

CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE AND ACADEMIC SENATE
November/ December 2010

Report from Academic Senate's Working Party on "Moderation"

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide Academic Senate with a final report on the deliberations of its Working Party which was established to develop a draft University-wide Moderation Policy.

2. Background

This working party was established by Academic Senate at its meeting on 26 May 2010 (AS 10.48) to consider ways of addressing the AUQA Panel's Affirmation (number 2):

AUQA affirms the findings of CSU's Academic Senate Self-Review, including the development of a University-wide moderation standard.

The AUQA Panel encouraged the development of a university-wide moderation standard because "moderation is employed quite widely as the University uses a significant number of external sessional markers in some disciplines". The development of a university-wide moderation policy is also critical as the University confers awards on CSU graduates taught by teaching partners in other countries and at Australian study centres.

The University does not have a "moderation" policy, but individual Faculties do have moderation processes and practices that have emerged over time. Moderation procedures are also included in contracts (operations' manuals) with teaching partners.

Academic Senate's working party was requested to develop for Academic Senate's approval a draft 'moderation' policy for use by all courses and subjects of CSU and its teaching partners.

The initial membership of the "Moderation" working party comprised:

Associate Professor J. Atkinson (Chair) – Head, International School of Business and Partnerships.

Dr. H. Cavanagh, Faculty of Science

Dr. A. Crampton, Faculty of Science

Dr. N. Drengenberg, Academic Secretary

Ms S. Thacker – Faculty of Business

Emeritus Professor R. Coombes

Others to join the working party were: Associate Professor A. Bain (School of Education) and Dr. F. Trede, (Deputy Director, EFPI)

The methodology used to identify options for the policy included: an examination of some existing moderation processes within CSU, consultations with relevant CSU staff, and a review of the AUQA good practice database as well as policies at other institutions. The working party met on three occasions between May and November 2010 to discuss issues and drafts of the document.

The policy covers undergraduate (including honours' courses) and postgraduate coursework offerings, but does not cover postgraduate research higher degrees. The policy requests the Faculties and Schools to develop specific guidelines/requirements, consistent with the general principles/requirements of the policy, and suggested guidelines are attached to the policy.

3. Discussion

The draft policy, *without* the School "guidelines", was provided to many staff and groups for feedback: the groups consulted included the Heads of School, the Deans, and the Sub-Deans (Learning and Teaching). There was support for a policy on moderation, but a great deal of the feedback received was concerned about the practical aspects of the proposal (especially due to expected "turnaround times" for assessments), the clarification of the responsibilities of various staff (such as Heads of School and course coordinators/directors), and the impact of the policy's requirements on the workloads of staff. The Deans requested that the working party provide "some practice guidelines" for the Schools (this has been completed, and the guidelines are included at the end of the draft policy). Further, at its September meeting, the Academic Programs Committee considered an earlier version of the draft policy that did not contain the suggested School guidelines. The Committee agreed that, prior to further consideration, the working party should provide clarification on the resourcing implications of the proposed policy (10/76). The guidelines attached provide some of the details of the possible resource implications. Further, many Schools and teaching partners already conduct moderation procedures consistent with the policy. The incremental resource implications of the policy (i.e. additional to those resources already employed) are difficult to measure with certainty. Importantly, however, this proposed policy complements very well recent initiatives to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience: the Academic Senate approved recommendations on the "CSU Subject", the five Common Teaching Standards (which contain requirements on the currency of materials and assessment practices), as well as the University's emerging strategic direction which focuses on courses, the student experience and research.

Some of the moderation phases of the policy could also be carried out by experienced casual staff, retired academics and others experienced in moderation. However, as one staff member commented: "to ensure integration with other CSU activities, moderators should have an understanding of relevant CSU standards (e.g. EFPI and flexible learning), the CSU Degree Initiative, the CSU subject, first year curriculum principles and Assessment 2020".

Further, effective moderation processes should help to reassure students that their performances are being evaluated with independent checks during the teaching period, and this may reduce the number of grade appeals.

The policy, once implemented, can be monitored and adjusted over time for "policy gaps" and for implementation issues such as unintended workload implications and other resource matters.

4. Recommendations of this Paper

That Academic Senate approves the recommendations of the Working Party.

