

SECTION 4: MODERATION OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

Comparability between schools occurs when the same result in the same course unit or subject means the same thing across the State. Moderation helps ensure comparability of school numerical assessments and grades. This in turn helps to ensure fairness of marking and grading for students. It also maintains the credibility of school numerical assessments and grades, which is significant as it influences students' prospects for further education or employment.

The basis of establishing comparability is:

- Syllabus documents which clearly indicate to schools the knowledge, skills and understandings that should be taught statewide.
- Assessment requirements that schools must follow in terms of assessment types and weightings.
- Teachers having a common understanding of the standards to be applied in the course unit or subject.
- Statistical adjustment of school numerical scores based on performance in the external examination.

To achieve this, the Curriculum Council provides:

- a quality syllabus for each course unit or subject, which clearly specifies the content and assessment requirements
- the criteria for assigning a grade for each course unit or subject
- quality assessment support materials for teachers
- assessment seminars for teachers
- a moderation process involving consensus moderation meetings and school moderation visits/validations.

Comparability is assured if the school:

- develops its structured education program for the course unit or subject based on the syllabus
- develops its assessment program for the course unit or subject to reflect the assessment requirements of the syllabus
- uses grading procedures which are consistent with the Curriculum Council standards.

| Course or subject specifications | Assessment support | Validation processes |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Establish content, skills objectives/outcomes, assessment requirements and standards for each course or subject.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the syllabus ○ the assessment structures, or assessment types and weightings, or common assessment framework ○ the grade descriptors, grade-related descriptors or performance criteria | <p>Provide materials and professional learning for common understanding of standards and assessment types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ assessment seminars ○ assessment support materials for teachers ○ student work samples ○ school performance data | <p>Use a variety of indicators to verify internal and external comparability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school moderation visits and validations ○ consensus moderation meetings ○ the proposed and final grade distribution approval process ○ statistical moderation (for Stage 2 and Stage 3 courses and E code TEE subjects only) |

4.1 The syllabus

The syllabus for each course or subject is available on the Council website at either http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Courses.
or
http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Subjects.

See Appendix 1 (pages 80–87) for a list of the courses and subjects available in 2009.

4.2 Assessment support materials for teachers

A range of assessment support materials for each course is available on the Council website. Materials include:

- sample teaching programs
- sample assessment outlines
- sample assessment tasks
- sample marking keys
- sample examinations
- grade descriptors.

A range of assessment support materials for each subject is also available on the Council website.

4.3 Assessment seminars

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

Assessment seminars are held during Semester 1. Attendance is highly recommended. Alternative arrangements (teleconferencing, video conferencing and online programs) are offered for all schools, but particularly for non-metropolitan schools that are unable to send a representative to a seminar.

In 2009, seminars may be conducted for:

- new or inexperienced teachers of courses implemented before 2008
- teachers of courses in the first or second year of implementation.

Schools are required to meet the cost of teacher relief and where required, teachers' travel and accommodation. School sector/systems advise schools to reserve sufficient funds for these seminars.

4.4 School moderation visits

Each year, moderators and school moderation officers (experienced teachers from all school sector/systems) visit a sample of schools. The purpose of school moderation visits is to ensure that Council requirements are understood, that approved assessment procedures are implemented, and that statewide comparability of standards is achieved.

In 2009, school moderation visits will concentrate on courses implemented before 2007 and E code subjects. School moderation visits are scheduled if requested by the school principal or where evidence suggests to the Council an assessment issue may exist in a particular course or subject. Schools are provided with at least three weeks' notice in writing of a planned moderation visit.

There are two forms of school moderation visit:

- a document visit
- a grading visit.

For a document visit, the school is required to make available the following materials:

- a course unit or subject outline
- an assessment outline for the course unit or subject which reflects the assessment requirements of the syllabus
- student assessment records for the class or classes (i.e. the marks book) up to the point of the visit
- assessment tasks conducted before the visit and any developed for use later in the year
- marking keys for assessment tasks conducted before the visit and any developed for use later in the year
- a brief statement of the internal comparability processes being applied, where more than one teacher is involved (see sub-section 3.2.4 on page 13)
- a brief statement, where required, of the moderation processes being applied to achieve comparability with the small group partner school/s (see sub-section 4.7 on page 33).

For a grading visit, the following additional materials are required:

- a proposed grade distribution (i.e. the anticipated number of students at each grade)
- assessment files containing all marked tasks for a sample of students at each grade cut-off point
- a ranked order list of students based on the total marks at the point of the visit (for course units and TEE subjects only).

Guidelines and a checklist to assist teachers in preparing for a school moderation visit are provided before a visit occurring. These documents are also available on the Council website.

At the conclusion of a school moderation visit the principal receives a written report. The form used when preparing a report for a school moderation visit is available on the Council website at <http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Policy/Moderation>.

4.5 School moderation validations

In some situations, schools will be asked to submit the materials required for moderation to the Council for review. This validation process is typically used for schools that are delivering a course or subject for the first time or for isolated schools where a visit is not viable. The moderation officer responsible for the course or subject reviews the materials and contacts the teacher to discuss the subsequent report. The report will then be sent to the school for sign-off by the principal.

The form used when preparing a report for a school moderation validation is the same as for a moderation visit and is available on the Council website at <http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Policy/Moderation>.

In 2009, school moderation validations will concentrate on courses implemented before 2007 (Aviation, Engineering Studies, English and Media Production and Analysis) and E code subjects.

