

Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

Effective moderation of assessment is fundamental to the ongoing development of academic quality. Moderation is undertaken to enable a reasonable level of assurance that assessment activities have been designed and implemented appropriately so that students and staff can be confident that the results provided are fair, valid and reliable.

Study Group Australia Pty Ltd (SGA) is committed to the processes of assessment moderation at the systemic and individual levels.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to student assessment in Foundation¹, ELICOS or Higher Education course delivered and awarded by a SGA College listed in the footer of this document and is for use by students and staff of these colleges.

This policy and procedure outlines the principles of assessment and in this context has also been designed for use by teachers engaged in the processes of curriculum development and quality review, the development and review of assessment and in marking, moderation and feedback processes.

3. Definitions

Within this document the following meanings apply:

- **Academic Director** means the lead senior academic staff member for the College (or their delegate, e.g. Course Coordinator/Head of Program). May also be referred to as Director Academic Programs, Dean, Program(s) Manager or College program lead.
- **Assessment** is the process of gathering a range of evidence about students' learning and performance that enables judgements to be formed as to whether a student has achieved the specified level of knowledge, skill and/or proficiency of application and/or performance in relation to the learning outcomes appropriate for the level of the course in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and as specified:
 - in the case of higher education courses, for the accredited learning outcomes for the unit of study and course set out in the course materials and unit learning outlines;
 - in the case of ELICOS and Foundation courses, in the expected learning outcomes for the course and subjects set out in the course and subject syllabus.
- **Head of College** means the most senior staff member for the College (or their delegate). May also be referred to as Centre Director, Principal, or Campus Director.
- **Moderation** is the review of assessment grading to ensure consistency in grading.
- **Unit** means a unit of study in a higher education course or a unit or subject in a ELICOS or Foundation course.

4. Purpose

The fundamental purpose of moderation is to promote quality and ensure consistency.

Five foci are specified to address this purpose:

- a. Ensure courses and units meet AQF standards
- b. Courses and units are comparable with other higher education providers
- c. Courses and units meet the standards of external accreditation authorities
- d. The currency of professional academic standards is maintained
- e. SGA's commitment to quality and standards is communicated externally

5. Policy Principles

Within the context described above, moderation can be viewed as a set of tasks and actions undertaken internally and externally. To guide the tasks and actions, the following principles and responsibilities have been developed to facilitate effective moderation:

- Procedures for assessment are explicit, fair, valid and reliable and these procedures are made public to all stakeholders
- Assessment tasks reflect the learning outcomes and performance criteria as stated in the unit outline
- Students are made aware of assessment requirements in the first week of trimester
- All assessment tasks are graded against a marking scheme (rubric) that is consistent with the assessment criteria
- SGA maintains transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and moderating grades
- Moderation processes are evaluated periodically.

5.1 Moderation Levels

5.1.1 Moderation at the Systemic level

Moderation processes at the systemic level can be undertaken externally and internally:

External moderation includes, but is not limited to:

- Course accreditation through TEQSA and resultant outcomes
- Moderation partnerships with other higher education providers
- Benchmarking processes with industry and other education bodies
- Employer/university satisfaction feedback

Examples of Internal moderation include, but are not limited to:

- Use of expert advisory panels in course development
- Oversight from the Academic Board of SGA's academic quality processes
- Formalisation of committees (e.g. Teaching and Learning Committee) to assess internal academic processes
- The use of checking processes to moderate the grading of assessment tasks

5.1.2 Moderation at the individual level

Individual teaching staff are required to be actively engaged in ongoing moderation processes, for example:

- Active engagement in scholarship
- Demonstrated commitment to academic standards
- Liaison with academic peers

5.2 Scholarship and Professional Development

The maintenance of assessment standards is a core value of academic work. Further, maintaining the currency of assessment processes and tasks complements this value. Accordingly, it is expected of academic staff to adopt processes to ensure that the setting of assignments and their grading is consistent with the expectations and standards of their discipline.

To assist in maintaining assessment standards, academic staff are encouraged to undertake external moderation procedures to ensure standards are consistent with those expected across the relevant higher education discipline. Specifically, external moderation through collaborative cross-making with assessors from university partners serves to aid academic staff in monitoring the standards they using to assess student work.

It is expected that external moderation procedures are:

- undertaken in a systematic manner
- conducted in conjunction with appropriate discipline-specific academic staff

recorded and results reported to the responsible senior academic staff member and/or academic committee as appropriate.

5.3 Responsibilities

The following responsibilities underpin moderation processes at SGA:

5.3.1 Academic Directors (or equivalent most senior academic leader for the program)[^]

The most senior academic staff member for the program¹ (or delegate) is responsible for the overall consistency of assessment throughout the course. Consistency of assessment is reviewed as part of the normal quality assurance monitoring process. The senior academic leader will liaise with academic teaching staff to provide opportunities for staff to discuss aspects of assessment design, timing, consistency and implementation.

This senior academic leader will report on a range of quality metrics and on any issues that may arise through the marking and moderation process to the relevant academic committee of the College and course (e.g. the Teaching and Learning Committee and SGA Academic Board for higher education courses).

[^]Note: May also be referred to as Director Academic Programs, Dean, or Program(s) Manager, or College program lead.

5.3.2 Unit Coordinators (or equivalent)

Unit coordinators (or their delegate) are responsible for the alignment of their unit and the coherence of the assessment tasks included within it. If there are multiple teachers/markers in the unit, Unit Coordinators convene unit meetings to discuss similar curriculum and assessment issues as above, in relation to the unit.

