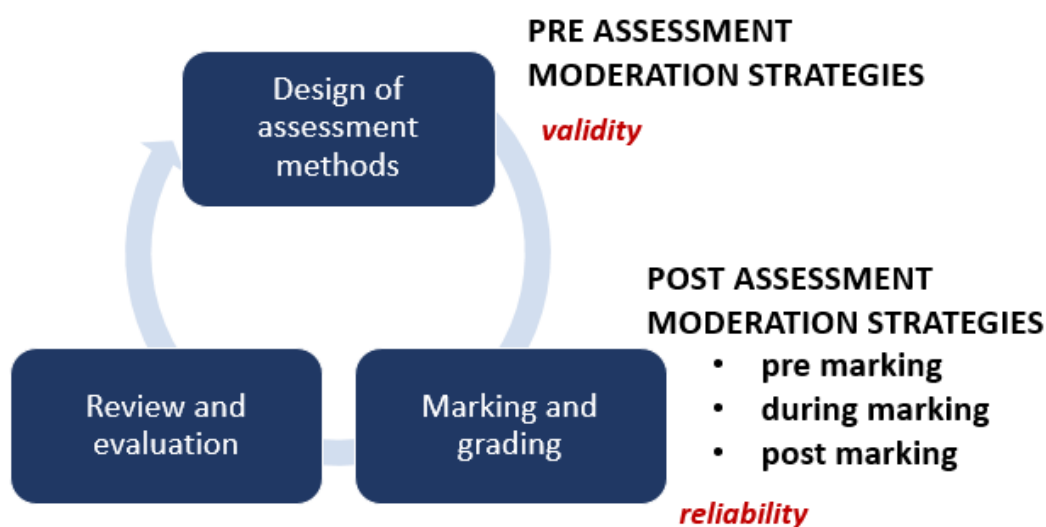


## What is moderation and what is in JCU policy?

Moderation articulates with all stages of all assessment. According to the JCU *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy*:

5.13. Progressive moderation of assessment will be undertaken for all subjects. **Validity and reliability** may take the form of **pre and post assessment moderation** including: exchange marking, double marking, blind marking or the use of pre-determined criteria based rubrics and comprehensive marking guides.



## *Other relevant JCU Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy statements*

### **Design of assessment methods**

4.2 All teaching and learning activities, resources, assessment and criteria for grading, and learning outcomes will be aligned so that courses and subjects are explicitly coherent.

4.2.2 Curriculum will be designed to recognise requirements of Australian Qualifications Framework and different year levels.

4.4. Where a subject is offered across different campuses and/or modes and/or teaching periods within the one calendar year, the learning outcomes will be the same, and other than in exceptional circumstances, there will be no variation in assessment type or weighting.

### **Marking and grading**

5.14. The sample for moderation will be nominated by a Subject Co-ordinator and can focus upon grade bands, selected students or specific items of assessment. If formal moderation is undertaken across a full subject it should consist of an analysis of top grades, borderline pass grades and a selection of mid-range grades.

### **Review and evaluation**

5.18. Course Co-ordinators will conduct an annual review of assessment and moderation processes.

5.17. Subject Co-ordinator must seek a biennial peer review of the subject's assessment plans and grading practices.

## *Terms in policy defined*

5.13. Progressive moderation of assessment will be undertaken for all subjects. **Validity and reliability** may take the form of **pre and post assessment moderation** including: exchange marking, double marking, blind marking or the use of pre-determined criteria based rubrics and comprehensive marking guides.

**Validity:** The degree to which a task assesses what it is intended or purported to assess (i.e. evidences student achievement of knowledge, skills and dispositions targeted in learning outcomes and task criteria).

**Reliability:** Concerned with fairness to students based on comparability between markers' judgements and of results yielded over time.

**Pre and post assessment moderation:** Investment in design of assessment methods (pre assessment), as well as processes to support and review marker judgements of students' marks and/or grades and feedback (post assessment).

**Pre-determined criteria based rubrics and comprehensive marking guides:** Instruments used to promote shared understandings about expectations and performance standards in assessment.

