

Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure HEPP35

PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to outline Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)'s position on moderation of assessment. The policy also supports continuous improvement of academic standards by ensuring that assessment practices are consistent, valid, and aligned with learning outcomes and external benchmarks.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all academic staff of Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) including the Academic Board and its standing committees.

DEFINITIONS

Assessment Moderation	The cross-comparison of student assessment at an individual, class, organisational, and industry level. Moderation requires independent – either internal or external – review of grading to ensure that fairness and integrity of assessment takes place.
Benchmarking	The process of comparing assessment practices, standards, and outcomes with those of equivalent courses or institutions to ensure alignment with sector expectations and promote continuous improvement.
Assessment Task	An assessment task is one that has been prescribed to be completed by students and assessed to be included as part of the final grade for a unit of study.
SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)

POLICY

1. SCEI-HE adopts a progressive and proactive approach towards assessment, moderation and benchmarking.
2. The principles underlying academic moderation are that our assessments and student performance are fair, transparent and in-line with industry standards.
3. Assessment moderation contributes to the integrity of qualifications and supports SCEI-HE's commitment to sector-wide academic comparability through regular internal and external referencing.

PROCEDURE

1. Approach to Moderation

To ensure that assessments at SCEI-HE are valid, reliable, and aligned with learning outcomes and sector standards, the Institute implements a structured moderation framework. This framework encompasses the review of assessment design, marking practices, and student results by academic peers and, where appropriate, external experts. Moderation is a quality assurance process that safeguards the integrity of assessment creation, grading, and outcomes. It involves academic staff at all levels—from course coordinators to lecturers—and includes both internal and external audits of assessment inputs and outputs, such as assessment tasks and marking.

2. Principles of Moderation

While moderation cannot ensure that the assessment system is flawless, the intention is to maximise the fairness of results and reporting and to eliminate bias and weaknesses in the assessment regime. Moderation is an important aspect of maintaining the integrity of degrees and the quality of higher education delivered at SCEI-HE.

3. Student and Staff Confidence in Assessment

A further reason for moderation is that students and staff have confidence that assessment is consistent, fair and reasonable for all students. Moderation demands that when assessment tasks are created and delivered that both staff and students can be confident that the assessment tool is measuring what it is intended to. SCEI-HE ensures that feedback on assessments is timely, constructive, and focused on improvement. Academic staff are expected to provide feedback within 10 working days of submission and include comments that relate to marking criteria. Moderation processes also ensure that assessment judgments are consistently applied across all delivery modes and locations. Moderation processes also review the quality and consistency of feedback provided to students.

4. Key Aspects of Moderation

Moderation involves, but is not limited to

- The design and clarity of assessment instruments;
- Their appropriateness to the course and learning objectives;
- The reliability and validity of assessment tools;
- Clear communication of assessment goals to students and staff;
- The ability of the task to avoid conscious and unconscious bias;
- Protection against unethical or inappropriate use; and
- Alignment with intended learning outcome.

Moderation involves, but is not limited to, evaluating both outputs such as:

- Correction of student work;
- Marking and assigning grades;
- Communicating assessment results to students;
- Benchmarking against other assessors and assessment tasks;
- Feedback and review of assessment to students; and
- Assessment tools such as criterion based rubrics and other assessment evaluation.

5. Moderation of Assessment Inputs

SCEI-HE is committed to ensuring the quality, clarity, and appropriateness of assessment tasks through a structured moderation process. To maintain fairness and consistency, the following moderation requirements apply:

- **Moderation of Language in Assessment Tasks**

All new or significantly revised assessment tasks (such as reports, presentations, or test items) must undergo moderation prior to being administered to students. This moderation aims to identify and resolve any ambiguities or inconsistencies in the wording to ensure clarity and fairness.

- **Validation of Suitability of Assessment to Unit**

Assessment tasks must be reviewed as part of the unit approval or revision process to confirm their alignment with unit learning outcomes and compliance with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) depth of learning requirements. This review involves consultation with the Course Advisory Committee and occurs before the assessment is deployed.

