

ASSESSMENT VALIDATION AND MODERATION PROCEDURES

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1. Overview

The Higher Education Leadership Institute (HELI) acknowledges the importance of making consistent, accurate, fair and reliable judgements about the standards and expectations of assessment. Section 8 of the Institute's *Quality Framework [QAF001]*¹ defines moderation as the process of ensuring that assessment validly and reliability measures achievement of expected student learning in a subject.

The purpose of assessment validation and moderation is to promote quality and consistency in the practice of assessment and its outcomes and to ensure that courses and subjects meet AQF specifications; address the *Higher Education Standards Framework*²; and maintain internal academic quality standards. Validation and moderation address the interests of all stakeholders and demonstrate that assessment standards are appropriate, reliable and comparable to good practice across the higher education sector.

HELI is committed to criterion-referenced assessment practices such that the awarding of marks and grades to students is based on their performance in relation to predefined standards and marking criteria. Assessment marking criteria and related standards form an integral part of information provided to student at the start of a subject and outline different levels of achievement for each assessment task within a subject.

To assure the quality of assessment practices, HELI undertakes pre-assessment validation processes to ensure that the design of assessments and their marking criteria validly and reliably help students achieve subject learning outcomes. The Institute also conducts post-assessment moderation to ensure that educators make consistent and accurate judgements about the level of achievement awarded to the work of students.

Validation ensures that assessments validly and reliably test student achievement of course and subject learning outcomes, and moderation ensures that consistent, fair, and accurate decisions are made about student performance and their overall achievement of course and subject learning outcomes.

Validation and moderation are therefore an essential part of ensuring the quality and integrity of assessment practices from initial design stages through to decision making and assessment review and improvement stages.

The following procedures aim to guide and inform all stages of the practice of assessment so that validity, reliability and consistency of assessment practices are quality assured and continuously improved.

Appendix 2 provides a diagrammatic overview of the stages involved in validation and moderation procedures.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of these procedures the following definitions apply:

- a. **External moderation** refers to the provision of a random sample of a subject's marked and graded assessments from across the grade range to an independent external moderator who compiles a Moderation Report in the prescribed form setting out their findings and recommendations.
- b. **Feedback** refers to written or verbal communication to students on their academic work and performance. Feedback should be clear, helpful, and timely so that students are

¹ HELI's Quality Framework is located in: [HELI Central>Quality Framework>QAF001 Quality Framework](#)

² The complete TEQSA Act is available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.au>

informed about the standard and level of achievement of their work and to indicate areas for improvement where required.

- c. **Formative assessment** refers to tasks that monitor student learning or engagement and provides opportunities for feedback that can help identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in a timely manner.
- d. **Marking criteria** refers to guiding statements or standards that assist educators to make consistent and accurate judgements and feedback about the quality and level of achievement of student work. Marking criteria also assist students to know what standards and levels of achievement are required and expected for an assessment task.
- e. **Moderation Schedule** refers to the selection of subjects that are scheduled for moderation each year as determined by the Course Coordinator in liaison with the Dean.
- f. **Peer Review** refers to meetings of the Course Coordinator with subject educators to review the findings and outcomes of moderation for professional development purposes.
- g. **Reliability** refers to ensuring that assessment design and marking criteria are sufficiently clear and precise to enable different educators or assessors to make comparable, consistent, and reliable judgements about assessment results.
- h. **Summative Assessment** refers to evaluating student learning by awarding marks and grades that reflect the level of achievement of assessment standards and marking criteria. Summative assessment should be accompanied by feedback to students that is clear, helpful and timely so that they are informed about the standard and level of achievement of their work and to indicate areas for improvement where required.
- i. **Term** refers to HELI's ten-week period of study. Each calendar year contains four terms separated by a two-week break. A five-week break separates the final term of a calendar year and the first term of the next calendar year.
- j. **Validation of assessment** refers to a pre-assessment quality assurance process to ensure that the design of assessment tasks, marking criteria and standards of achievement validly assess what is intended to be assessed so that students and educators can confidently rely on that information to guide their efforts and achieve intended subject learning outcomes.

3. Assessment Validation

Assessment validation ensures the appropriateness, fairness, clarity, accuracy and standard of assessment tasks and marking criteria, whether new or revised, before they are used for the first time.

3.1 Validation Procedures

- a. The content developer for a subject is initially responsible for the design of a subject's assessment tasks and marking criteria, and for ensuring their constructive alignment with course and subject learning outcomes and graduate attributes prior to first delivery.
- b. The Course Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving new or revised Subject Outlines³ including assessments to ensure that they meet standards of rigour and depth appropriate to the award and are consistent and reflect best practice.
- c. The Course Coordinator, in liaison with subject educators, is responsible for managing the ongoing review and updating of assessment tasks and marking criteria, to ensure that they are valid and reliable, helping students to achieve the intended subject learning outcomes.

