

ASSESSMENT MODERATION POLICY¹

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¹ For a list of external documents consulted see Appendix A

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.

1 Scope

1.1 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.

Note that this policy applies to all assessments conducted online and/or in a face to face teaching environment.

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

1.2 Legislative Context

- The Higher Education Support Act (HESA) 2003
- The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS) 2000
- The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011

2 Definitions

Item	Definition
Assessment item	The collection of assessment tasks that are aggregated to award a grade at the completion of a unit.
Assessment task	A set of instructions, word count or duration and due date specifying how a student will be assessed for specific learning outcomes

Item	Definition
Benchmarking	Benchmarking is comparing one's business processes and performance metrics to industry bests and best practices from other companies
Learning Outcomes	Means the set of knowledge, skills and application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.
Moderation	<p>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.</p> <p>Krause (2012) defines moderation as:</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>The industry standards such as cross-institutional research and institutional practices differentiate internal and external moderation.</p>

3 The role of Internal Assessment Moderation

Internal assessment moderators are subject assessors and other nominees by the 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);

- ensuring all assessment items comply with the current UBSS Assessment Guidelines.

4 Internal Moderation Procedures

4.1 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:

- Refer to the UBSS Assessment Guidelines to ensure that each assessment item fits within the guidance provided;
- 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;

4.2 Stage b) Assessment Marking

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the 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.).

4.3 Stage c) Examination Setting

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the 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 clear instructions are given to students; If exam templates are used;
- If the weighting of multiple-choice questions adheres to the academic policies.

4.4 Stage d) Examination Marking

Subject assessors and/or other nominees by the Dean moderate or endorse the marked end-of-term assessments after 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.

It is the policy of UBSS not to normalise marks but rather accept the grades as moderated without adjustment, this

- 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 Grade Review Committee investigates the marks and is authorised to accept or suggest a moderation of these results.
- If a moderation is endorsed by the Grade Review Committee, the formula applied must be recorded and reported to the next Academic Senate meeting

4.5 Moderation Process for Summative Results of Trimester

Given the fact that UBSS now deliver courses across three sites and hence, UBSS would like to commence moderation process using the standard university bell curve (normal distribution) system with regard to Trimester results.

- The model is based on a moderation practice of allocating a percentage to grade distribution (not marks) prior to the release of grades. The model is based on the bell curve (because it resembles a bell shape) of –
 - Fails – 10%
 - Pass – 20%
 - Credit – 40%
 - Distinction – 20%
 - High Distinction – 10%
- This means the UBSS Grade Review Committee on receipt of marks would allocate grades accordingly – marks within each category may vary (and usually does) from trimester to trimester.
- This process would not drive any changing marks but UBSS will ensure a proper balance of results in line with current university and higher education provider best practice.

4.6 Units marked by two (2) or more examiners

The results from all units assessed by two or more markers (including external moderators) may be, at the discretion of the Dean, externally or internal 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 or internal moderation expert nominated by the 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.

4.7 Conflict resolution and reporting of the internal moderation

The Subject Assessors/other moderators nominated by the 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 Dean and/or Chair of Academic Senate for a decision. The Subject Assessors/other moderators report the outcomes of the review process to the Dean or his delegates who will collate a faculty wide report for Academic Senate each trimester.

5 Rolling Moderation of Assessment Setting and Sampling Methodology

Rolling internal 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 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 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.

6 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."

6.1 Procedures for External Benchmarking for Moderation:

The Dean will nominate a sample of 3 comparable subjects each year are to be submitted for independent external review by no fewer than two external benchmarking partners or nominated external reviewers 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 of a statistically representative sample of assessments for each study period. All key assessments (i.e. weighted 20% or more) of the 3 selected subjects are to be reviewed and moderated. 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.

6.2 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 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.

7 Amendments to Assessment Moderation Policy

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

8 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	Amendments to clarify definitions and the distinction between the setting and marking of assessment pieces (4) & (5.1), specifications for moderation procedures (5.4) and processes for units with multiple or external examiners (5.5)	March 2018	Professor Ian Bofinger
V12.2	Addition of reference to Assessment Guidelines	June 2018	Associate Professor Andy West
V12.3	Amendment to section 7.1 External Moderation Procedures to include TEQSA condition 3A Assessment Moderation.	December 2018	Associate Professor Andy West
V12.4	Amendment to 5.5 for procedure for moderation of assessments by Units marked by two or more examiners	December 2019	Associate Professor Wayne Smithson
V12.5	Removal of Executive Dean replaced with Dean Typos amended	March 2021	Anurag Kanwar
V13	Update in line with recommendations from Dr Capper	January 2021	Anurag Kanwar
V14	Clause - 4.5 added.	August 2023	Professor Ashok Chanda

Appendix A

List of external documents referenced in this document.

Name of Institution	Name of document	URL	Date accessed
AIB	Assessment Procedure	https://www.aib.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Assessment-Procedure.pdf	7/01/2022
La Trobe University	Assessment Procedure – Validation and Moderation	https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=140	7/1/2022
Eastern College Australia	Assessment Moderation Policy	https://policy.eastern.edu.au/pid/009-assessment-moderation-policy	7/1/2022