**Exchange marking:** Occurs when two staff members exchange certain pieces of work for marking (e.g., the Cairns lecturer marks examination scripts for the Townsville lecturer and vice versa).

**Double marking:** Occurs when two staff members mark the same piece of work. Comments and marks of the original assessor are seen by the second marker.

**Double blind:** Double marking where the second marker does not see the original comments or marks.

### **Interchangeable terms**

- Exchange marking = Cross marking
- Double marking = Confirmatory review
- Blind marking = Anonymous marking

## *Consider*

### **Pre assessment moderation**

It is critical when designing assessment to ensure that the ability to complete the tasks we set for students *actually* depends on achievement of the intended learning outcomes. If the task can be done without that learning, then the measure is **invalid**. If you assess something that is not specified in the subject learning outcomes, then what message are you sending to your students? Conversely, if you specify learning outcomes that are not assessed, what message are you sending your students?

### **Post assessment moderation**

When you mark a piece of work you are using your professional judgement. Imagine you take a copy of all your students' work. You mark the originals and return them, keeping a record of the marks. A week later you mark the copies and compare the marks. Do you think that they will compare well? (**Intra-marker reliability**). What about if a colleague marks the copies? Will their marks compare well with yours? (**Inter-marker reliability**).

Research literature says that both these forms of reliability are frequently very low unless specific practices are employed to ensure that markers agree on the criteria, the performance standards and the forms of evidence that equate to particular marks being awarded. (Duncan Nulty, unpublished Good Practice Guide)

## How do we moderate?

### PRE ASSESSMENT

**Design of assessment methods:** It is essential to invest in pre assessment moderation strategies. **No amount of investment in post assessment moderation strategies can address flaws in design of assessment methods.**

Subject Coordinators, as appropriately supported by Course Coordinators, are encouraged to engage with relevant colleagues and available data in subject level planning to ensure that:

1. Assessment tasks and criteria are aligned with learning outcomes, and across campuses, modes and/or study periods, of high cognitive order, and weighted appropriately
2. Assessment tasks are authentic (see [JCU assessment list](#)), aligned with core learning activities and, where appropriate, stimulate a wide range of active responses
3. Assessment tasks take student and marker workload into consideration, are distributed across the study period, and allow opportunities for timely and consequential feedback
4. Assessment task specifications, criteria, standards and supporting resources are available, clearly articulated and aligned

Data may include: Curriculum mapping output, student achievement data, YourJCU Subject Survey data, Peer Review of Teaching data, pre marking moderation meeting notes etc.

**Refer to resource:** [Academic staff rubric to evaluate design quality of subject assessment methods](#)

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### POST ASSESSMENT

**Marking and grading:** It is important for Subject Coordinators to facilitate processes associated with supporting and reviewing marker judgements across different campuses, modes and/or study periods. Facilitating a **pre marking calibration meeting** and maintaining communication with markers to further support judgements **during marking** will significantly reduce the number of issues that can present post marking.

#### *Pre marking*

**Pre marking calibration meeting:** A highly effective moderation strategy is for Subject Coordinators to select and distribute a small sample of student work to all markers, across campuses and modes, who blind mark according to the criteria-standards rubric or marking guide. Subject Coordinators then facilitate a meeting with markers to review and calibrate marker judgements (through discussion and review of criteria vis-à-vis evidence/student work). Only after having been calibrated do markers then commence marking their allocated quota.

Other pre-marking moderation strategies include:

- de-identifying student samples to allow for anonymous marking;
- exchanging a percentage of student submissions for marking;
- allocating questions to markers so that, where possible, the same assessor marks a particular question for all papers.

#### *During marking*

Double mark a selection of submissions at grades borders across the grades range, noting that:

A **critical interface** in any standards system is the one between satisfactory and unsatisfactory or **pass and fail**. The greatest return on investment is probably to be had by focusing on that interface. This is what 'benchmark', 'threshold', or 'minimally competent' decisions are essentially about. The second most critical point is probably the **level of attainment necessary to warrant award of the highest available code** (Sadler, 2014, p. 285).

#### *Post marking*

Note that it is often problematic to change or scale marks after all marking has been completed. This moderation strategy should only be used when other strategies have been ineffective.