³ A *Subject Outline* contains an overview of the accredited elements of a subject (e.g. aim, learning outcomes, formative and summative assessment tasks, weekly content topics, and readings and related resources).

- d. All validation procedures will normally be conducted through the Peer Review Portal (PRP)⁴, in which review documentation, feedback reporting and communications will be managed.
- e. In preparation for the inaugural (or subsequent) delivery of a subject, the Course Coordinator prepares an Assessment Validation Report in the prescribed form and presents it to the Dean for review and approval prior to delivery.
- f. The Dean maintains a record of the outcomes of Assessment Validation Reports including information on the assessments validated and the number and nature of changes to assessment tasks arising from validation processes.
- g. The Dean prepares an Annual Assessment Validation and Moderation Report summarising all validation outcomes including any improvements or amendments to assessments tasks or practices.

4. Assessment Moderation

The marking of assessment tasks undergoes post-assessment moderation to ensure the consistency, accuracy and reliability of assessment decisions. Moderation is undertaken by an external moderator who is independent of HELI. The Institute may elect to have more than one external moderator as the number of subjects and students increase overtime.

Assessment moderation at HELI will normally be conducted through the PRP, in which review documentation, feedback reporting and communications will be managed.

4.1 External Moderator role and tasks

An External Moderator is appointed by the Dean for a specified period to undertake moderation and report on outcomes. The External Moderator is responsible for ensuring that educators are making consistent judgments about grading standards and that the outcomes of assessment practices are fair, valid and reliable. An External Moderator must ensure that assessment marking criteria are applied consistently; that the standards of assessment marking are consistent and reflect best practice; and that any differences in assessment outcomes are addressed.

The tasks involved in external moderation include:

- a. Liaison with the Dean on all matters related to moderation including the provision of advice about the integrity and consistency of assessment practices throughout the Institute that may include recommendations to enhance congruency and address inconsistencies.
- b. Familiarity with the Institute's discipline areas and Quality Framework⁵ on all matters related to assessment and moderation.
- c. The moderation of a random sample of marked and graded assessments from across the grade range of selected subjects within an agreed timeframe.
- d. The submission of a *Moderation Report*⁶ in the prescribed form setting out findings and recommendations on selected subjects within an agreed timeframe.

⁴ TEQSA has endorsed the Peer Review Portal (PRP) as an online support mechanism enabling education providers in meeting national standards in external peer review. The PRP is a document and workflow management system that provides a robust framework for management review. It also assists in sourcing appropriately qualified external expert reviewers.

⁵ The Quality Framework is available in: [HELI Central > Quality Framework](#)

⁶ Refer to Appendix 1: *Moderation Report* template

4.2 Moderation Procedures

The tasks involved in external moderation include:

- a. In accordance with an Annual Moderation Schedule, once results have been approved by the Results Review Committee, the Course Coordinator (or Dean) collates a random sample of marked and graded assessments in specified subjects from across the grade range; in practice this means that two marked and graded assessments from each of assessment two and three in each grade category are selected at random, up to a maximum of 20 assessments. The sample is then submitted to the External Moderator (normally through the PRP). Submission to the External Moderator will normally occur within four weeks of the end of the term within which the subjects were taught.
- b. The External Moderator completes a Moderation Report in the prescribed format (normally through the PRP), normally within four weeks of receipt of assessment samples and submits the report for review and approval of the Dean (again normally through the PRP).
- c. The Course Coordinator organises a peer review meeting with the subject educator to discuss moderation outcomes for feedback and professional development purposes.
- d. The Course Coordinator compiles a summary of moderation outcomes and presents those findings and any recommendations arising for review and discussion with the Dean.
- e. The Dean maintains a record of all moderation activities and outcomes. The record should include information on the subjects moderated and any follow-up actions for consideration and review by the Results Review Committee and the Academic Quality Committee.
- f. The Dean prepares an Annual Assessment Validation and Moderation Report summarising all validation and moderation activities and outcomes including any improvements or amendments to assessments tasks, practices, or marking criteria.
- g. The Dean presents the Annual Assessment Validation and Moderation Report for consideration by the Academic Quality Committee at its second meeting each year.
- h. The minutes of the Academic Quality Committee including the Annual Validation and Moderation Report are presented for consideration and review at the second meeting of the Academic Board each year.
- i. The Dean, in collaboration with the Course Coordinator, is responsible for the implementation of recommendations or actions arising from meetings of the Academic Quality Committee and the Academic Board.

