



## **2008 External Audit Summary Moderation of Low Volume Papers for the New Zealand Diploma in Business**

### **Introduction**

The New Zealand Diploma in Business (NZDipBus) has a system for moderating low volume papers. Low volume papers are those offered by only a few Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) or for which there are a small number of results reported. They include papers that are locally endorsed for a particular TEO by the National Advisory Committee for Business Studies and approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for Unspecified Credit for NZDipBus. A list of papers that are classified as low volume is available on the NZQA website at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/tertqual/dipbus/moderation.html>.

The low volume moderation process was implemented in 1998. It was reviewed in 2005 and some minor changes were made, although the changes did not significantly affect the operation of the system.

The low volume moderation process requires TEOs to moderate each low volume paper they offer every semester in which the paper is offered. Papers must be subject to pre-assessment moderation (checking the assessment task and the marking schedule) and post-assessment moderation (verifying marking of student work). Papers may be moderated internally or externally to the TEO, but with the requirement that every third teaching cycle or within a period of three years, whichever comes first, a paper must be moderated externally.

The low volume process also contains provision for TEOs to be audited. This report summarises the 2008 audit, which was conducted under this provision.

Audits were previously conducted in 2001, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

### **Purposes of the audit**

The purposes of the audit are:

- to verify that TEOs have an internal moderation system in place for low volume papers
- to determine if the system is operating in an effective manner.

### **Audit process**

All TEOs submitting results to NZQA for low volume papers in 2007 were identified. For each of the 22 TEOs identified, a maximum of three low volume papers were selected for the audit.

The papers were selected on the basis of one or more of the following:

- results were submitted as Unspecified Credit
- of the low volume papers for which results were submitted, the paper(s) selected had the largest number of results
- the paper was included in the 2007 audit but the audit results were either inconclusive or showed a level of non-compliance.

In a letter from NZQA dated 18 August 2008, all 22 TEOs were asked to submit moderation reports for each of the course assessments for 2007 for the selected papers. The deadline for submissions was 15 September 2008. Follow-up occurred where TEOs did not submit material by the due date.

As with the 2007 audit, each of the 22 TEOs was asked to complete an Audit Cover Sheet for each paper selected for audit. The purpose of the cover sheet is to provide information about the paper, the absence of which had hindered previous audits. The information provided is essential to the audit process and includes:

- if appropriate, a declaration that results submitted as Unspecified Credits were from credit transfer (in which case no moderation reports are required for the audit)
- the semesters in which a low volume paper had been offered in the years 2004 – 2007 inclusive, and whether moderation was undertaken internally or externally in each semester
- a list of the assessments for the paper as offered in 2007, the approximate date of each assessment and information related to the moderation process for each assessment.

The Appendix on page 6 provides a copy of the cover sheet.

### **Audit response**

- All TEOs who were required to submit returns did so.
- Some TEOs submitted material not relevant to the audit, such as course moderation/approval documentation or a sample of marked student work.
- Some TEOs did not complete the audit cover sheet as required – for example, the moderation reports submitted did not correspond with the assessments listed on the cover sheet, or the TEO authorisation section of the report was not completed.

## Audit findings

The following table gives a summary of the audit findings. Some TEOs did not meet requirements for more than one of the reasons listed below and have therefore been recorded more than once.

Finding	No of TEOs
Moderation processes meet requirements for all low volume papers audited	3
Requirements relating to internal moderation are met - low volume papers have not been offered for three semesters or three years so far and so there is no requirement for external moderation yet.	4
Moderation processes do not meet requirements of the low volume moderation process – external moderation requirements were not met or only partially met.	2
Moderation processes do not meet requirements of the low volume moderation process – no pre-assessment moderation was carried out.	4
Moderation processes do not meet requirements of the low volume moderation process – no post-assessment moderation was carried out.	7
Results for low volume papers or for an Unspecified Credit are from credit transfer only.	6

- All 16 TEOs offering low volume papers and who were required to submit moderation reports are undertaking moderation. However, nine of these TEOs are not meeting one or more of the moderation requirements for low volume papers, as shown in the table above.
- Moderation practice varies. As the table above shows, in some cases:
  - assessments and marking schedules were not moderated prior to assessment; as a consequence, any assessment design issues identified in moderation as being necessary could not have been addressed before materials were used
  - assessments and marking schedules were moderated prior to assessment but there was no post-assessment verification of marked work; as a consequence, assessor decisions would not have been verified as being appropriate or consistent
  - post-assessment moderation was carried out after the results would have been released to students; as a consequence, it would have been too late to correct any marking issues identified in the moderation.
- In most cases, moderation reports contained boxes which had been ticked but had no or few (usually brief and/or general) comments. This may be because the material moderated was of high quality. However, it also raises questions about how effective the moderation was, as it is unlikely that there were no matters that moderation could identify for improvement, especially across several assessments.

