

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.

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.
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.

PROCEDURE

- 1. Approach to Moderation**
 To ensure that SCEI-HE incorporates assessment is valid and reliable, SCEI-HE adopts a range of moderation processes. Moderation can be defined as a quality review process that provides a framework to maintain the integrity of assessment setting, marking and student results. The process involves all levels of academic staff from course coordinators to lecturers. The moderation process involves running a range of external and internal audits on assessment inputs and outputs including assessment tasks and marking.
- 2. Principles of Moderation**
 While moderation cannot ensure that the assessment system is flawless, the intention 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 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 review the quality and consistency of feedback provided to students.
- 4. Key Aspects of Moderation**
 Moderation involves evaluating inputs such as:
 - 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 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 takes the design of assessment tasks seriously. As processes in the moderation assessment inputs, we recommend the following:

a) Moderation of Language of Assessment Tasks

The aim of moderating assessment inputs (such as assessment tasks such as reports, presentation, or test items) before students are asked to undertake them, is to address any ambiguities in the questions.

b) Validation of Suitability of Assessment to Unit

SCEI-HE's course design process involves the communication and collaboration to the Academic Programs Committee to submit new units and assessments. The internal review of academic assessment tasks will focus on the appropriateness and suitability to the unit, the extent to which the task meets the AQF depth of learning requirements as course accreditations standards as defined in higher education regulation.

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, a student (or students') work 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. 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.

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.

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.

Course Coordinators

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

Academic Board

- Responsible for the oversight of this policy and procedure.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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