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POLICY OF MODERATION

Introduction

Assessment activities executed by different individuals must be consistently accurate and reliable, produce similar results, and be judged against the unit standard/specific outcomes of the unit standard which is being assessed. The scope of this document covers the above-mentioned as well as professional interaction between the moderators and assessors and address the continuous improvement of assessment activities. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that the moderation of assessments is carried out professionally to ensure quality processes.

Definitions

Assessor	A person that is able to conduct internal and external assessments for specific qualifications and/or part-qualifications ¹
Examiner	A person appointed to develop, administer and oversee a formal assessment ²
Moderator	A person, apart from the examiner, who is appointed by the institution to be responsible for ensuring the standard of the examination and its accompanying marking framework and response exemplars, and for marking a representative sample of examination responses.
Examination	A written, oral or practical assessment of learning, including supplementary examination and re-examination, continuous evaluation, and evaluation of experiential learning. ¹
Moderation	The process of ensuring that assessments were conducted in accordance with agreed practices that are fair, reliable and valid. ³

¹ National Qualification Authority. 2017. Standard Glossary of Terms. Available at: <https://hr.saqa.co.za/glossary/pdf/NQFPedia.pdf> ² SAQA. 2001. Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered standards and qualifications. Available from: <https://cdn.lgseta.co.za/resources/guidelines/2.4.1%20SAQA%20Criteria%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Assessment.pdf>

³ Council on Higher Education. 2004. Criteria for Programme Accreditation. Available at: http://nr-online.che.ac.za/html_documents/CHE_accreditation_criteria_Nov2004.pdf

⁴ UGC Handbook of Evaluation Reforms in Higher Educational Institutions /7. Moderation/page no 41

Roles and responsibilities

The moderator's role is to ensure consistency. The provider is responsible for the management of the moderation process. A generic standard regarding the moderation of assessment is detailed in this document. One (1) moderator, based on expertise, usually checks the work of several assessors.

Roles and responsibilities related to the assessment and examination process are described in Policy

Moderation processes

Internal and External moderators:

The examination papers and projects of all exit level modules, terminal modules and projects must be externally moderated. Internal MGP staff members will be used as internal moderators for all modules not linked to exit level outcomes. External moderators must possess subject matter expertise and experience. All external moderators must hold a qualification at least at the level of or higher than the qualification they moderate and must be experienced in higher education. The Head of School is responsible for contracting external moderators. A nominal fee will be paid to the external moderator. The external moderator must submit a report on their findings to MGP after completing moderation. External moderators must be subject to performance reviews and be rotated in a three-year cycle.

All requirements for assessment and moderation will align to the rules, legislation and specifications as stipulated by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the regulatory council, where applicable.

External moderators:

The external moderator's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate to the programme to be examined. Both the level and the subject of the moderator's qualifications should generally be at least at the level of or higher than the programme/qualification/module under moderation.

The external moderators should have appropriate standing, expertise and experience to maintain comparability of standards and may be indicated by:

1. The present (or last, if retired) post and place of work.
2. The range and scope of experience across higher education/professions; and
3. Current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the relevant field of study.

An external moderator should have enough recent external examining or comparable related experience to indicate competence to assess students in the relevant subject. If the proposed moderator has no previous experience at the appropriate level, the application should be supported by either:

1. Other moderation experience.
2. Extensive internal moderation experience.
3. Other relevant and recent experience likely to support the moderator role.

Moderators must be selected from a wide variety of professional contexts and traditions to the benefit of the Programme with wide-ranging external scrutiny.

Conditions for External Moderators:

1. External moderators should not be over-extended by their external examining duties.
2. The external moderator should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two other substantial undergraduate moderator appointments.
3. External moderators should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with MGP that might compromise objectivity.
4. Over the last five years the proposed external moderator should not have been:
 - a. A member of staff, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff who is involved with the Programme.
 - b. An examiner of the Programme in MGP.
5. The proposed external moderator should not be:
 - a. Personally associated with the sponsorship of students.
 - b. Required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme.
 - c. In a position to significantly influence the future employment of students on the programme.
 - d. Involved in teaching or delivery of seminars or lectures.
 - e. Likely to be involved with student placements or training in the moderator's organisation.

Proposed moderators without prior experience should, where possible, join an experienced team of external moderators or, where there is only one external moderator, work initially alongside them, possibly on a related Programme. This initial period should include involvement in the final stages of assessment for the qualification.

Conditions for Moderator Teams:

1. There should not be more than one moderator from the same institution in the team of external moderators, except in a complex Programme, involving a very large number of discrete subject areas.
2. There should be an appropriate balance of expertise in the team of external moderators.
3. The proposed external moderator should complement the external moderation team in terms of expertise and moderation experience.
4. There should be an appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners, where possible.
5. A range of academic perspectives relevant to the Programme should be represented in the external moderating team.
6. Where the Programme is associated with or may lead to a professional qualification, there should be at least one practitioner with appropriate experience in the team.
7. There should be sufficient and wide ranging external moderating experience in the team as a whole to ensure a consistent standard is maintained across subjects.

All external moderators are usually appointed in each examination period.

External moderators have the right to adjust marks and must approve the final marks list for the qualification concerned. They must also comment on:

1. The validity of the assessment instruments in relation to the specified learning outcomes.
2. The quality of student performance and the standard of student attainment across the spectrum of results in relation to the learning outcomes.

3. The reliability of the marking process.
4. Performance against national standards.
5. The quality of feedback given to students.

MGP must provide the external moderator with the following to enable the moderation function:

1. Programme structure and credit allocation.

2. Course outline.
3. Exit level outcomes.
4. Final examination paper and memoranda.
5. Supplementary exam paper and memoranda.
6. Profile of all students registered for the module.
7. A contract.
8. Any external moderator reports.