- The quality of moderation documentation varies. Most moderation reports include criteria for moderators to make judgements against, but some moderation reports were open with no criteria given. Administrative information was not always present or not always clear. In some cases, even though moderation reports made specific provision to give details such as dates moderation occurred, the information had not been entered. Some reports were not validated with a signature.

Recommendations for documenting internal moderation were included in the *2007 External Audit Summary* and in tertiary circular T2007/001 *New Zealand Diploma in Business – Administration 2008*.<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are repeated below:

Moderation reports should include provision for the following to be shown:

- the name of the TEO
- whether moderation is internal or external
- the name of the paper to which the assessment being moderated relates
- the name or some other clear identification of the assessment (e.g. "Assignment 1", "Final exam") being moderated
- the moderator's name and official position
- the moderator's signature
- the organisation from which the moderator comes (for external moderation)
- the date the moderation report was completed.

Without these details, it is difficult to identify at a later date what moderation activity a completed moderation report relates to. It also makes auditing and completing paper trails difficult.

It may also be useful for internal quality assurance if moderation reports contained provision to note the actions to be taken in response to matters raised in the report, and for the appropriate person to confirm that the actions have subsequently been taken.

- Moderation reports sometimes covered more than one assessment. While a moderator may moderate several assessments for a prescription at the same time, reporting on each assessment separately makes it easier for the moderator to ensure that comments specifically target assessment design issues and for the TEO to identify the particular material to which comments relate.
- Some TEOs had difficulties in obtaining appropriate external moderation services.

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<sup>1</sup> The circular is available on the NZQA website at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/publications/circulars/tertiary.do>

### **Concluding comments**

The *2007 External Audit Summary* suggested that TEOs should identify continuing opportunities to develop their moderation processes and moderators' expertise. The 2007 audit process also highlighted the need for NZQA to revise the *Procedures for the Moderation of Low Volume Papers* booklet to make more explicit moderation requirements for low volume papers and promote good practice for moderation reports.

Tertiary circular T2008/001 provided clarification of moderation requirements for low volume papers and good practice moderation recommendations. Revision of the booklet was deferred while NZQA reviews all NZDipBus national moderation processes, including the low volume paper moderation system. Sector feedback during the review, still in progress, has:

- noted the difficulty, for some low volume papers, of identifying appropriate specialists external to a TEO who can moderate assessment materials for those papers
- queried the purpose of the current low volume audit process, which audits TEO moderation practice rather than moderates assessment materials
- suggested that low volume papers should be brought under the same national external moderation system as high volume papers.

The outcome of the review may therefore affect the low volume paper moderation system, in the longer term if not for 2009. TEOs will be advised if there are any changes to the process for 2009.

**Cover Sheet for Submission of Materials for  
2008 External Audit of NZDipBus Low Volume Papers**

<b>Name of TEO</b>	
<b>Name and number of NZDipBus paper</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Were 2007 results the outcome of credit transfer?  **Yes**  **No**

If **Yes**, complete only the TEO Authorisation section below at the bottom of this page.  
If **No**, complete all following sections.

**Moderation history for this paper**

Year	Semester(s) paper was offered	Was moderation internal or external?
2004		
2005		
2006		
2007		

**Course assessment and moderation for the above paper delivered in 2007**

In the column "Nature of Moderation", enter one of the following:

- A if moderation for this assessment was carried out *prior to* assessment only
- B if moderation for this assessment was carried out *after* assessment only
- C if moderation for this assessment was carried out prior to assessment *and* after assessment.

Nature of assessment (eg major project, final examination)	Moderation report (use appropriate identifier, as shown on enclosed report(s))	Approximate date of assessment	Nature of moderation	Was moderation internal or external?	Name and organisation of external moderator (if appropriate)

**TEO authorisation**

Name of NZDipBus Liaison	
Signature of NZDipBus Liaison	
Date	
Name of Head of Department/School	
Official position	
Signature	
Date	