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

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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.

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.

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

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

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).

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

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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.