4.6 Consensus moderation meetings

Consensus moderation meetings aim to build the common understandings of the course standards that underpin comparability. This is achieved through analysis of assessment tasks for a sample of students covering the range of grades at the school provided by the participants at the meeting. The school is required to provide a school assessment file for a prescribed number of students for a unit (typically four students, one at each grade between A and D). Teachers reflect on the feedback received from their colleagues to determine any adjustments that may be required for schools' assessments to be comparable.

Note: The file includes all the marked assessment tasks for the unit, unless schools are asked to only provide work which demonstrates a particular aspect of a course (typically for courses with a significant practical component).

One teacher represents the school at the consensus moderation meeting. Meetings will be held in Term 2 or Term 3. In 2009, meetings will be conducted for all courses implemented in 2007, 2008 or 2009 (meetings will not be held for any TEE or WSA subjects). Attendance at a meeting is compulsory for one representative from each school delivering a stage of the course. Alternative arrangements are made for schools more than 200 km from the nearest scheduled venue. Schools are required to meet the cost of teacher relief and where required, teachers' travel and accommodation. School sector/systems advise schools to reserve sufficient funds for these meetings.

Each school is allocated to a consensus moderation group for a course/stage and a Council moderator or a consensus moderation officer (experienced teachers from all school sector/systems) facilitates the meeting of each group. An expression of interest form for teachers interested in the role of consensus moderation officer is provided in the first WACE Circular each year.

4.7 Small group moderation process

In a class where fewer than 10 students sit the external examination, the under-performance of one or two students may unfairly affect the degree of statistical adjustment of the numerical school assessment of other students in that class. 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. Correctly implemented small group moderation procedures will minimise any distortion that may be unfair to students in a small group.

When enrolments in a particular course at Stage 2 or 3, or in a TEE subject, are projected to be fewer than 10 examination candidates, schools must become involved in a small group moderation partnership. When a group is between 10 and 15 it is advisable to consider participating in the small group moderation process, to allow for possible reductions in enrolments that may result in fewer than 10 students sitting the external examination. For European Languages courses or subjects (French, German, Italian), there should be a minimum of 10 external examination candidates over and above background speakers.

It is the responsibility of each school with a small group to:

- initiate the formation of a partnership
- register each partnership with the Council on a Small group partnership implementation form by 20 February 2009
- ensure that the partnership operates effectively.

Partnership requirements

A partnership can be formed with one or more schools. This should be done as early in the school year as possible or preferably, at the end of the preceding year.

The partnership should be formed with one school that has a large group of students. Partnerships involving more than three schools should be avoided wherever possible.

In courses that have defined contexts, the school is required to form a partnership with a school delivering the course in the same context (Materials Design and Technology: wood; metal; textiles; Design: dimensional design; graphics; photography; technical graphics; Children, Family and the Community: living independently; caring for others; Food Science and Technology: hospitality; product development; nutrition and health promotions; Music: western art music; jazz; contemporary music; world and indigenous music).

In courses that have specialist fields, the school is required to form a partnership with a school delivering a course in the same field (i.e. Engineering Studies: Mechanical, Electronic/Electrical, or Systems and Control).

Comparability

For students to be treated as though they are from the same school, the numerical school assessments (school marks) of all schools in the partnership must be comparable (i.e. the numerical school assessments for each student in the partner schools are on a common scale).

Statistical moderation options

Early in Term 4, the principal of each school in a partnership is required to advise the Council which of the following statistical moderation options they select for each course or subject:

- Option A the school is statistically moderated in partnership with its partners, regardless of the outcome of analysis of the external examination results of the partner schools carried out by the Council in December.
- Option B the school is statistically moderated without its partners.
- Option C the school's small group partnership is reviewed by the Council and adjusted, if necessary, in the interests of fairness.

More details of the small group moderation process are available in the Guidelines for Implementation 2009, available on the Council website at

http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Teacher_Support/Small_Group_Moderation.

4.8 School performance data

A range of reports is available in SIRS to assist schools when reflecting on the achievement of Year 12 students. The information on individual students is confidential and must not be released to a third party without permission of the student concerned.

School TEE/WACE course examination statistics

Pathway: *Reports > TEE statistics*

This set of tables shows, for each course or TEE subject, each student's examination mark, numerical school assessment, and the intermediate marks obtained when the Curriculum Council calculates the combined score.

Maximising feedback

Pathway: *Reports > maximising feedback*

This report provides a detailed analysis of how the students at the school performed in the external examination for each course or TEE subject. For each exam, feedback is provided about performance on each multiple choice item and each open ended response item.

STS022: Listing of school assessment statistics

Pathway: *Reports > other reports > report type: statistics*

This report is designed to help schools evaluate their numerical school assessments (school marks) and grades in both courses and TEE subjects.

STS010: Year 12 provider statistics

Pathway: *Reports > other reports > report type: statistics*

This report provides summary statistical information for the school.

STS009: Year 12 State statistics

Pathway: *Reports > other reports > report type: statistics*

This report provides summary statistical information for the state.

CSE077: Student summary details by provider

Pathway: *Reports > other reports > report type: students*

This report provides the results of individual Year 12 students in course units, subjects, VET units of competency, endorsed programs and VET qualifications. It also indicates if the student has met the WACE requirements.

Details of the contents of all of these reports can be found in the Explanatory notes for Year 12 statistical reports available on the Council website.