5.3.3 Course Advisory Committees (for higher education courses only)

The course advisory committee for each higher education course is responsible for the review of all unit outlines on a three-year cycle to ensure, *inter alia*, that assessment tasks, grading and other related assessment information is appropriate.

5.3.4 Assessment Subcommittee (for higher education courses only)

The assessment subcommittee is responsible for reviewing all unit grades on a trimester basis to ensure compliance with the SGA Assessment Policy.

5.3.5 Teaching and Learning Committee (for higher education courses only)

The Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for reviewing the distribution of grades on a trimester basis to ensure compliance with the SGA Assessment Policy.

5.4 Tasks and Actions

Within the broader responsibilities listed above, the following tasks and actions are used as moderation mechanisms.

5.4.1 Unit Outline Development

All unit outlines and assessment tasks are required to be checked by an academic peer. This includes checking and providing feedback in relation to the:

- alignment of assessment tasks with the unit's learning outcomes in relation to the level of study
- clarity of the task description
- criteria and standards by which the tasks will be marked
- clarity and usefulness of any accompanying assessment rubric

¹ [^]Note: May also be referred to as Director Academic Programs, Dean, Program(s) Manager, or College program lead.

- ways in which students will receive feedback
- guidance available for markers
- workload of the assessment tasks.

5.4.2 Review of assessment items prior to use

All exams and a range of non-exam assessment such as assignments, research projects, class presentations and tests are reviewed for issues of English expression, mark allocation, design and formatting as well as review of content of the exam against the learning outcomes of the unit.

This is achieved through:

- a second lecturer being appointed to review each exam and selected non exam assessment tasks
- external reviewer being engaged if internal lecturers are not available
- reviewer to produce a brief report, making recommendations as necessary
- Course Coordinator meeting with the lecturer and the reviewer to discuss and implement agreed changes.

5.4.3 Moderation by review of marking and grading

A key aspect of moderation is the review of a sample of students' marked work to determine whether the marking is consistent with the assessment criteria and undertaken at the appropriate standard.

Some examples of marking and grading review strategies are:

- blind marking of the papers or a sample of papers, i.e. the marker does not know the identity of the students whilst marking
- second-marking or sampling, by a different assessor, concentrating at the boundaries of grade classifications (i.e. pass/fail or distinction/high distinction etc.). There should be no indication of the first assessor's grades or comments. A reasonable sample would be 5% of the papers or 10 papers (whichever is the larger)
- marking by an assessor external to the unit, ideally by someone who has taught the unit before
- assign the same marker to certain questions in assignments or tests so all those questions are marked by the same assessor across different tutorial groups
- use computer aided marking (for example, machine readable multiple choice quiz sheets, on-line automated marking)
- use of the same marking criteria rubric by all assessors
- comparison with model answers for the question type
- pre-marking assessor comparability meetings to trial mark and set marking standards.

5.5 Moderation Plans

The most senior academic leader of the program¹ (or delegate) is responsible for the development of a moderation plan each trimester. The moderation plan will include tasks associated with one or more of the marking and grading review strategies listed above, with assigned responsibilities for completion of the tasks and dates and times for completion of the tasks. The activities of the moderation plan must occur in the period following the initial marking and recording of results at the end of each trimester and before the meeting of the assessment subcommittee to ratify the grades.

6. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed at a minimum of once every 5 years by the policy owner (or delegate) to ensure alignment to appropriate strategic direction and its continued relevance to current and planned operations. The next scheduled review of this document is listed in the document history section of this document.

7. Records

Records in association with this policy will be kept in accordance with SGA's Records Management Policy. Confidential documents related to the implementation of the policy will be maintained according to relevant privacy requirements.

8. Related Documents

SGA Student Privacy Policy, SGA Student Assessment Policy and Procedure, SGA Records Management Policy.

9. Related Regulations

This policy has been developed in line with requirements set out in the: Education Services for Overseas (ESOS) Act 2000 (and its amendments); National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (the National Code) which complements existing national quality assurance frameworks in education and training including the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards, the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) Standards 2018, the Foundation Standards (operating adjunct to the National Code), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and other Commonwealth and State legislation and regulatory frameworks and standards including the Privacy Act 1988.

Document Approval

Document ID	SGA Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure		
Policy Owner(s)	Heads of College and Academic Directors (or equivalent) - ANU College, Taylors College Sydney, Taylors College Perth, and Flinders International Study Centre, and Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance.		
Approved by	Head of International Study Centres - ANZ	Date Approved	3 September 2018
	Academic Board (West)	Date Approved	3 September 2018
		Date Commencing	15 September 2018

Document History

Commencing Date	Summary of Changes	Next Review Date
5 December 2012	v1 Initial approval. Then titled "Moderation Policy"	September 2014
18 September 2014	v4 Approval by Academic Board	September 2019
15 September 2018	v5 Review and amendment to maintain regulatory and business currency	September 2023

ⁱ References to Foundation courses herein apply only to Foundation courses delivered and awarded by SGA's Taylors College (Perth campus) and Flinders International Student Centre (CRICOS Provider Code 01682E). They do not apply to the University of Sydney Foundation Program (CRICOS Course Code: 022310D) delivered by SGA's Taylors College (Sydney campus) on behalf of the University of Sydney (CRICOS Provider code 00026A).