

Draft For Consultation June 2007

Good Practice Guidelines for the Moderation of Standards Based Assessment

1 Introduction

NZQA is committed to identifying and promoting good moderation practice in relation to National Qualifications Framework assessment.

We encourage all assessors and accredited organisations to use this document as a resource and reference.

Context

The *National Qualifications Framework Moderation Policy*¹ requires all standards registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to be supported by moderation systems, and expects moderation to be consistent with and supportive of National Qualifications Framework principles².

The relevant quality assurance standards³ require accredited organisations to internally moderate their assessment materials and assessor decisions, and comply with national external moderation requirements of the relevant standard setting bodies.

Purpose of moderation

The purpose of moderation is to achieve valid and consistent assessment.

Its aim is to ensure that:

- assessments are fair, valid and at the national standard.
- assessors make consistent judgements about candidate performance.

Effective moderation occurs when the outcome is an accurate decision about the validity of the assessment.

Moderation also provides for professional interaction and upskilling that will improve all learning and teaching.

*Moderation systems*⁴

A moderation system is a coherent set of processes designed to assure confidence in assessment design and assessor decisions.

National external moderation is the responsibility of the standard setting body, eg an Industry Training Organisation or NZQA. It aims to ensure that there is consistent assessment to the required national standard among all accredited organisations. It may also inform national standards setting processes.

¹ The current NZQA Board policy statement on National Qualifications Framework Moderation can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/resources/index.html>.

² The National Qualifications Framework principles are: flexibility, accessibility, partnership and quality.

³ Refer to Quality Assurance Standard for PTEs, GTEs and Wānanga (QA Standard One), Quality Assurance Standard for ITOs, Quality Assurance Standard for Secondary Schools, and Academic Quality Standard Nine for ITPs.

⁴ See also *Learning and Assessment – A Guide to Assessment for the National Qualifications Framework*, NZQA, 2001, ISBN 0-90892751-7. It can be found on the NZQA website at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/resources/index.html>.

Internal moderation is the responsibility of individual accredited organisations.

It aims to ensure the organisation is making internally consistent assessment decisions, eg among assessors within and across campuses, sites or workplaces

- enables organisations to manage and enhance the quality of assessment practices against unit or achievement standards.

Accredited organisations are often required to comply with multiple national external moderation systems.

Pre-assessment moderation (moderation of assessment materials) occurs before the assessment event and is used to check the fairness and validity of the assessment material.

Post-assessment moderation (verification of assessor decisions) occurs after the assessment event and is used to check consistency of assessor decisions.

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2 Good Practice Guidelines

What is the purpose of the Guidelines?

This *Good Practice Guidelines for the Moderation of Standards Based Assessment* document is intended primarily for people involved in the development and operation of moderation systems. It provides guidance for the development and review of effective and efficient moderation systems, and is equally relevant to:

- the secondary and tertiary education sectors
- all types of education organisations
- internal and national external moderation
- pre-assessment and post-assessment moderation.

What activities contribute towards a useful moderation outcome?

The following activities contribute towards a useful moderation outcome:

- **Selecting**
- **Checking**
- **Recording and Reporting (Feedback)**

Selecting

Moderation is normally carried out on a selected sample of assessments; moderation of all assessment is not usually practicable, necessary, affordable or manageable.

- Sampling can enable the effective use of resources available for moderation.
- A defined approach (plan) to selection is required. The approach will take account of, and be consistent with, assessment cycles, and cover the size of the sampling, the sample selection criteria and the method of moderation.
- The size of the sample and selection criteria should ensure that the selected sample is sufficiently representative of all the assessed standards for the moderation 'cycle'.
- The selection of standards may be based on techniques such as: high risk or high use areas, higher level standards, standards not previously assessed, known problem areas, poor previous moderation results, new standards or standards included in new qualifications include random selection or may be random.
- Selection of a suitable method of moderation (eg postal, kahui/meetings, kanohi ki te kanohi/face-to-face interaction, visit) will facilitate effective moderation. A moderation method that is suitable for some standards or organisations may not be suitable for others. The method selected should be supportive of all (including new and creative) types of assessment.
- Provided that the standards selected for moderation are sufficiently representative of all the assessed standards, the moderation results will allow conclusions to be drawn about all assessments.
- The nature and size of the sample may change annually resulting from a review of the moderation system and/or a change in the focus of moderation activities.

Checking

- Checking⁵ determines whether the requirements specified in the standard have been fairly, validly and consistently assessed⁶.
- Checking may consider the programme design, including how the standards are integrated within the programme.
- Accurate checking depends on:
 - the quality and completeness of the evidence provided for moderation
 - the skill and expertise of the ‘moderator’
 - the use of a suitable method of moderation
 - the precision of the interpretation of the standard.
- The outcome of the checking/evaluation process allows for the validation, or not, of the assessment design and of the assessor decisions.

