

SECTION 6: MODERATION OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Moderation assists in comparability of school assessments and usually involves the verification of student work. Comparability occurs when the same result in the same learning program means the same thing across the State. Advice is also provided to schools about a broad range of assessment quality and equity issues.

The moderation process supports the development of a shared understanding between teachers about the standards, what is being assessed and how different assessment performances should be identified and described.

The Curriculum Council:

- provides feedback to schools and other providers on comparability of assessment
- accurately certifies student achievement
- provides student achievement data to TAFE Admissions and TISC.

Moderation processes:

- help teachers make comparable assessments (consensus moderation)
- validate or adjust assessments to improve comparability.

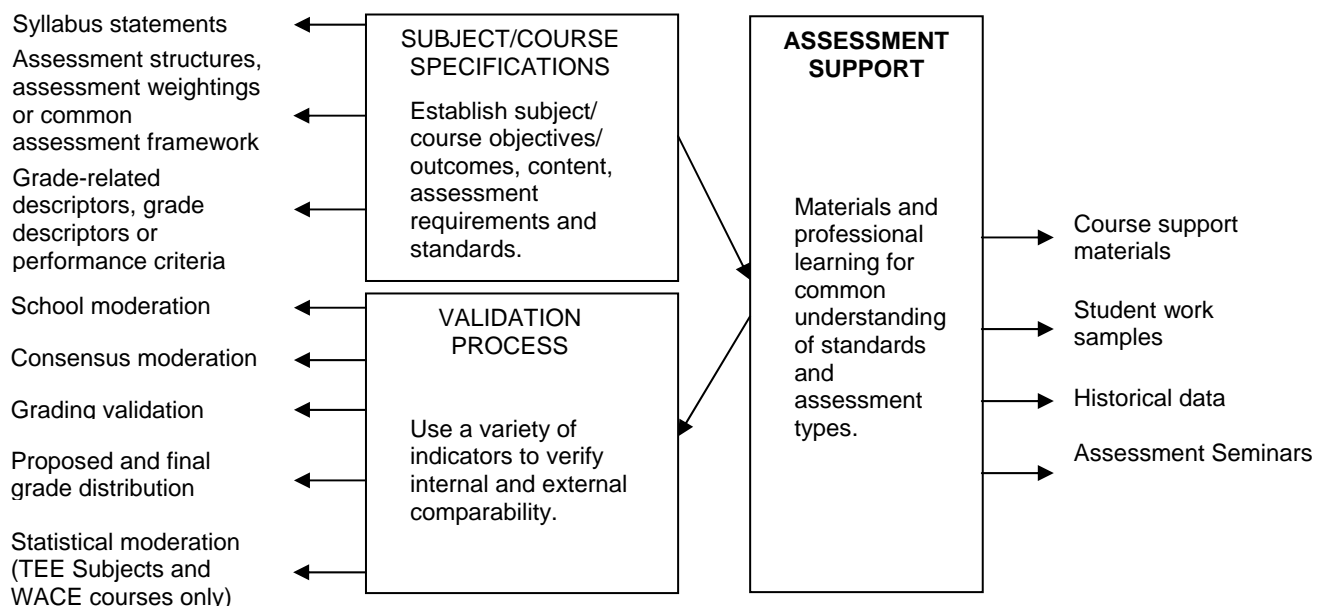
The outcomes of moderation are:

- fairness to students
- credibility of numerical assessments and grades as they may determine a student's prospects for further education or employment.

The Curriculum Council has established guidelines and procedures to assist schools to achieve comparability of assessments and grading.

Comparability in a standards system of assessment is assured if:

- the subject/course content is clearly specified in the subject/course syllabus
- the assessment outline is an integral part of all subjects/courses
- criteria for allocating a grade is stated in the syllabus in terms of required standards
- schools develop their structured educational program for the subject/course based on the syllabus
- school assessment programs reflect the assessment requirements defined in the syllabus
- school grading procedures are consistent with the standards approved by the Curriculum Council.



Assessment and moderation support

Assessment seminars

Assessment seminars provide an opportunity for teachers to share good practice in designing assessment outlines and tasks and marking student responses. They also support the development of common understandings about standards.

Half-day seminars are conducted in most learning areas for new or inexperienced teachers of TEE subjects.

In the first year of implementation of new courses, assessment seminars are full-day meetings. For courses in the second year of implementation, half-day seminars are held.

Assessment seminars are usually held in terms one and two. Attendance is highly recommended. Alternative arrangements (teleconferencing and video conferencing) will be offered for those non-metropolitan schools unable to send a representative.

Venues and times will be advertised in the new eCircular, the quarterly WACE Circular, correspondence to schools and on the Curriculum Council website at www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/Senior_Secondary/Teacher_Support/Assessment_Seminars/.

