

Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure HEPP35

PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to outline Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)'s position on the moderation of assessment. The policy ensures that assessment practices are consistent, equitable, transparent, and aligned with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and relevant professional accreditation standards.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all academic staff of Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education), including the Academic Board and its standing committees in relation to assessment design, delivery, moderation, benchmarking, and review..

DEFINITIONS

Assessment Moderation	The cross-comparison of student assessment at an individual, class, organisational, and industry level. Moderation requires an 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.
Benchmarking	The process of comparing assessment practices, standards, and student outcomes internally across units/courses and externally with comparable higher education providers to support continuous improvement.
Generative AI	Artificial intelligence systems capable of producing text, images, or other content. In assessment, AI must be transparently declared by students and may be used in moderation processes for sampling and consistency checks, provided oversight is maintained by academic staff.
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. Moderation and benchmarking processes will be evidence-based, documented, and reviewed regularly to ensure that assessment practices continue to meet internal quality assurance requirements, external regulatory standards, and professional accreditation expectations where relevant.
4. Generative AI use in assessment and moderation will be managed under formalised guidelines, with students required to declare AI use in their submissions, and staff authorised to use AI in moderation activities with Academic Board oversight.

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 settings, 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, or within a timeframe approved by the Academic Board for specific units where justified. Feedback must be constructive, related to marking criteria, and supportive of improvement..

4. Key Aspects of Moderation

Moderation involves evaluating inputs such as:

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

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

- 4.8 Correction of student work;
- 4.9 Marking and assigning grades;
- 4.10 Communicating assessment results to students;
- 4.11 Benchmarking against other assessors and assessment tasks;
- 4.12 Feedback and review of assessment to students; and
- 4.13 Assessment tools such as criterion-based rubrics and other assessment evaluations.

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:

6. Moderation of Language of Assessment Tasks

- 6.1 The aim of moderating assessment inputs (such as assessment tasks, such as reports, presentations, or test items) before students are asked to undertake them, is to address any ambiguities in the questions. Language moderation must occur for each offering of the unit to ensure clarity and avoid ambiguity.

7. Validation of Suitability of Assessment to Unit

- 7.1 SCEI-HE's course design process involves communication and collaboration with 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 accreditation standards as defined in the higher education regulation. Validation of assessment suitability will occur during annual monitoring, and at unit/course reaccreditation

8. Moderation of Assessment Outputs

Board of Examiners (BOE) ensures the integrity, fairness, and consistency of assessment and grading, in line with HESF 5.3.2, 5.3.7, and 6.1.2.

- 8.1. BOE convenes at the end of each semester/delivery period.
- 8.2. The BOE reviews moderated results, confirms grades, and reports to the Academic Board (AB).
- 8.3. Meetings: Chaired by the Academic Director at the end of each semester/delivery period.
- 8.4. Membership: Academic Director (Chair), Course Coordinator, one lecturer, one QA representative, and one external academic as required. Membership must collectively demonstrate expertise, independence, and compliance with HESF standards.
- 8.5. Responsibilities:
 - Review moderation integrity and endorse grades.
 - Identify risks or anomalies in assessment outcomes.
 - Report confirmed results and moderation findings to AB.
- 8.6. BOE reports must document grade approvals, moderation outcomes, risks, and recommendations.
- 8.7. Reports are submitted to the Academic Board for institutional oversight.

9. 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's (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 at least two qualified assessors will independently review the work, with escalation to a third assessor where consensus is not achieved.

10. 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.

11. 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. Benchmarking will be conducted at least at a comprehensive course review, and findings will be mapped against course learning outcomes, graduate attributes, and professional accreditation standards where applicable.

12. Recommendations if Moderation Finds Problems in Assessment

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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'.
- 12.3 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. The Academic Director will oversee implementation of corrective actions, with outcomes tracked through the Quality Assurance Framework and reported to the Corporate Board where systemic risks are identified.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Assessment Policy and Procedure HEPP04
Quality Assurance Framework

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.
- Ensures that moderation outcomes and benchmarking reports are used to inform strategic decisions regarding academic quality, standards, and risk management, in alignment with the HESF 2021.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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