

What's Moderation?

This pamphlet explains moderation of achievements in college-based assessment:

- What is moderation?
- Why is moderation necessary?
- How is moderation carried out?
- How well does moderation work?
- Who does the work of moderation?

What is moderation?

Moderation is a set of processes designed and implemented by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies to:

- Provide system-wide comparability of grades and scores derived from college-based assessment;
- Form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary colleges;
- Maintain the quality of college-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (ACTBSSS) uses two methods to ensure that these goals are achieved:

- Qualitative moderation - Unit Grades from portfolios of student assessment are moderated by peer review against system criteria;

- Statistical moderation - Scores from student assessment within T courses are placed on the same scale using results from the ACT Scaling Test (AST).

This document focuses on the processes of qualitative moderation. Statistical moderation is dealt with other ACTBSSS publications including another pamphlets in this series - *What's the UAI?*

The board processes of moderation include:

- Establishment of system-wide assessment requirements, criteria and standards in Board Course Frameworks;
- Accreditation of colleges' programs of study (courses) from which students' result may be recorded on Board certificates;
- Validation of portfolios of student assessment responses (year 11 and 12) to establish standards and maintain comparability of assessment outcomes;
- Feedback to colleges about consensus-based grade decisions.

Qualitative moderation (review) involves teachers in and across colleges reaching consensus about students' unit grades through consultation, negotiation and reference to published criteria and standards. The moderation process takes place twice each year. In March, the student responses from the previous year's Year 12 cohort are reviewed. In August, the student responses from the first semester of Year 12 are reviewed. This means that Year 11 and 12 student work from the same cohort of students is reviewed twice.

Why is moderation necessary?

Moderation is necessary for producing valid, credible and publicly acceptable Board certificates in a college-based curriculum and assessment system. Colleges accommodate a diversity of students' needs. Local development of learning and assessment experiences to meet these needs is encouraged and supported by the Board. Moderation provides for comparability of standards across the 20 or so senior secondary colleges, each of which offers a curriculum of between about 50 and 150 accredited courses based on about 40 Course Frameworks.

The public, tertiary education sector and industry in the Australian Capital Territory expect a particular level of achievement in one college to have the same meaning as the same level achievement in the same subject area in every other college. Unit Grades and Unit Scores must be comparable, so that scores and the University Admission Index are meaningful and grades are valid for the system.

How is qualitative moderation (review) carried out?

Course frameworks are approved following writing by teachers, members of subject panels and officers of the Board Secretariat. Teachers develop courses based in approved Course Frameworks and submit the courses to subject panels for accreditation. Teachers provide learning and assessment experiences for students as outlined in the accredited course, and prepare presentation on moderation days by colleagues who advise colleges about the quality of the decisions on standards of student work

How well does qualitative moderation (review) work?

Studies conducted by education authorities responsible for senior secondary certification on the comparability of levels of achievement support the view that qualitative moderation processes work very well. For example, in Queensland, where college-based assessment has been moderated in this way for nearly two decades, levels of achievement in subjects across the state have been shown to be at least as comparable as result obtained in a system of statewide external exams. Qualitative moderation is carried out successfully in various forms in other Australian states.

Who does the work of qualitative moderation (review)?

Teachers from senior secondary colleges carry out qualitative moderation with designated Subject Group Leaders guiding the processes on the day. These leaders are generally recruited from Board panels.

Issues arising from moderation days are referred to Board Committees. The Assessment and Certification Committee informs and advises the Board about assessment and moderation issues. The Curriculum Advisory Committee monitors trends in curriculum development and informs and advises the Board about curriculum issues. Board subject panels provide advice about accreditation of college course documents and are closely involved in curriculum development and qualitative moderation processes. The Board's committee and the subject panels are supported by officers of the Board Secretariat.

Who is responsible for comparability?

System checks and balances help to maintain and monitor comparability of Unit Grades and Scores. The best form of

checking, though, begins and ends with students and their parents. Each college has responsibility for deciding Unit Grades and Scores. The Board provides guidelines for efficient, effective and accountable assessment procedures to establish and maintain standards and ensure consistency of decision-making.

More Information

Remember, your college is keen to help you. There are staff members who can explain and give advice on this brochure or any others in this series.

Other pamphlets in this series that are available from your college are:

What's the AST?

Explains the ACT Scaling Test and its role in your assessment program.

What's the UAI?

Explains the Universities Admission Index and details how it is calculated.

What Certificates could you obtain?

Explains all the different certificates you could be awarded at the end of year 12, and what's on them.

Your Rights to Appeal

A guide to what your rights are in appealing against results and procedures for determining your grades and scores.

Equitable Assessment and Special Consideration in Assessment in Years 11 and 12

Explains the rights of students with disabilities, including physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological or learning disabilities, and special needs.

Further information may be obtained at:

<http://www.bsss.act.gov.au>

Enquiries may also be directed to the:

Executive Officer
Board of Senior Secondary Studies
Po Box 1584
TUGGERANONG ACT 2900 AUSTRALIA

Phone (02) 62057181
Facsimile (02) 62057167

February 2003