USING CONSENSUS MODERATION TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS WHEN MARKING: FACE-TO-FACE STANDARDISATION MEETINGS (ESSAYS)

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Introduction

The English Language Enhancement Courses (ELECs) consist of four courses that each have a discipline specific focus (one per academic group: GBS, Health, SEET, & AEL) and are each run across multiple campuses. Each of the ELECs runs an end of semester examination. Moderation processes have been developed within and between these courses.

Context

Each semester a marking team of the four convenors and sessional staff (as required) mark the essay component of the final examination.

Description of Consensus Moderation Practice(s)

Before the markers begin marking the essays they gather for a standardisation meeting where several carefully selected sample essays are marked through consensus moderation. The examples have been chosen before this meeting so that they represent a range of student work. Within the meeting all the markers look at each sample, mark it, and then agree on the correct mark. Where differences occur the markers return to the text for evidence to be matched against detailed criteria. This discussion leads all markers to become standardised in their marking of the essays. After the meeting the markers then go away and mark the essay components of the final exam. All markers also engage in a process of self moderation where they re-mark a sample of their own previous marking to maintain consistency over and between sittings.
Following completed marking of the essay exams a sample of about 10% of each marker’s work is then blind re-marked by a different marker. It is important for the second marker not to be viewing the first marker’s grades so that their own judgement of the student’s work is not influenced. This check enables consistency to be maintained between the final grades awarded by different markers. The convenors meet and discuss the results of the double marking and if necessary look at making alterations to a marker’s work. Generally this is not necessary due to the effectiveness of the standardisation process before marking begins.

What’s Good about the Practice(s)

The process outlined above helps maintain consistency and increases the inter-marker reliability across a large and diverse cohort with multiple markers. It also allows markers to work together to develop sharper skills in examining the evidence presented in student work.

Critical Factors

1. Samples selected for consensus moderation must cover a range of student levels.
2. Clear criteria and standards must be developed.
3. Discussion of grades must focus on matching the criteria and standards with evidence provided in the student work. This means the markers should not just agree on the grade but they must agree and discuss the evidence for that grade that is present in the work.
4. This process needs to be repeated several times before markers can be confident their marks are standard.

Markers should take notes and keep their annotated samples for later reference when they are marking.