USING CONSENSUS MODERATION TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS WHEN MARKING: SELF ACCESS STANDARDISATION KIT

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Context

The English Language Enhancement Courses (ELECs) have a large sessional tutor team. ELEC management wanted to support the tutors to maintain a set standard across all courses, campuses, and cohorts when marking students’ oral presentations. As a key part of assessment, students were required to give a group oral presentation, for which both individual and group marks were awarded, as well as qualitative peer feedback. However, it was impossible to gather all sessional staff together at the same time in the same place to hold standardization meetings. To overcome these issues we developed a self-access standardisation kit that was placed on the Learning@Griffith course sites and made available only to tutors.

Description of Consensus Moderation Practice(s)

In developing the self access kit several steps were necessary. First, we wanted to be working with authentic material so we recorded actual student presentations and gained permission to use these for moderation and standardisation purposes. Second, after the video recordings had been made the ELEC Management Team (four convenors and two tutors) each independently and in isolation marked the recording according to detailed, set criteria in a way that was as similar as possible to how a tutor would mark in a live tutorial. Third, the team then met and, through consensus moderation, decided on the correct result for the group presentation. Where markers differed, the team then went back and examined the recording for evidence against the criteria until consensus was reached. Fourth, the team then outlined in writing the evidence within the recording as well as the reasoning for the results that were given to the presentations. All these materials form part of the standardisation kit. It is important to note that the recoding of student work constituted a representative range of student responses to the assessment criteria.

Tutors are now expected to go into Learning@Griffith and access the standardisation kit before they begin to mark the oral presentations in their tutorials. The kit contains two elements:

A. A document that explains the steps tutors should follow to complete the standardisation process.
B. A recording of a group presentation.
In completing the standardisation process tutors should follow the procedure below:

1. For Student 1, first look at the scores awarded by the team. Watch Student 1 only and consider why these scores have been awarded by referring to the detailed comments.
2. For Student 2, do not look at the scores before watching the video. Watch Student 2 and award the four scores, considering why you consider them to be appropriate by referring specifically to the OP Reference Sheet for Tutors. Compare your scores with the official scores. Look at where you differ and consider whether you have a tendency to rate too harshly or too leniently for each criterion.
3. For Student 3, watch the video and score as you watch, again considering why you wish to award each score by referring closely to the criteria. The aim is to reach a close agreement with the official rating. Read the comments made by the team and compare to your own reasons for awarding each score.

What’s Good about the Practice(s)

Oral presentations are a very common assessment item in courses of all types, however it is very impractical and time consuming to arrange standardisation sessions for them. They are often marked by tutors in isolation and although many maintain consistency within their own group, consistency between markers using the same criteria is hard to guarantee. The development of the Self-Access Standardisation Kit for tutors aims to support consistency in marking across a teaching team, particularly one that includes sessional staff spread across multiple campuses. By using consensus moderation to develop the resources we ensured that a set standard was developed that was representative of all courses and based on several expert opinions. Returning to examine evidence where differences of opinion arose also ensured detailed comments on the presentation were developed.

Critical Factors

1. Have clear and detailed criteria to mark the oral presentations.
2. Ideally record authentic source material (actual student presentations for the same assessment item).
3. Ensure a range of levels is evident in the recorded sample, so tutors can standardise their marking at a range of levels (ie, Fail, Pass, and Distinction).