USING CONSENSUS MODERATION TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS WHEN MARKING:
TUTOR INDUCTION DAY

A Case Study by Rowan Michael
School of Languages and Linguistics
Griffith University

Paper presented at the Third Promoting Good Practice in Assessment Symposium,
Griffith University, 2 November 2011

The English Language Enhancement Courses (ELECs) consist of four courses that each have a discipline-specific focus. There is one course per academic group: GBS, Health, SEET, & AEL and are each run across multiple campuses. Approximately 25 tutors deliver the tutorials. Each of the ELECs awards an allocated percentage to Tutorial Participation during semester as part of the assessment regime.

Context
Each semester each tutor is required to allocate a mark to each student for Tutorial Participation in Weeks 3-7 and for Weeks 8-12.

Description of Consensus Moderation Practice(s)
Tutors are trained at induction day each semester in the use of the tutorial participation criteria and method of scoring. They are trained in applying the criteria by ensuring the criterion is fully met before awarding the score. This involves checking that the threshold related to attendance has also been met. At induction day, tutors are invited to consider the example scenarios and discuss in groups what score should be awarded. The score agreed by the management team is then presented in order to set the standard. At the end of semester via the tutor survey, staff are invited to provide feedback on the criteria, scores and information provided to students regarding the tutorial participation requirements. Documentation has been amended accordingly to result in a fair, clear and practical system for awarding scores in a notoriously subjective area of assessment.

In Weeks 1 & 2 no score is awarded while students settle in to their first semester at university. Students are informed of the requirements for this aspect of assessment and are provided with a copy of the criteria in Week 2 of each course and an explanation of how scores are awarded. Tutors keep records of participation as well as attendance and award a score between 1 and 5 for Weeks 3-7 and again for Weeks 8-12. This raw score is entered into Grade Centre and students can access the score on My Grades by Week 8 and 13 respectively, giving them an opportunity to improve scores for the latter half of semester or to discuss issues with the tutor. There is a formal process for dealing with absence due to sickness.
What’s Good about the Practice(s)

The process outlined above helps maintain consistency and increases the inter-marker as well as intra-marker reliability across a large and diverse cohort of students and multiple tutors. This is important across such a large and high profile course for consistency as well as for face validity to students. Students are graded on participation not only attendance and that they are informed of the distinction at the beginning of semester. The awarding of two scores allows students to improve their level of participation after the score is awarded for the first half of semester, thus functioning as formative assessment.

Critical Factors

1. Face validity for students regarding the consistency of scoring.
2. Participation contrasted with attendance.
3. ‘Settling-in’ period to university expectations.
4. The opportunity for students to improve on mid-semester outcomes.
5. Increased inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability through clear criteria and training.