Prepared by Emeritus Professor Robert Coombes,
On behalf of
Associate Professor John Atkinson, Chair of the Working Party
18 November 2010

CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

DRAFT MODERATION POLICY

1. The Scope of this Policy

- 1.1 This policy applies to all undergraduate (including undergraduate honours' courses) and coursework postgraduate courses and subjects
- 1.2 The policy establishes a framework of **minimum** requirements for the moderation of learning materials and assessment within which Faculties will devise specific guidelines for moderation procedures, allowing for the contractual arrangements involving teaching partners of Charles Sturt University

2. Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that:

- 2.1 Course and subject materials provided to students contain clearly-stated objectives, learning outcomes and current learning resources, and that students understand what is expected to complete satisfactorily the requirements of courses/subjects
- 2.2 Subject unit assessment tasks are stated unambiguously, consistent with the accepted curriculum principles for the course and the objectives and learning outcomes for the subject, and that they are appropriately and fairly weighted and are applied consistently irrespective of the place and modes of delivery
- 2.3 Everyone involved in delivery and assessment has a shared understanding of assessment principles, and will make informed assessment judgments that are transparent and applied consistently to all students.

3. The Objectives of Moderation

Moderation seeks to ensure that:

- 3.1 The subject examiners and course teams comply with the University's Policy on Assessment ("Principles of Assessment at CSU": http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/gcontm.htm)
- 3.2 Standards to be achieved by students are transparent, widely-understood and observed
- 3.3 Learning tasks, activities and assessments are consistent with stated learning objectives and outcomes and are set at the appropriate level (for the award)
- 3.4 Assessment procedures and practices are fair, culturally-appropriate and incorporate clearly-defined assessment (and marking) criteria that are fairly and consistently applied for all students in the same course and subject.

4. The Nature and Definition of Moderation

The minimum requirement at Charles Sturt University is that moderation of all assessment will be undertaken for students in the same offering of the subject.

At Charles Sturt University, moderation has three phases (pre-delivery moderation; moderation during delivery; post-delivery moderation):

4.1 Pre-Delivery Moderation:

4.1.1 **Moderation of Course and Subject Details:** involves a thorough examination of the content of the subject outline, both on the Mandatory Subject Information (MSI) and in the subject offering for the forthcoming teaching session. Course and subject unit moderation considers:

- the appropriateness and currency of the learning materials used
- the appropriateness of the subject content for the level of the award
- an analysis of the intended course objectives, and the learning outcomes, and the quality of the communication package provided to students
- the suitability of pre-requisite learning and the intended textbooks and references
- an analysis of resources available to students (such as web-based resources)
- the staffing of teaching partners
- an appraisal of the extent to which previous moderation reviews, feedback and comments have been addressed.

4.1.2 **Review of Assessment Tasks:** reaffirms the fairness, clarity and standards of the assessment tasks before they are used. Designated assessment tasks will be subject to pre-assessment moderation to ensure that:

- they are appropriately aligned to the learning outcomes and graduate attributes of the course
- assessments are fair and feasible, culturally-appropriate and that reasonable weightings are applied for each task
- they are appropriately spaced throughout the study period and achievable by students in the allocated timeframe
- their content and instructions are clearly presented, and
- the academic challenge they demand of students is consistent with the level of the award for the course.

4.2 **Moderation During Delivery:** includes checking the consistency of marking during the assignment, examination and grading process against the assessment/marking criteria to ensure consistency across groups of students in the same subject, as well as the review of grades before approval and communication to students.

4.3 **Post-Delivery Moderation:** is an examination of the effectiveness of the moderation process and includes a formal record on moderation methods used.

5. Moderation of the Three Phases

- 5.1 Pre-Delivery Moderation should be carried out according to the guidelines established by the Faculties, but at least once every two years
- 5.2 Moderation during Delivery and Post-Delivery Moderation will occur with each offering of a subject.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Dean or nominee will be responsible for moderation of courses and subjects taught by CSU teaching partners, in consultation with Heads of Schools
- 6.2 The Dean or nominee will provide a summary report to Academic Senate each year on the effectiveness of the moderation process within the Faculty, and the report will include a statement on the effectiveness of programs of induction and training of moderators
- 6.3 The Head of School or nominee will be responsible for the moderation of subject units.

7. Moderators

Moderators:

- 7.1 Will be appointed by the Head of School or nominee
- 7.2 Experienced staff, including people outside the University
- 7.3 Involved in the Pre-Delivery Moderation and in the Post-Delivery Moderation process cannot be staff involved in the delivery of the subject
- 7.4 Involved in the During Moderation process can be staff involved in the delivery of the subject.

8. The Role of Academic Senate

Academic Senate is responsible for:

- 8.1 Approving and amending this policy and the School/Course Moderation Guidelines
- 8.2 Monitoring the implementation and outcomes of this policy by receiving and reviewing annual reports (as part of the Annual Course Performance Report) from the nominated person in each Faculty.