Recording and Reporting (Feedback)

- The outcome of the ‘check/evaluation’ must be documented. Bona fide moderation cannot be said to occur if it is, for example, merely a conversation about intent, an anecdotal reporting of outcomes, or a general discussion about standards.
- The result of the ‘check’ should be recorded and reported to all participants in the moderation process. Timeliness is of essence; the closer the feedback is to the assessment event, the more likely it is to have a greater impact.
- Where the outcome of the ‘check’ is validation of the assessments, the report provides reassurance that the assessor decisions are at the required national standard and were made on the basis of assessments that were fair and valid. This also confirms good assessment practice.
- Where the outcome of the ‘check’ does not validate the assessment materials and/or assessor judgements, the record and feedback should identify the improvements required to ensure that assessment materials and future assessor decisions meet the requirements of the assessed standard, enabling appropriate follow-up action to be taken.

Note: Issues relating to the quality of the standard (eg the need for review of the standard) should be separately reported to the standard setting body.

How can the outcomes of moderation be used?

- Moderation outcomes can be used for a variety of purposes. Outcomes can:
 - provide reassurance to the learner/organisation/ stakeholders
 - provide opportunities for professional discussion on assessment, as an integral part of the teaching and learning process
 - guide the continuous improvement of assessor and moderator performance, assessment design and assessment processes; On-going professional development is essential to good practice moderation.

⁵ The checking process considers firstly whether the assessment design:

- provides the candidate with a fair and valid opportunity to meet the requirements of the standard
- clearly shows the evidence the candidate is expected to provide
- clearly shows the basis on which assessment decisions are to be made.

Checking will secondly determine whether the assessor decisions about the learner evidence establish with confidence that all requirements have been considered, and that learner performance meet the requirements of the standard and could be repeated with consistency.

⁶ Refer to *Best Practice Principles for the Assessment of Unit Standards* which can be found on the NZQA website at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/resources/bestpract-us.html>.

- reflect the calibration of the national standard
- identify areas for improvement in the quality of the standards
- ensure compliance with internal and external quality assurance requirements
- guide the continuous improvement of the moderation system
- provide evidence for follow-up action to be taken where it is appropriate.

A moderation system will reflect the priority an organisation has assigned to the above purposes, some of which are regulatory requirements.

What concepts underpin an effective and efficient moderation system?

Application of the following concepts underpin an effective and efficient moderation system that supports good practice moderation:

- **Systematic processes**
- **Appropriate relationships and partnerships**
- **Meaningful feedback**

Systematic Processes

- Processes should be articulated and implemented for:
 - selection and training of moderators
 - ongoing calibration of moderators' decisions
 - documentation requirements for moderation reporting
 - appeals against moderation decisions
 - follow-up requirements, when non-validation of assessment has occurred.
- Regular (minimally annually) monitoring of the moderation system will ensure that the system is operating as intended. Regular monitoring will identify issues and enable appropriate follow-up action to be taken. Ongoing monitoring should focus on areas such as:
 - moderation results
 - moderation over- or under-expenditure
 - engagement with the moderation system
 - consistency between moderators and between assessors
 - resource availability (capacity)
 - specialist knowledge requirements (capability).
- Regular review of the moderation system will enable identification of improvement opportunities and/or to ensure it remains effective. The review should include considerations such as:
 - the effectiveness and efficiency of the moderation system
 - the skills and knowledge of the personnel involved in the moderation system, and identification of professional development requirements
 - moderation policies, processes, and practices
 - the appropriateness of the moderation model, moderation method(s), selection plan and the selection criteria
 - how moderation outcomes⁷ are used, as they may provide an indication of areas in need of further investigation or improvement
 - regular external audit of the moderation system to provide confidence that the system has been reviewed objectively.

⁷ Moderation outcomes are not necessarily an accurate indicator as to the effectiveness of the moderation system. Poor moderation outcomes do not necessarily indicate that the moderation system is ineffective or in need of improvement, while good moderation outcomes are not necessarily a reliable indicator of effective moderation.

Appropriate Relationships and Partnerships

- Effective moderation systems will create and manage relationships and partnerships to ensure that:
 - judgements regarding assessment materials and assessor decisions are made objectively
 - mutual trust is encouraged between all participants in the moderation process
 - the relevant skills, experience and understanding of all participants within the moderation system are taken into consideration.
- A moderation system should have mechanisms in place to:
 - foster shared understandings of the moderation system between all participants
 - promote shared understandings of assessment requirements
 - protect intellectual property rights
 - protect the participants in the process from undue influence or pressure with regard to forming judgements
 - ensure respectful consideration for professional judgement
 - foster effective feedback on the moderation outcomes
 - provide for resolution of disagreements with moderation decisions
 - assure learners and other users of the standards that assessment decisions and moderation judgements have been formed objectively and fairly.

Meaningful Feedback

- The reporting of moderation outcomes should be:
 - timely – enabling modifications to occur before the next assessment cycle
 - accurate – correct in all details
 - fair – avoiding influences unrelated to the matters being assessed
 - detailed – providing information that is sufficient and which clearly indicates the reasons why the assessment design and/or the assessor decisions do not meet the requirements of the assessed standard
 - constructive – providing information that assists with improvements to assessment materials and/or assessment processes
 - transparent – providing information that allows input into the relevant appeals process.