ASSESSMENT MODERATION POLICY

Document ID	3.19
Related Documents	UBSS Academic Policies and Procedures
Date	Refreshed March 2018
Date of Next Review	October 2018
Authorised by	UBSS Academic Senate
Approved by	UBSS Academic Board May 2014
Version	v12.1
Responsible Officer	Executive Dean
References and Legislation	National Codes of Practice for International Students (NCPIS) Standard(s): All standards

Table of Contents

1   Context

This policy specifies the assessment moderation practice and procedures in consistent with the requirements of TEQSA. Assessment moderation is designed to be a quality assurance practice ensuring that marks or grades are awarded appropriately and consistently. It involves reviewing assessment schemes, items and assessor judgments. It forms a part of UBSS's continuous improvement program, which is designed to provide timely feedback to the markers (i.e. lecturers) and assists with creating consistency of marking between markers.

Assessment moderation aims to maintain and strengthen the integrity of the overall assessment system at UBSS. It ensures that grades attributed to students' performances reflect the appropriate standards at the subject level and satisfies institutional, national and international standards of the academic discipline or professional community.

2   Scope

2.1   Rationale

This policy applies to all award courses offered by UBSS. Selected key assessment tasks including final exams, mid-term tests or other assessments, which are weighted at 20% or more of the total assessment marks, are subject to moderation.

The responsibility of assessment moderation lies with the Executive Dean, UBSS.

2.2   Legislative Context

- The Higher Education Support Act (HESA)
- The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS): 2000 The National Code
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011

3   Definitions

Item	Definition
Benchmarking	Benchmarking is comparing one's business processes and performance metrics to industry bests and best practices from other companies
Moderation	Moderation is a quality assurance process that is used to check that assessment practices are applied equitably to all students in the same program or course. Moderation includes processes put in place prior to marking and grading to ensure assessors understand assessment criteria and performance standards, and those put in place subsequently to ensure consistency in their application. Moderation ensures that marks or grades are awarded appropriately and consistently. Krause (2012) defines moderation as: *A quality review and assurance process which supports* ***assessment setting*** *and* ***marking activities***. *It involves using other academics and qualified staff to confirm that the assessment tasks and marking are valid and reliable.* The industry standards such as cross-institutional research and institutional practices differentiate internal and external moderation.

4   The role of Internal Assessment Moderation

Internal assessment moderators are subject assessors and other nominees by the Executive Dean at UBSS. The role of assessment moderators is defined as including:

- reviewing the appropriateness of all assessment items as specified in the subject outlines and recommending improvements if any (see 5.1 Assessment Setting below);
- moderating or endorsing the marked progressive assessments (e.g. mid-term, assignments) during the term and recommending improvements if any (see 5.2 Assessment Marking below);
- reviewing the appropriateness of end-of-term assessment (i.e. final exam) during the term and recommending improvements if any (see 5.3 Examination Setting below);
- moderating or endorsing the marked end-of-term assessment after the exam period and recommending improvements if any (see 5.4 Examination Marking below).

5   Internal Moderation Procedures

5.1   Stage a) Assessment Setting

Subject Assessors review and endorse the assessment items of each subject by reviewing the unit outline proposed for that trimester and prior to release to students. Specifically, the following:

- If assessment's timelines are appropriate, comprehensive and clearly specified, and aligned with the graduate attributes endorsed by UBSS;
- The description of each assessment includes the nature of the assessment, the weighting, word/time limits, format, due date etc., and any other factors of significance to that assessment;
- The linkage between the specified learning outcomes and each assessment is clearly demonstrated;
- An explication or guidance concerning the requirements of assessment to be met by students, and the intended method of allocating of marks for each assessment is provided if appropriate.
- If clear instructions are given to students;
- If the progressive assessments are designed to address the learning objectives;
- If there is a reasonable degree of analytical, situational and scenario based questions to ensure the application of the knowledge learned;

5.2   Stage b) Assessment Marking

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the Executive Dean moderate or endorse the marked progressive assessments. Specifically, the following:

- If there are significant departures from the marking guide;
- If there is incorrect tallying of the marks;
- If there is sufficient and constructive feedback given to the students, especially when the assessments are qualitative in nature (i.e. essay, reports etc.).

5.3   Stage c) Examination Setting

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the Executive Dean review the end-of-term assessments prior to the end of term. Specifically, the following:

If the scope, length, and difficulty of the exam questions are suitable in addressing the learning outcomes and the graduate attributes;

- If there is a reasonable degree of analytical, situational and scenario based questions to ensure the application of the knowledge learned;
- If clear instructions are given to students; If exam templates are used;
- If the weighting of multiple-choice questions adheres to the academic policies.