Schools are required to meet the cost of teachers' travel, accommodation and teacher replacement for assessment seminars.

Consensus moderation meetings

Consensus moderation meetings will **not** be held in TEE/WSA subjects during 2008.

Consensus moderation meetings for WACE courses focus on assessment standards, student work samples, school assessment programs and assessment tasks to:

- validate the implementation of good practice
- validate that comparability has been/will be achieved
- build common understandings that underpin comparability.

These meetings support the development of common understandings of grade descriptors through analysis of student work samples. They provide feedback on:

- the adequacy of evidence in students' course folios
- adjustments that may be required for schools' assessments to be comparable
- schools and teachers that may require further support to achieve comparability.

In the first year of implementation of a WACE course, consensus moderation meetings are typically full-day meetings of all schools in each consensus moderation group.

In the second year of implementation of a WACE course half-day meetings are held.

Schools will be allocated to consensus moderation groups and a Council moderator or a consensus moderation officer will be allocated to each group. The consensus moderation groups provide an opportunity for schools to collaborate in the development of teaching programs, assessment programs and tasks and the formation of small group moderation partnerships.

Attendance at consensus moderation meetings is compulsory for schools within 200km of the nearest venue. Alternative arrangements are made for schools outside that range.

Schools are required to meet the cost of teachers' travel, accommodation and replacement for consensus moderation meetings. School sector/systems advise member schools to reserve sufficient funds for these meetings.

Schools are required to inform the Council of the name and contact details of their school course representative. The designated school representatives will be sent the venue and meeting details.

School moderation visits and validations

Each year moderators and school moderation officers visit a sample of schools. Their role is to ensure that Curriculum Council requirements are understood, that approved procedures are implemented, and that Statewide comparability of standards is achieved.

School moderation visits are usually scheduled every three to four years. Additional visits may be scheduled if requested by the school principal or where documentation suggests an issue may exist.

Schools are advised well in advance of a planned Curriculum Council moderation visit.

In planning for a school moderation visit, teachers will be required to provide the following materials:

- a subject/course outline
- an assessment program which reflects the assessment requirements of the syllabus
- student assessment records (i.e. records of performance on assessment tasks)
- assessment tasks given before the visit and any others that may be available.

For a grading school moderation visit the following materials also need to be provided:

- a proposed grade distribution
- samples of student work grade cut-off points (i.e. the work of a few students just above and just below cut-off points)
- a rank list of students.

A checklist for school moderation visits is included in Appendix 9.

Principals will receive a written report following a moderation visit. A sample moderation report is included in Appendix 9.

In 2008, school moderation visits will concentrate on TEE and WSA subjects. A moderation visit in a WACE course will only occur if the school has requested a visit or in special circumstances.

Documentation validation and grading validation

For documentation validation and grading validation, schools will be asked to submit information to the Curriculum Council where it is reviewed and a report written. The moderator responsible for the subject/course will contact the teacher to discuss the report. The information and moderation report will be returned to the school.

Validations are used in situations such as:

- the moderator is planning to moderate only one subject/course at a school
- a school requests feedback on assessment and grading
- early follow-up to problems experienced on a previous visit
- country schools that are unable to send a representative to a consensus meeting.

Small group moderation

Because the numerical school assessment of TEE subjects and course units contributes to the TER (and admission to tertiary institutions), statistical moderation of school assessments is necessary to ensure fairness across all schools. In a group of 10 or less examination candidates, the anomalous performance of one or two students may unfairly affect the degree of moderation of the numerical school assessment of other students in that school's cohort. Correctly implemented small group moderation procedures minimise any distortion that may be unfair to students.

When enrolments in a particular Year 12 subject/course are less than 10 examination candidates, schools must become involved in small group moderation. When groups are between 10 and 15 it is advisable to consider small group moderation, to allow for possible reductions in enrolments that may result in less than 10 students sitting the Curriculum Council examination in a subject/course.

The small group moderation process provides schools with the opportunity to increase their group size and minimise potential statistical anomalies associated with moderating numerical school assessments.

It is the responsibility of the school with a small group in a final year subject/course to initiate the formation of the small group moderation partnership and to ensure it operates effectively.

Schools with small groups may form moderation partnerships with one or more schools of their own choosing. In new WACE courses, where possible, schools should form their small group moderation partnerships with a school/s in the same consensus moderation group. Schools are required to form their own partnerships as early in the school year as possible. However, it is recommended that partnerships are established at the end of the preceding year.

The Council requires schools to provide information about small group partnerships by the end of February each year. While it is the schools' responsibility to ensure that an effective partnership is formed, the Council may assist schools who are unable to find a partner school.

Effective partnerships

When two or more schools have formed a small group partnership for assessment and moderation, it is essential that all numerical school assessments for the partnership be on a single scale. The assessments of all schools in the partnership must be comparable so that the students can be treated as though they are from the same school. Similar assessments (grades and numerical school assessments) from different schools in a partnership must have the same value.

