Moderation Policy and Procedure

1.   Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Moderation Policy and Procedure sets out the purpose, scope, principles, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to the use of moderation in assessment. This Policy and Procedure is designed to assure academic standards in APAC's courses and units, and drive compliance with mandated higher education standards.

1.1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure sets out APAC's approach to the use of moderation in assuring academic standards in the development and delivery of APAC's courses and units; in underpinning academic quality; and in ensuring APAC complies with the requirements of the relevant mandated higher education standards.

1.2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all academic staff and to members of APACs decision-making bodies.

1.3. Principles

- Effective moderation contributes to the maintenance of academic standards and is a key process in academic quality assurance and improvement.

- Moderation is framed and supported within a whole of institution approach, as a key factor to be considered in curriculum design and delivery.

- Moderation is transparent, fair, and collegial.

- Moderation processes are carefully documented and regularly reviewed to identify deficiencies to be remedied and opportunities for improvement to be utilised.

- Moderation processes contribute to compliance with mandated higher education standards and exemplify good practice.

2.   Policy Statements

2.1. Academic Standards, Academic Quality, and Improvement

Moderation of assessment assures the validity, reliability, and consistency of assessments of student achievement relative to course and unit learning outcomes. Internal moderation, that is moderation within APAC, underpins consistency and maintenance of academic standards set by APAC. External moderation, that is moderation involving academic input outside APAC, assures the comparability of APAC's academic standards to those of the sector more broadly in similar disciplines, courses and units.

Both internal and external moderation may reveal deficiencies requiring expeditious remedy in order to assure academic standards in particular and academic quality more generally. They may also identify opportunities for improvement which the institution should consider acting upon to better secure its academic standards and to lift academic quality more generally. Moderation, therefore, is an element in APAC's quality cycle of continuous improvement.

2.2. Framing and Supporting Effective Moderation

The development of the curriculum includes the specification of learning outcomes and descriptions of standards of achievement as well as developing assessment tools that are designed to validly, reliably and consistently measure standards of achievement relative to learning outcomes. Such assessment tools are designed to facilitate moderation, for example, utilising marking guides and marking rubrics, specifying marking criteria and employing consistent terminology to describe similar types of assessment tasks. The delivery of curriculum reflects its design, including the implementation of planned approaches to assessment and moderation. This is framed within, and supported by, a set of policies, procedures and processes that apply consistently to all of APAC's efforts in curriculum design and delivery.

2.3. Transparency, Fairness and Collegiality

Effective moderation requires:

- that students and staff clearly understand and trust APAC's approach to, and implementation of, moderation, including the role that it plays in assuring academic standards and, ultimately, underpinning the credibility of APAC's awards;

- that the objectives of each assessment task, and the criteria on which marks will be awarded, are explicit and well justified, and are well explained to both students and markers; and

- the active, open and honest participation of staff in moderation activities, both individually and collegially, including participating in professional development and inductions, in order to assure the credibility of the assessment process and academic standards, to identify opportunities for academic quality improvement, and, more broadly, contribute to the development of a positive academic culture.

2.4. Documenting and Reviewing

The careful documentation of moderation activities and processes, their immediate outcomes, and consequent adjustments to assessment more broadly, provides evidence of good practice and compliance with mandated higher education standards. This documentation provides a baseline against which improved moderation activities and processes may be planned, implemented, reviewed and improved in an ongoing cycle of academic quality improvement.

3. Procedure

3.1. Approach to Moderation

The following actions work together to provide a procedural framework for effective moderation and to build an academic culture that values the role of moderation:

i. The Director of Higher Education, with the Heads of Discipline, assign a moderation team to each unit to be offered in the next future teaching period to work collegially in a process of consensus moderation, to develop the specific assessment tools for the unit, including creating clear marking rubrics and marking guidelines, clarifying the objectives of assessment task, marking criteria and standards, and engaging in activities such as reviewing criterion-referenced marking rubrics and marking and discussing sample assessment submissions. The information resulting from the consensus moderation process is made easily accessible to student and markers before the unit commences.

ii. The Director of Higher Education, with the Heads of Discipline, will meet with the academic staff at the commencement of each teaching period to discuss assessment expectations, to outline the moderation process and moderation activities scheduled for that teaching period. A separate, more detailed induction will be provided for new academic staff, including any staff engaged only for marking.

iii. All academic staff are provided with an assessment and moderation manual, covering key matters in the assessment and moderation process, such as developing marking rubrics and marking guidelines, and including useful resources, such as de-identified examples of student work with marks and explanatory commentary.

iv. The Director of Higher Education, with the Heads of Discipline, develops in advance of each teaching period, a schedule of moderation activities for that teaching period, which sets out details of internal and external moderation processes, such as arrangements for blind cross-marking of assessment submissions, including by external academic discipline experts, for each assessment task in each unit. The schedule also includes professional development activities, such as workshops and external expert presentations.

v. The Director of Higher Education initiates regular external reviews of the moderation process, with reporting to the Grades Ratification Committee, and development and implementation of plans in response to review findings.

vi. The Director of Higher Education ensures that documents and information capturing the detail of all moderation activities, including reviews of the moderation process and resultant plans and actions, are kept and securely stored.

