

## CONTENTS

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | PURPOSE.....  | 1 |
| 2 | SCOPE.....  | 1 |
| 3 | PROCEDURE .....                                       | 1 |
|   | Moderation of assessment tasks (pre-assessment) ..... | 2 |
|   | Moderation of marks/grades (post-assessment) .....    | 2 |
| 4 | RESPONSIBILITIES .....                                | 4 |
|   | Compliance, monitoring and review.....                | 4 |
|   | Reporting.....  | 4 |
|   | Records management.....                               | 4 |
| 5 | DEFINITIONS .....                                     | 5 |
| 6 | RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS .....               | 5 |
| 7 | FEEDBACK.....   | 5 |
| 8 | APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS.....                      | 5 |

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 This procedure outlines the processes for moderating assessment at CQUniversity.

## 2 SCOPE

2.1 This procedure applies to enabling, undergraduate, postgraduate, and research coursework units offered by CQUniversity.

## 3 PROCEDURE

3.1 Moderation is a quality assurance process that ensures the appropriate quality of, and valid and consistent judgement of student performance in:

- assessment tasks, and
- assessment outcomes.

3.2 Standards-based assessment (criterion-referenced) achieves comparability of results between students, which is further enhanced by collaboration between assessors and reviewers, so that the marks/grades awarded to individual students are academically defensible.

3.3 Moderation involves collaboration between academic employees, with the aim of reviewing assessment tasks and assessment criteria before a unit begins, and then reviewing judgments of student performance (marks/grades) on completion of the assessment tasks, to ensure that:

- assessment tasks are appropriate, in terms of their alignment with learning outcomes (pre-assessment)
- assessment criteria are appropriate, in terms of the characteristics against which assessments are measured (pre-assessment), and
- marks/grades are appropriate, in terms of the standards of performance achieved against the assessment criteria (post-assessment). This is particularly important where more than one person is involved in assessing student performance, to ensure equity and consistency in assessment.

## **Moderation of assessment tasks (pre-assessment)**

- 3.4 The Unit Lead/Coordinator is responsible for the academic leadership and oversight of all aspects of CQUniversity units allocated to them. This includes the setting and review of assessment tasks.
- 3.5 Unit Leads/Coordinators will prepare draft assessment tasks in the University's Academic Information Management System (AIMS), with sufficient descriptive detail of the task and its assessment criteria to enable a reviewer to assess whether it aligns with the learning outcomes being assessed, in a timeline that enables the publication of these details in the unit profile. If other employees are involved in teaching the unit in addition to the Unit Lead/Coordinator, they should be included in the preparatory stages where possible (pre-assessment discussions), to provide peer feedback on the assessment tasks as part of a process of consensus moderation (see 3.9 below).
- 3.6 Each unit will be assigned a Reviewer, whose role is to confirm the suitability of the assessment tasks described in the draft unit profile, working collaboratively with the Unit Lead/Coordinator to resolve any issues raised during the review process and thereby ensure that assessments are well designed and their requirements are clearly explained to students.
- 3.7 The Unit Lead/Coordinator will confirm publication of the unit profile only after the Reviewer has agreed that no further changes are required to the assessment task description and associated assessment criteria (and assuming all other checks have been completed).