By the end of September each year, schools are required to advise the Council of the statistical moderation option for each subject/course. Principals will select one of the following moderation options:

- Option A I wish my school to be statistically moderated in partnership with its partners, regardless of the outcome of any *post hoc* analysis carried out by the Curriculum Council.
- Option B I wish my school to be statistically moderated without its partners.
- Option C I wish my school's small group partnership to be reviewed by the Curriculum Council and adjusted in the interests of fairness.

The following advice is provided to assist schools with forming and maintaining partnerships.

- The most effective strategy is for a small group to join with one large group.
- Partnerships involving more than three schools are not advisable.
- Partnerships should be formed as early in the school year as possible to enable a common assessment program to be planned.
- It is strongly recommended that small group moderation partnerships are formed if enrolments are between 10 and 15 to allow for possible reductions in enrolments or anomalous performers.
- For Languages (LOTE) subjects/courses there should be a minimum of 10 external examination candidates over and above background speakers.

School performance data

The Curriculum Council provides comprehensive statistical feedback to schools summarising their results in each subject/course compared with Statewide performance. The data enables schools to review their assessment and grading procedures and make adjustments if required.

These printouts are sent to schools early in the year and include:

- Year 12 school statistics
 - Summary school statistics
 - Number of TEE subjects and WACE course units completed
 - Summary of students' grades
- Year 12 State statistics

As above, but for the whole State. This enables the Year 12 School statistics to be seen in context.
- Listing of School TEE subject/WACE course statistics

This is a listing of marks obtained in each component of the external examination and shows how they are transformed by the Curriculum Council's marks processing.
- Listing of school internal assessment statistics

This set of results for TEE subjects/WACE courses shows the extent to which numerical school assessments are adjusted by statistical moderation, and the outcome of small group partnerships (if applicable). It also compares the school's grading standards with those of the rest of the State.

- Maximising feedback

Also available upon request is more detailed feedback on students' performance for all TEE subjects/WACE courses. Order forms for this request are published in the first edition of the Curriculum Council Circular each year.

General achievement test (GAT)

The Curriculum Council will review the use of the general achievement test (GAT) early in 2008 and advise schools of its decision at the earliest opportunity. If the Council decides to continue using the GAT, students will sit the test on 13 June, 2008. Results will be reported to schools and used by Council officers to inform the moderation process.

School moderation timeline

The timeline below provides a guide on moderation activities for TEE and WSA subjects during the school year.

Table 4: Sample moderation timeline for TEE and WSA subjects

Term 1	Provide feedback on school assessment documents (March) Assessment seminars for new teachers (Term 1)
Term 2	School moderation visits/validations of subject documentation
Term 3	School moderation visits/validations of subject documentation and grading
Term 4	Consensus moderation meetings in a limited number of subjects Proposed grades approval (E code subjects) Final grades approval (E code subjects) Tertiary entrance examinations (E code subjects only) Statistical adjustment procedure for transmission of data to TISC
Term 1 of the following year	Final grades approval (D code subjects)

The timeline below outlines school moderation activities during the first two years of WACE course implementation.

Table 5: Sample moderation timeline for WACE courses

	First year of implementation		Second year of implementation
Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On request from schools, provide feedback on school assessment documents (March) Assessment seminars 	Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On request from schools, provide feedback on school assessment documents (March) Final sample examination paper published Assessment seminars
Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample WACE examination paper published (April) School moderation visits/validations may be conducted at the principal's request or where documentation suggests an issue may exist Grading advice meetings 	Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement data collection and possible use of GAT results (Year 12) School moderation visits/validations may be conducted at the principal's request or where documentation, grading pattern or statistical feedback suggests an issue may exist Grading advice meetings
Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School moderation visits/validations may be conducted at the principal's request or where documentation suggests an issue may exist Consensus moderation meetings 	Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School moderation visits/validations may be conducted at the principal's request or where documentation, grading pattern or statistical feedback suggests an issue may exist Consensus moderation meetings
Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus moderation meetings Course folio sampling Achievement data submission and statistical monitoring Approve achievement data for publication of statements of results (early February) Achievement data collection (Year 11) 	Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course folio sampling Achievement data submission and statistical monitoring WACE examinations Approve achievement data for publication of statements of results (early December) Statistical adjustment procedure for transmission of data to TISC

Guidelines for gathering evidence for the moderation process are attached in Appendix 8.

School moderation officers

Heads of learning areas and experienced teachers from the various school systems will be invited to provide supplementary support for the moderation program.

School moderation officers are engaged by the Council to carry out school moderation visits in public, Catholic and independent schools as a representative of the Curriculum Council. In this capacity they are agents of the Curriculum Council and are responsible to the director of Assessment and Moderation for the duties they perform.