3.2. The Moderation Meeting

The moderation meeting at the end of each teaching period, and the preparation for it, is the culmination of the moderation process prior to the ratification of academic results by the Grades Ratification Committee. The key steps in this procedure are:

i. All final assessment results must be in the Learning Management System (LMS) by the nominated deadline and provided to the Director of Higher Education in the form of a Grade Report. The data from the Grade Report is inserted into the Moderation Report and is used by the Director of Higher Education to identify assessment items for moderation and the academic staff who will do blind cross-marking.

ii. The outcomes of the blind cross-marking process are discussed at the Moderation Meeting, which includes the following agenda items:

- significant discrepancies arising from cross-marking (> +/- 10%);

- borderline grades;

- incomplete results; and

- supplementary assessment and re-assessment

iii. Where a significant discrepancy arising from cross-marking is identified, then the Director of Higher Education will provide a direction on the appropriate mark to be applied.

iv. Where a significant discrepancy has arisen, the Director of Higher Education will review at least two other examples of marking by the initial marker, to determine if there is a systematic issue to be addressed and further moderation required.

v. The Moderation Report resulting from the meeting is finalised and endorsed by the Director of Higher Education and provided to the Grades Ratification Committee for review and ratification of academic results.

vi. All documentation from the Moderation Meeting, including a record of discussion, is kept and securely stored.

vii. Any potential conflicts of interest in the Moderation Meeting are properly managed through the reassignment of responsibilities as required.

4. Responsibilities

The following points set out the relevant responsibilities in relation to moderation.

4.1. The Board of Directors

Oversee the management and performance of APAC, including academic governance and the implementation and effectiveness of management and performance improvement activities.

4.2. Grades Ratification Committee

The Grades Ratification Committees responsible for:

- the oversight and monitoring of moderation;

- providing advice on moderation activities and processes, and contributing to an academic culture that values moderation as a key strategy in assuring academic standards and driving academic quality improvement;

- ensuring that the institution's approach to moderation is regularly reviewed, and that identified defects are expeditiously remedied and opportunities for improvement considered;

- reviewing the Moderation Report from the Director of Higher Education; and

- ratifying academic results for publication.

4.3. Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for ensuring that effective moderation is adequately resourced.

4.4. Director of Higher Education

The Director of Higher Education is responsible for:

- ensuring that required moderation activities and processes are effectively implemented;

- ensuring the availability of appropriate staff induction content and professional development required to underpin effective moderation;

- implementing the regular review of moderation and implementing resultant actions approved by the Grades Ratification Committee;

- preparing the Moderation Report for Grades Ratification Committee.

4.5. Academic Staff

Academic Staff are responsible for:

- Participating actively, openly and honestly in moderation activities and processes, including inductions and professional development, as required; and

- Working with colleagues to build an inclusive and collegial academic culture that values the maintenance of academic standards and academic quality improvement.

5.   Relevant Documents

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

- Office for Learning and Teaching Good Practice Report: Assuring Learning Outcomes and Standards, 2014

- TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Quality Assurance 2017

- TEQSA Guidance Note: Course Design (including Learning Outcomes and Assessment) 2017

6.   Definitions

- **Marking Rubric** is a document specifying the criteria on which an assessment item will be marked, describing the standards of achievement for each criterion, and detailing what must be demonstrated to achieve a particular standard relative to a particular criterion.

- **Moderation** is a process, separate from the marking of assessment items, which ensures that an assessment outcome, such as a mark or grade, is fair, valid and reliable, that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, and that any differences in academic judgement between individual markers can be identified, acknowledged and addressed.

- **Reliability** is the degree to which assessment consistently measures what it is intended to measure, in different courses and units, at different times, and with different markers.

- **Validity** is the degree to which an assessment task measures what it is intended to measure.

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1.0	APAC	New document.	18 February 2018	
1.1	APAC	Incl. Benchmarking Policy and Course Review Policy		
1.2	APAC	Incl. Course Review Policy		
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1.4	APAC	Incl. Course Discontinuation Policy		
2.0	APAC	Consolidation of AQ Policies. Grade Updates.		
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