## **Moderation of marks/grades (post-assessment)**

- 3.8 The Unit Lead/Coordinator is responsible for the academic leadership and oversight of all aspects of CQUniversity units allocated to them. This includes the management of marking/grading, including the collation, moderation and submission of results and finalisation of grades.
- 3.9 Moderation of marks/grades may take place by either:
  - consensus moderation (sometimes termed 'social moderation') - involving all assessors in a unit, or
  - expert moderation - where the Unit Lead/Coordinator acts as moderator of marks/grades for all other markers.
- 3.10 Where moderation of marks/grades occurs through consensus moderation, all assessors including the Unit Lead/Coordinator will be involved in the marking/grading process. This approach aims to reach agreement of all assessors, in terms of a shared understanding of the measurement and standards of student performance. Consensus moderation of assignment or examination scripts, involves one or more moderation meeting (face-to-face or virtual) and discussion between the assessors, sharing their judgments' on examples of students' work in order to reach agreement about the marks/grades awarded to work of a particular standard of performance. It is best conducted during the early stages of marking, by the circulation of representative examples of student work together with assessment criteria and any marking guidelines/standards rubrics, followed by individual marking across all assessors, with subsequent discussion and agreement on the appropriate mark to be awarded against each of the assessment criteria, and for the overall assessment at the moderation meeting. The process should facilitate the resolution of any issues raised across the team of assessors, resulting in agreement on the appropriate marks/grades to be awarded across the cohort and thereby confirming the appropriateness of the outcomes of the assessment process.
- 3.11 Alternatively, where moderation of marks/grades occurs through a process of expert moderation, the Unit Lead/Coordinator will act as the moderator for all other assessors in the unit, taking sole responsibility for confirming that appropriate marks/grades have been awarded. Under this procedure, Unit Leads/Coordinators must:
  - contact teaching employees including tutors, assessors and lecturing employees associated with the unit to discuss details of assessment tasks, assessment criteria, marking and moderation procedures prior to the start of term where possible, or as soon as marking contracts are issued, and
  - provide assessment criteria and marking guidelines to assessors no later than the assessment submission date. Assessors should be instructed to begin their marking as soon as possible after the submission/examination date, in order to facilitate moderation by the Unit Lead/Coordinator.

- 3.12 The Unit Lead/Coordinator will develop a moderation plan which sets parameters for moderating assessments in line with this procedure, including ensuring:
- moderation will be conducted by consensus or expert moderation
  - the moderation process will not significantly delay the provision of results and/or feedback to students
  - moderation will occur promptly following the assessment due (or submission) date, or receipt of examinations, and will be conducted within the time frames agreed between the Unit Lead/Coordinator and Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching. As a guide, it may take up to 10 working days to complete the moderation process and release results/feedback to students
  - agreed time frames will be communicated to assessors in a timely manner
  - assessors provide Unit Leads/Coordinators with sample copies of marked assessment items for moderation as requested, where assessments are not available online. **Originals must remain secure**, and
  - students receive timely and constructive feedback on their assessment items, in line with the [Assessment Policy and Procedure \(Higher Education Coursework\)](#).

### **Consensus moderation**

- 3.13 Chosen by the Unit Lead/Coordinator, at least three samples of students' work will be assessed, including work indicative of one passing assessment (50 – 55 per cent), one medium achievement assessment (70 – 75 per cent), and one high achievement assessment (>80 per cent) where possible.
- 3.14 The Unit Lead/Coordinator will ensure copies of sample assessments, assessment criteria, and any marking guidelines/standards rubrics are available to assessors for moderation marking.
- 3.15 Assessors will mark the sample assessments within the agreed time frame and prior to scheduled moderation meeting/s.
- 3.16 A moderation meeting/s will be convened by the Unit Lead/Coordinator, at which assessors will share their judgments on the sample assessments to reach agreement about the marks/grades awarded against each of the assessment criteria, and for the overall assessment.
- 3.17 Once a shared understanding, or consensus, about marks/grades awarded to work of a particular standard has been reached, each assessor will proceed to mark their allocated quota of assessment items within the agreed time frames to enable the timely provision of results and/or feedback to students.
- 3.18 If there are new assessors involved in marking, additional support may be considered to ensure subsequent marking adheres to agreed standards.