5. Associated documents

- QAF001 Quality Framework (Section 8)
- QAF075 Student Assessment Policy and Procedure
- FRM040 Assessment Validation Report (template)
- FRM045 Assessment Moderation Report (template)

6. Version Control

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	2 November 2016	Document creation and initial approval
2.0	Academic Board	13 June 2018	Updates due to change of nomenclature and harmonisation with QAF
2.1	Dean	6 September 2019	Minor changes as recommended by the AQC
3.0	Academic Board	5 December 2018	Major changes as recommend by the AQC
3.1	Dean	13 March 2019	Changes to moderation procedures as recommended by the AB
3.2	Dean	5 June 2019	Inclusion of External Moderator role and tasks as recommended by the AB
4.0	Academic Board	4 March 2020	Change of timing of Annual Validation and Moderation Report, because of the time delay in marking, assessing and moderating marks from term 4 with the Christmas and New Year shutdown period. Added the normal use of the Peer Review Portal in conducting validation reviews and moderation.
4.1	Dean	4 August 2020	Clarifying selection and number of assessments to be submitted for external moderation.

Document owner: Dean

Appendix 1: Moderation Report (template)⁷

A Moderation Report is completed by the External Moderator on the marking of assessments for selected subjects to ensure that:

- Educators are making consistent judgments that are fair, valid and reliable
- Assessment marking criteria are applied consistently
- The standards of assessment marking are consistent and reflect best practice
- Any differences in academic judgement are acknowledged and addressed

Report Information (to be completed by Course Coordinator)

External Moderator name:	[insert name of moderator]
Moderation Report for:	[insert subject code and title]
Course title:	[insert the title of the course of study]
Term and Year of delivery:	[insert Term and Year of delivery]

Assessment Moderation Information (to be completed by Course Coordinator)

Assessments moderated	
Assessment 1	[insert title of Assessment 1 and weighting] Number of assessments moderated: Date completed:
Assessment 2	[insert title of Assessment 2 and weighting] Number of assessments moderated: Date completed:
Assessment 3	[insert title of Assessment 3 and weighting] Number of assessments moderated: Date completed:

Moderation Report Outcomes (to be completed by Dean or Nominee)

Moderation Outcomes		Comments
Assessment 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfactory	
Assessment 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfactory	
Assessment 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfactory	
Name	[Dean or Nominee]	
Signature		
Date		

⁷ This template would be uploaded to the PRP when it is used.

Assessment Moderation Report (to be completed by External Moderator)

ASSESSMENT 1	<i>[insert assessment title and weighting]</i>				
Assessments moderated	<i>[total number of assessments moderated]</i>				
Number of papers graded within ranges:	F: <50	P: 50-64	C: 65-74	D: 75-84	HD: >85
Moderation Outcomes					
Are you satisfied that marking and grading judgements are fair, valid and reliable?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the assessment marking criteria have been applied consistently?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the standards of assessment marking reflect best practice?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments and/or Recommendations					
Date completed					
Moderator signature					

ASSESSMENT 2	<i>[insert assessment title and weighting]</i>				
Assessments moderated	<i>[total number of assessments moderated]</i>				
Insert number of papers graded within ranges:	F: <50	P: 50-64	C: 65-74	D: 75-84	HD: >85
Moderation Outcomes					
Are you satisfied that marking and grading judgements are fair, valid and reliable?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the assessment marking criteria have been applied consistently?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the standards of assessment marking reflect best practice?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments and/or Recommendations					
Date completed					
Moderator signature					

ASSESSMENT 3	<i>[insert assessment title and weighting]</i>				
Assessments moderated	<i>[total number of assessments moderated]</i>				
Insert number of papers graded within ranges:	F: <50	P: 50-64	C: 65-74	D: 75-84	HD: >85
Moderation Outcomes					
Are you satisfied that marking and grading judgements are fair, valid and reliable?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the assessment marking criteria have been applied consistently?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the standards of assessment marking reflect best practice?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments and/or Recommendations					
Date completed					
Moderator signature					

ASSESSMENT 4	<i>[insert assessment title and weighting]</i>				
Assessments moderated	<i>[total number of assessments moderated]</i>				
Insert number of papers graded within ranges:	F: <50	P: 50-64	C: 65-74	D: 75-84	HD: >85
Moderation Outcomes					
Are you satisfied that marking and grading judgements are fair, valid and reliable?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the assessment marking criteria have been applied consistently?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you satisfied that the standards of assessment marking reflect best practice?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments and/or Recommendations					
Date completed					
Moderator signature					

Appendix 2: Validation and Moderation Flowchart