The external moderator is expected to mark 20% of the scripts and randomly check 20% of the scripts.

The following procedures apply:

1. At minimum 20% of the scripts must be moderated (internally and externally), with a minimum of 5 and maximum of 20. Where these are less than 20 scripts in total, all must be moderated.
2. It is advised that the scripts in the 35%-50% and 75%-85% mark range be moderated. All moderation must be marked in green only. The moderator must sign the script after moderation is completed and inform the assessor of any corrections by completing the moderator's part of the assessment report.
3. In the case of external moderation, reports from the external moderators must be returned to the Head of School. Where problems are raised, these are discussed with the lecturer/ assessor concerned, and Head of School ensures that agreed improvements are affected.

Student Access to Assessment Feedback

Good feedback on assessed work tells the student the following:

1. What are the good or essential features of the assessed work,

2. What are the poor or less successful features of the assessed work,
- and 3. How the student can improve in this piece of work.

All items of assessment completed by a student should be marked promptly and returned to the student with feedback and the mark obtained.

Feedback may include discussion, written comments on work, and lists of common mistakes. In providing feedback, the assessor must anticipate and expect student success.

Finalisation of Marks

For the full Assessment and Examination Policy and Process please refer to Policy [Assessment of learning and Policy Examination](#).

All examination marks will be reviewed, vetted and approved for final release at an Academic Committee Meeting.

The final mark for exit level modules and qualifications must be signed off by the external moderator.

The Academic Committee must be certain that the Registrar has done all necessary Quality checks on the reliability and security of the results.

The following procedures could be used for adjustments of final examination marks:

1. Academic Quality will not be compromised in any form or manner. All mark adjustments must be approved by the relevant Head of School and approved by the Academic Committee.
2. The Academic Committee should maintain strict and detailed records of adjustments made motivations provided. A note indicating that adjustments were made must accompany the schedule submitted to the Registrar. Detailed records of adjustments will be sampled and checked by the Assessment Sub-Committee before ratification of the Final Results.
3. Discourage others from plagiarising by observing the practices above in accordance with the institutional Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism as a Form of Misconduct

For the Plagiarism Policy and Process please refer to [Policy Student Plagiarism](#).

In the case of suspected plagiarism, the student will receive feedback and offered an opportunity to resubmit. Should the student's resubmission be suspected of plagiarism, the Study Administration and Engagement Unit will report the incident firstly to the Head of School and the Registrar. The Registrar will lead a formal investigation into the matter, where after the student must attend a hearing.

In the case of proven misconduct, the following penalties are available:

1. Reduction or cancellation of the mark for the assessment.
2. Requirement to do further work or repeat work in relation to which misconduct occurred.
3. Refusal or cancellation of credit for the course.
4. Suspension or expulsion

To ensure the security of its processes the Registrar conducts its operations as follows:

1. Meetings with the staff body to discuss the examination protocol in terms of setting of examination papers.
2. The papers are set in chronological order and stored in a secure repository. Please refer policy on the storage of student results in alignment with the Protection of Personal Information Act.
3. The appointed examiners will be responsible to type question papers.
4. Examiners may do their work on personal computers not linked to an external network and all their work should be done in a restricted area.
5. The source documents should be filed with assessment/examinations.

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis.

The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and MGP's community via the website and other publications.

Moderation

Moderation of assessment is an organized procedure which ensures use of valid assessment material and consistent application of criteria, to provide fair academic judgment and reliable outcome in the form of marks or grades. It assures appropriate designing and implementation of assessment activities along with generation of valid and reliable results.

Integration of moderation process with assessment system is imperative for the development of academic quality in higher educational institutions as :

- It addresses any difference in individual judgments of different evaluators.
- It ensures that all achievements in the form of marks and grades across courses reflect achievement of same level of standard.
- It is also carried out to develop a common understanding of the standards and criteria and to recognize performance which demonstrates that standard or fulfils that criteria.

Moderation may be conducted in case there are large number of fail grades or high grades, or when large numbers of students who have received the same grade or clustering of students on letter grades, or when there are discrepancies between grades allocated to individual students in different courses, or to find out the difficulty level of the question paper or whether the assessments modes used cover the entire syllabus or not.

Applicability - Moderation should be made applicable to both external and internal modes of assessment. All programs and courses should indicate, as part of their statements on assessment, arrangements for the moderation of assessed work. This can be done through formulation of a moderation policy and implemented across all programs and courses of instruction and delivery, i.e. even those programs delivered *via* distance or online mode. The time frame for the moderation should be linked with the time frame for assessment.

In the event a moderation is triggered, an evaluation should begin with a discussion on the following (though not exhaustive) lines:

- a. What are the rubrics used for each of the different types of assessment in the course? Is a standardized/ prescribed rubric used or has the instructor developed his/ her own rubric. If the instructor is using a personally framed rubric, or if there is no identified rubric, then how does the assessment map to learning outcomes?
- b. The difficulty level of the questions included in the assessments, i.e., is the difficulty level on the extremes, very easy or very hard.
- c. The manner of awarding marks, i.e., has the correction been at the extremes, liberal or tough.

Each department should establish a committee and designate roles and responsibilities at different levels for smooth working of the moderation process. In order to maintain neutrality, it should be ensured that moderator should not be the assessor. Staff members should be trained professionally in assessment techniques and moderation procedures. All assessment material produced by learner including examination sheets, assignments, project reports, research reports etc. should be examined.

Higher educational institutions should be encouraged to make the moderation process online. In this system, assessment plans, moderation plans, assessment tools, samples of which may be submitted online. Moderation reports should be generated online so that progress can be tracked.

The moderation should not be restricted to just assessment but also include moderation of content and assessment design.