5.4   Stage d) Examination Marking

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the Executive Dean moderate or endorse the marked end-of-term assessments prior to releasing the results to students. Specifically, the following:

- If there are significant departures from the marking guide;
- If there is incorrect tallying of the marks.
- If the distributions of grades within acceptable norms;
  - Fail rates not above 30% of the class population
  - Class average (mean) within 50% - 70%
  - No significant clustering of class grades within a single band
- If these distributions fall outside these parameters, then the committee investigates the marks and is authorised to accept or suggest a moderation of these results.
- If a moderation is endorsed by the committee, the formula applied must be recorded and reported to the next Academic Senate meeting

5.5   Units marked by two (2) or more examiners

The results from all units assessed by two or more markers (including external moderators) are externally monitored for potential moderation. This verification of independent marking includes:

- Three samples from each marker are compiled. Each sample demonstrates 1) a high grade (e.g. distinction or high distinction), 2) a medium grade (e.g. pass or credit) and 3) a low grade (e.g. fail).
- An external moderation expert nominated by the Executive Dean then verifies these samples for consistency across all of the unit markers.
- If the external moderation expert does not verify that the samples are consistent, the expert will suggest a suitable moderation process or remarking of all of the assessments marked by the identified examiner.

5.6   Conflict resolution and reporting of the internal moderation

The Subject Assessors/other moderators nominated by the Executive Dean or his delegates advise the lecturers of any concerns arising from the review and seek to resolve the issues with the lecturer. Unresolved differences, especially, material differences between primary marker and moderator, are to be referred to the Executive Dean and/or Chair of Academic Senate for a decision. The Subject Assessors/other moderators report the outcomes of the review process to the Executive Dean or his delegates who will collate a faculty wide report for Academic Senate each trimester.

6 Rolling Moderation of Assessment Setting and Sampling Methodology

Rolling moderation is implemented for all award courses at UBSS. For instance, there are 24 subjects within the Bachelor of Accounting program. Rolling moderation of 8 un-moderated subjects is to be conducted every year for a three-year period. This ensures that at the end of three-year period all 24 subjects are reviewed. Specifically, the following;

1. Pre-assessment moderation such as reviewing subject outlines and final exam scripts requires the timely submission of the subject outlines and final exams be given to the subject assessors before the outlines and final exams are made available to the students.
2. Post-assessment moderation such as moderating the quality and quantity of questions/scripts included in key assignments, mid-term exams and final exams. This requires a sample of marked assessments to be given to the subject assessors and/or other nominees of the Executive Dean. The sample size is to be 3 copies of student scripts per assessment moderated. The 3 scripts must include a high (distinction or high distinction, if any), a medium (pass or credit, if any) and a low grade (fail, if any).
3. The Executive Dean reserves the right to enlarge the sample size for each subject under review based on the advice of the moderators if needed to establish a pattern of inconsistencies or errors.

7 The Role of External Benchmarking for Moderation

External moderation, involves benchmarking learning outcomes, assessment practices and outcomes, and grade distributions across institutions with accredited award courses equivalent to those offered by the home institution. As specified by TEQSA's course accreditation standards:

"The academic standards intended to be achieved by students and the standards actually achieved by students in the course of study are benchmarked against similar accredited courses of study offered by other higher education providers."

7.1 Procedures for External Benchmarking for Moderation:

The Executive Dean nominates a sample of 3 comparable subjects each year to be submitted to benchmarking partners or nominated external reviewer on a confidential basis for an independent review of the assessment practices and protocols. The 3 subjects should be selected from the areas of accounting and business. All key assessments (i.e. weighted 20% or more) of the 3 selected are subject to review and moderation. Specifically, the following:

1. If assessments are aligned with the learning outcomes as specified in the subject outlines;
2. If the scope, length, and difficulty of the exam questions are suitable in addressing the learning outcomes and the graduate attributes;
3. If assessments are marked in line with marking guides without significant departures;
4. If assessment requirements are clearly articulated.

7.2   Reporting of the External Moderation

Given logistical issues, the external moderation of marks and grade distributions is necessarily *post hoc* in nature. Consequently it informs subsequent assessment practices rather than alters the outcomes of the internal grading process conducted each trimester.

The Executive Dean or his delegates will report the results of external moderation to the Course Advisory Committee and Academic Board outlining recommendations to enhance assessment regimes and protocols employed at UBSS.

8   Amendments to Assessment Moderation Policy

The Academic Senate has authority to amend this policy on recommendation of the Executive Dean.

9   Document Change Control

Version	Change Description	Date	Author
v12	Refreshed format	November 2017	Professor Ian Bofinger
v12	Expanded legislative context (Section 2.2)	November 2017	Professor Greg Whateley
v12	Expanded definitions to include 'benchmarking' (Section 3)	November 2017	Professor Greg Whateley
V12.1	Expanded definition of moderation (Section 3) The process for 'moderation of units with two or more examiners' added (Section 5) The stages of internal moderation procedures further clarified (Section 5)	March 2018	Professor Ian Bofinger