END OF POLICY

THE CSU DRAFT MODERATION POLICY

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FACULTIES, SCHOOLS AND COURSE TEAMS (THIS IS NOT PART OF THE UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICY)

1. General Responsibilities

- 1.1 Faculties, Schools and Course Teams are responsible for developing their own moderation guidelines and internal reporting practices
- 1.2 The University will develop templates for the reports of moderators, Heads of School and others in relation to the moderation processes
- 1.3 The Dean or nominee is responsible for moderation of courses and subjects taught by CSU teaching partners, in consultation with Heads of Schools
- 1.4 The Head of School or nominee will be responsible for the moderation of subjects
- 1.5 The Dean or nominee will provide a summary report to Academic Senate each year on the effectiveness of the moderation process within the Faculty, and the report will include a statement on the effectiveness of programs of induction and training of moderators

2. Moderators and their Appointment

- 2.1 Moderators for subjects will be appointed by Heads of School or nominees
- 2.2 Moderators will be experienced staff, with appropriate skills, and may be people who are not currently employed as staff of the University
- 2.3 Moderators will be provided induction training on their expected tasks.

3. Pre-Delivery Moderation

3.1 *Moderation of Course and Subject details*

- 3.1.1 The moderator will examine the details included in the subject and the accuracy of information provided to students
- 3.1.2 For this purpose, the moderator will **not** be a member of the *current* teaching team, and can be a person from outside the University.
- 3.1.3 The moderator will provide feedback to the subject examiner, the Head of School or nominee, on the quality of the materials inspected
- 3.1.4 The subject examiner will consider the feedback provided and indicate to the Head of School or nominee which aspects of the feedback were accepted

3.2 *Review of Assessment Tasks*

- 3.2.1 Staff members responsible for preparing assessment tasks, in consultation with the Head of School and the course directors, will decide which moderation tasks will be moderated and will provide their designated tasks to the moderator
- 3.2.2 The moderator will examine the assessment tasks according to the criteria communicated to students and will provide feedback to the subject examiner, the Head of School or nominee, on the quality of the materials inspected
- 3.2.3 For this purpose, the moderator will **not** be a member of the *current* teaching team, and can be a person from outside the University.
- 3.2.4 The subject examiner will consider the feedback provided and indicate to the Head of School or nominee which aspects of the feedback were accepted
- 3.2.5 The Head of School or nominee will, if needed, resolve any disputes arising from the moderation process.

3.3 Pre-delivery moderation will take place at least once every two years for each subject.

3.4 The Head of School or nominee will choose the subject to be assessed each teaching period.

4. **Moderation during Delivery**

4.1 The moderator can be members of staff involved in teaching the subject in the current teaching period

4.2 The moderator will be appointed by the subject examiner

4.3 During the assessment moderation process, the moderator will check that, and confirm the extent to which, the specified assessment criteria have been applied to all students in the subject (and the pre-grading “checking” process may include School rules such as double-marking (of say final exam papers) for all potential “fail” grades)

4.4 The moderator will prepare a report on the consistency and fairness of the assessment and marking processes

4.5 The moderators report can be in the form of a standard template but there will be provision for written narrative

4.6 This type of moderation will be conducted with every offering of the subject.

5. **Post-Delivery Moderation**

This stage of the moderation process involves undertaking post-assessment moderation activities in accordance with University policy and School guidelines. The specific processes to support post-assessment moderation will vary according to the nature of the assessment tasks (e.g. exams), the sampling techniques and sample size, and the locations and modes of subject offerings.

5.1 The moderator **cannot** be a member of staff involved in teaching the subject in the *current* teaching period, and can be a person from outside the University.

5.2 The moderator will be appointed by the Head of School after consultation with the subject examiner

5.3 The moderator will prepare a formal report on the overall moderation process which can be in the form of a standard template, but there will be provision for written narrative.

5.4 This type of moderation will be conducted with every offering of the subject.

6. **Reports, recording and monitoring of the moderation processes and outcomes**

6.1 Templates may be prepared by the University for the use of moderators and those responsible for making written reports relating to moderation

6.2 Faculties will decide on the internal reporting processes for each stage of the moderation

6.3 The Head of School or nominee will maintain a record of the moderation processes

6.4 The Head of School will provide a report to the Dean on moderation undertaken within the School

6.5 The Dean will provide a brief report (as part of the Annual Course Performance report) to Academic Senate on moderation undertaken within the Faculty

End of Guidelines