- **Frequency of Moderation**

For newly introduced units or assessments, 100% of assessment tasks must be moderated prior to first use. For continuing units, a minimum of 20% of assessment tasks will be moderated each academic semester to ensure ongoing validity and reliability.

Additional moderation will be triggered when:

- Significant changes are made to an assessment task;
- Student performance outcomes significantly deviate from expected standards;
- Student appeals or complaints indicate potential assessment issues.

- **Levels of Moderation**

Moderation covers assessment inputs (design and language), assessment processes (marking and grading), and assessment outputs (final grades and feedback). Each level will follow appropriate moderation procedures as outlined in this policy.

6. Moderation of Assessment Outputs

SCEI-HE demonstrates moderation processes in 3 specific facets:

- a) Regular Moderation from Teaching and Learning Committee

SCEI-HE's Teaching and Learning Committee regularly reviews student performance to ensure consistency of results.

- b) Review of Student Appeals

Students have the right to appeal their assessment in special circumstances. Where irregular, problematic or perceived inaccuracies are detected by or reported to the Course Coordinator, the work of a student or students will be reviewed first by the Course Coordinator and then moderated by the Teaching and Learning Committee. Moderation will be blind (where possible) and the weighted results of 3 assessors will determine the revised grade (if necessary).

- c) Peer Moderation

A characteristic of SCEI-HE is that it is a highly collegial and collaborative teaching environment. As such lecturers are encouraged to split marking so that different lecturers will review assessment tasks and results will be arrived at through a peer review system. SCEI-HE encourages lecturers to share the reporting of results with other lecturers, with discretion, for the purposes of ensuring grading is standard and consistent across SCEI-HE. This process is particularly suitable for new lecturers, where there are multiple academics involved in delivery, or for units requiring substantial experience and expertise.

7. External Benchmarking Review

SCEI-HE will conduct assessment moderation benchmarking by comparing assessment design, grading standards, and student performance with those of equivalent courses offered by partner or comparable higher education providers.

Frequency and Timing:

- External benchmarking will be conducted at least once every three years for each course or program, coinciding with scheduled course accreditation or reaccreditation cycles.
- Additional benchmarking may be undertaken when significant curriculum changes are made, or where internal moderation or appeals data indicate potential issues with assessment standards.
- The findings from these benchmarking activities will be formally documented and incorporated into course reviews, reaccreditation submissions, and new course proposals to support continuous quality improvement and alignment with sector standards.
- Benchmarking outcomes will be recorded and referenced in course review documentation and will inform curriculum renewal and professional development activities.

8. Recommendations if Moderation Finds Problems in Assessment

- 8.1 Pending the results of the investigation, the Teaching and Learning Committee should make recommendations on corrective action, subject to continuing review, moderation and evaluation of assessment.
- 8.2 In special or unusual cases requiring attention, SCEI-HE should seek external providers to conduct an audit and review of assessment tasks ensuring their integrity against benchmarked 'external standards'.
- 8.3 Findings from moderation processes will be reported to the Academic Board and used to inform continuous improvement of unit design, teaching practices, and assessment standards. Where systemic issues are identified, appropriate staff development and curriculum review actions will be implemented.
- 8.4 The Academic Director will ensure that findings from moderation activities are included in the annual report to the Academic Board, highlighting key trends, risks, and actions taken to uphold academic standards.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Assessment Policy and Procedure HEPP04
Quality Assurance Framework HEMIS11

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, Standard 11
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011

RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Director

- Responsible for the overall consistency of assessment across all programs of study. Consistency of assessment is reviewed as part of the normal quality assurance framework.
- Responsible for ensuring that moderation is implemented in accordance with this policy and procedure.
- Reports to the Teaching and Learning subcommittee on any issues that may arise through the marking and moderation process.
- Ensures that moderation practices are externally benchmarked where appropriate and that findings inform strategic academic planning.

Course Coordinators

- Responsible for conducting and reporting the outcomes of moderation in accordance with this policy and procedure.



Teaching and Learning Committee

- Reviews moderation reports, identifies patterns or risks, and advises on professional development or curriculum changes where necessary.

Academic Board

- Responsible for the oversight of this policy and procedure.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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