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

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

Introduction

5904LAL “Language and Communication in Arts and the Social Sciences” is one of the four English Language Enhancement Courses (ELECs) offered at Griffith University. All of the ELECs utilise portfolios to assess students writing proficiency and the same language criteria are used across all four courses. A similar process is also followed for 5904LAL, however there are some discipline specific differences between the types of writing and the stages of writing required of students in each of the courses. While the focus here is on the moderation process that occurs within 5904LAL a similar process occurs in all the ELECs.

Context

In 5904LAL the five Portfolio writing tasks are:

1. A one paragraph summary of a discipline specific journal article. This is also the journal article that will form the basis of their Oral Presentation. It is marked as “pass” or “resubmit” thereby utilising a process approach to writing;
2. A structured paragraph is also marked as “pass” or “resubmit”;
3. A critical review which is the main writing task.
4. A reflection by the students on their OP – their perceived strengths and weaknesses; their experiences working in a group; plans for improvement;
5. A Learning Services reflection - how it went, what was learnt, would they access the service again?

Written feedback is given by tutors on all student work except the reflections which are given a general holistic comment. However, students are penalised for lack of inclusion of any part of the portfolio.
Description of Consensus Moderation Practice(s)

A face to face standardisation meeting is used to increase inter-marker reliability in portfolio marking. This meeting usually occurs in week 9 or close to the middle of the semester. There is also a detailed document that spells out marking standards and FAQs. All tutors are provided several samples of work to mark prior to attending the meeting. During the meeting the convenor chairs the tutors as they discuss these pieces of work and come to a consensus about the correct grades. Some examples of past student work are annotated and provided for further reference later. The meeting examines samples of work for the first three portfolio tasks mentioned above and consists of a range of student work. Generally, two to three examples of each task are discussed.

What’s Good about the Practice(s)

1. Inter-marker reliability is raised.
2. Difficult situations are discussed and resolved as a team.
3. Markers’ focus is consistently directed to matching evidence in student work against the criteria and standards provided.

Critical Factors

1. Authentic material is used.
2. Markers come to the meeting prepared with exemplars pre-marked.
3. All markers are open to coming to a consensus by examining the evidence in student work against the criteria and standards provided.