



# **BEST PRACTICE MODERATION**

## **Best Practice in implementing Moderation for the National Qualifications Framework**



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA



Skill New Zealand  
*Pūkenga Aotearoa*

## **NOTE**

This document should be read, interpreted and applied in conjunction with the APNZ ITF document “*Best Practice in the Assessment of Unit Standards*”, which is available on NZQA web site [www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand, New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers and Industry Training Federation are committed to identifying and promoting best assessment policy and practice in relation to unit standards.

This collaboration will promote quality in assessment and promote development and review, which will lead to improved quality of unit standards.

Moderation is an integral part of assessment best practice. It is a quality management system designed to achieve valid, fair and consistent assessment. Moderation quality management systems are the responsibility of either NZQA or an ITO. Different industries and assessment situations have different moderation systems but the same best practice principles apply to all moderation systems.

This document proposes a set of principles to ensure that the moderation systems providers and standards setters are required to participate in are run in an effective and positive manner.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Standard Setting Body**

This is an organisation, which is responsible for developing, writing and reviewing unit standards that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework. These bodies are also responsible for moderating the assessment of their unit standards.

### **Moderator**

In this paper moderator means an organisation or individual responsible for carrying out moderation processes. A moderator may be an external moderator, used by the standard setting body to moderate the assessments of different organisations, or an internal moderator, responsible for moderation of assessment activities within an individual training or other organisation accredited for assessment.

### **Assessor**

In this paper assessor means an individual or organisation responsible for the assessment of competence against unit standards that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework.

## **PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE MODERATION**

### **Principle 1 Partnership**

Best practice moderation occurs when it is based on an effective partnership between assessors and between assessors and moderators.

### **Principle 2 Continuity**

Best practice moderation occurs when it is an ongoing process that underpins relationships between assessors and between assessors and moderators.

### **Principle 3 Evolution**

Best practice moderation occurs when it is an evolving and educative process for assessors and moderators.

## **ISSUES UNDERPINNING THE PRINCIPLES**

### **Principle 1**

- 1.1 An effective partnership requires a clear definition of the roles, responsibilities and obligations of all parties.
- 1.2 Partnership is crucial in moderation best practice because it is the foundation for mutual trust and respect between assessors, and between assessors and moderators.
- 1.3 The intellectual property rights of all parties must be respected.
- 1.4 Ultimately it is the assessor alone who makes the assessment decision using his or her professional judgement. This assessment process must be supported by an effective partnership with a moderator. Such a partnership is most effective when it is based on mutual trust.
- 1.5 Accreditation and audit processes support mutual trust and respect between assessors and between assessors and moderators. These processes ensure that accredited organisations maintain systems for the appointment of assessors and moderators, who have the skills necessary for their roles.
- 1.6 During moderation, problems caused by another aspect of assessment or accreditation may become apparent, for example, inadequate preparation of assessors. Such problems need to be referred back to the appropriate authority for resolution through the relevant processes; their resolution is related to but is not a direct part of the moderation process.

## **Principle 2**

- 2.1 Any contact between assessors, and between assessors and moderators provides an opportunity to support consistency of assessment.
- 2.2 The process of moderation involves a dynamic interaction between assessors, and between assessors and moderators regarding interpretation and assessment of specific unit standards. Agreed exemplars or assessment guides are integral to this interaction.
- 2.3 Formal moderation events may be one aspect of the ongoing moderation process.
- 2.4 All assessors are included and professionally supported when a moderation system provides positive feedback into the assessment process.
- 2.5 Open ongoing communication between all participants is the hallmark of a well designed and functioning moderation system. This communication may include mutually agreed sharing of assessment resources between assessors.

## **Principle 3**

- 3.1 The first step in any moderation process is for all the participants in the system to have a shared understanding of the system and its purpose.
- 3.2 The implementation and maintenance of an external moderation system is the responsibility of the standard setting body and requires information and training for all participants regarding processes and procedures.
- 3.3 A moderation system must evolve in step with the ongoing development of unit standards, training and assessment processes.
- 3.4 Standard setters have a responsibility to ensure that their moderation systems are workable, realistic and practical for assessors and moderators. They need to ensure that moderation systems evolve to adopt complementary practices and procedures.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 1. What makes an effective moderator?

In our experience an effective moderator is someone who:

- has had extensive experience as an assessor;
  - has credibility and holds the professional respect of stakeholders;
  - listens and explains;
  - can facilitate a good discussion on assessment;
  - is open to innovation in assessment techniques;
  - is clear on their role within the moderation system;
  - acknowledges the role and expertise of an accredited organisations' assessors;
  - can share assessment ideas;
  - makes clear and consistent moderation judgements;
- and
- in a timely manner uses the moderation system to feed back necessary amendments to the standard setting body.

### 2. How do I appeal a moderation decision?

Each moderation system should have a mechanism for querying a moderation decision. Ask the standard setting body for information on their appeal process.

Any moderation process must lead to a final decision, for example in a standard setting body's moderation system a National Moderator may be the final arbitrator for any appeal made against a regional moderator's decision.

### 3. What do I do if I disagree with the standard setter regarding the moderation system?

The best thing to do is to discuss your concerns/ideas with the standard setter. Standard setting bodies should be open to constructive inputs. A key issue in resolving disagreements is recognising each other's professionalism and offering (and accepting) comments in a professional manner.

If you cannot reach agreement with the standard setting organisation then there is an option of discussing your concerns with the Moderation Section of NZQA. This is really a last course of action. NZQA's initial response will be that you should discuss your concerns directly with the standard setter. They are likely to request evidence of your attempts to resolve the issue with the standard setter before they will become involved.

NZQA's involvement in assisting an accredited organisation and a standard setter in resolving disagreements is restricted to ensuring that the moderation system is being operated in accordance with the standard setter's registered Moderation Action Plan (MAP) and the principles and rules of the National Qualifications Framework.

#### **4. Where can I go for help?**

Your organisation is your first avenue for support. Talking to other assessors working within your standards setting body's area or from other areas is an excellent way of gaining an understanding of moderation. Many industry areas also have professional educator associations to support tutors and assessors.

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