USING CONSENSUS MODERATION TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS WHEN PLANNING COURSE ASSESSMENTS

A Case Study by Katie Weir and Peter Grainger
School of Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University

Introduction

Teaching a program across multiple campuses creates a challenge for providing consistent delivery of the curriculum. This is why consensus moderation between all staff teaching in the course is essential to ensure transparency and accountability. Moderation can also enable all students to have equal access to the curriculum and information that enables them all optimal conditions for demonstrating evidence of their learning irrespective of what campus they are on and who teaches them.

Context

In 2011, 2 weeks prior to the commencement of semester, two new staff members were employed to convene 4020 Responsive Assessment in Context – a 4th Year undergraduate course that caters for approximately 400 students at Logan, Gold coast and Mt. Gravatt. The course runs for the first 9 weeks of the semester and is followed by a 4 week practicum. The Course Profile had already been finalised and published by the time we were employed so an initial challenge was working within the constraints of a curriculum that neither of us had any input into its design. It was therefore imperative that we collaborate closely throughout the semester.

Description of CM of Course Level Planning

We began collaborating prior to semester’s start with daily phone calls and emails and about 4 hours of face to face meetings. We discussed the course profile expectations and agreed on learning experiences that were necessary for students to fulfil the course Learning Objectives and so they could successfully complete the assessment requirements. Utilising each others particular areas of knowledge strength – we allocated out the development of content. We would normally share our respective ideas and pedagogical strategies, provide feedback, revise until we finally agreed upon the final content and mode of delivery that would be suitable for use across all three campuses.

The assessment requirements of the course were already outlined in the Course Profile, but the criteria for marking needed to be determined so again it was imperative that this was done collaboratively to ensure a shared understanding of the standard of student work expected for each grade. Therefore together we discussed and developed the assessment criteria for evaluating student work. At the same
time we constructed an “indicative A response” to index to sessional staff what a top assessment (at “A" level) ought to look like.

Constant daily communication back and forth via phone and email were needed, and resulted in agreement between us on content, pedagogical approach, resourcing and the assessment.

**Critical Success Factors**

A positive working relationship and *willingness to accept another perspective* is critical for this type of process to work effectively. We had mutual respect for each other’s expertise and were always willing to listen to and learn from each other.

These basic attitudes meant collaboration was easy and productive.

The process also *requires a commitment of time* and would not have worked without both of us being willing to take the time (on a daily basis to begin with prior to semester) to discuss and come to agreements.

It also helped that neither of us had particular or preceding “ownership" of their campus courses; which allowed for a very *open sharing of all ideas and resources*.

We found that working with a CP which was already published challenging. The process could have been further enhanced if we had the opportunity to collaborate and reach consensus at the CP development stage.