### **Expert moderation**

- 3.19 Chosen by the Unit Lead/Coordinator, at least three samples of students' work from each assessor will be reviewed, including one passing assessment (50 – 55 per cent), one medium achievement assessment (70 – 75 per cent), and one high achievement assessment (>80 per cent), where possible. Where an assessor is new to marking for that assessment/unit, the moderated sample size may be increased up to five. Unit Leads/Coordinators may request up to 10 per cent of assessment items prior to the assessment due date if the unit has more than 50 students.
- 3.20 Grades will be moderated and feedback provided to assessors within the agreed time frame to enable the timely provision of results and/or feedback to students. The Unit Lead/Coordinator will provide feedback and advise assessors directly of any required adjustments to their marking. This may necessitate the assessor adjusting previous marks awarded to conform to the moderated sample.
- 3.21 Once assessors have acted on moderation feedback and finalised marking, the Unit Lead/Coordinator will be provided with a list of all (final) assessment marks. This must occur within the agreed time frames.
- 3.22 The Unit Lead/Coordinator will formally communicate the date of completion of moderation to assessors. No assessment items or results will be released to students until the Unit Lead/Coordinator has completed the moderation process.

- 3.23 Assessors will ensure that any component changes that constitute the moderated mark be made on the assessment item feedback before it is returned to students. They must also ensure that assessment criteria sheets and/or marks returned to students with an assessment item include only the one substantiated moderated mark. Under no circumstances should a student receive both an original and a moderated mark.

### **Consensus and expert moderation**

- 3.24 Marks/grades must only be released to students once the moderation process is complete, in line with the requirements of the [Assessment of Policy and Procedure \(Higher Education Coursework\)](#).
- 3.25 Assessors will ensure that assessment items and examinations from their group are marked fairly and consistently when compared with others in the unit. This may require regular ongoing reciprocal communication with the Unit Lead/Coordinator.
- 3.26 Assessors must meet the timeframes for marking and moderation as agreed between the Unit Lead/Coordinator and Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching. Any delay in provision of assessment marks may put at risk the timely provision of results and feedback to students. Where submission of marks, or the moderation process itself is delayed without prior negotiation, the appropriate academic supervisor (Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching/Head of College, or nominee) must be advised by the Unit Lead/Coordinator.
- 3.27 Assessors, including the Unit Lead/Coordinator, must ensure that assessment items returned to students contain only one substantiated moderated mark, and that any adjustments to marks that have occurred as a result of the moderation process have been made prior to the return of work to students.
- 3.28 Unit Leads/Coordinators will maintain regular contact with assessors throughout the term, during the moderation processes for each marked piece of assessment and as part of the moderation of overall results before presentation to the appropriate School or College Committee assessment meeting.
- 3.29 Unit Leads/Coordinators will prepare a report at the conclusion of each term, to confirm that appropriate moderation procedures have been followed during the unit, and to present unit assessment breakdowns, results, and grade distributions. These reports will be presented to the appropriate School or College Committee assessment meeting. If the Unit Lead/Coordinator does not attend the meeting, they must be readily contactable or have fully briefed the Dean of School/Head of College or proxy to answer unit result queries from the meeting.

## **4 RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Compliance, monitoring and review**

- 4.1 The Director Educational Quality and Integrity is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and ensuring compliance with this procedure.
- 4.2 Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching, Heads of College, Unit Lead/Coordinators and assessors are responsible for implementing this procedure.

### **Reporting**

- 4.3 No additional reporting is required.

### **Records management**

- 4.4 Employees must manage records relevant to administering this procedure in accordance with the [Records Management Policy and Procedure](#). This includes retaining these records in a recognised University recordkeeping information system.
- 4.5 University records must be retained for the minimum periods specified in the University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule on the [Queensland State Archives website](#). Before disposing of any records, approval must be sought through the Records Management Office (email [records@cqu.edu.au](mailto:records@cqu.edu.au)).

## 5 DEFINITIONS

5.1 Terms not defined in this document may be in the University [glossary](#).

## 6 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

[Assessment Policy and Procedure \(Higher Education Coursework\)](#)

[Learning and Teaching Framework](#)

## 7 FEEDBACK

7.1 Feedback about this document can be emailed to [policy@cqu.edu.au](mailto:policy@cqu.edu.au).

## 8 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

| Approval and Review          | Details                                    |
|------------------------------|--|
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