

Assessment moderation

"One of the most powerful research-based strategies for linking assessment to improved instructional practice is teacher moderation. This process involves educators in a collaborative discussion of student work based on predetermined assessment criteria."¹

OVERVIEW

This Professional Practice Note guides teachers and school leaders on how to use moderation to improve student learning growth. Moderation supports:

- the development and use of consistent assessment practices across classrooms and teachers
- the development of metacognitive² and self-regulation skills to enable students to monitor and lead their own learning.

Understanding the process of moderation and how it can be used in schools is a driver for improvement of student learning outcomes. Moderation enables teachers within a school to develop and apply a consistent and precise language of assessment which can be used by teachers, students and families to describe and discuss student learning.

This Professional Practice Note, together with the [Practice Principles](#), may be a useful reference point for future planning and improvement and can support schools at all stages of implementing moderation for formative assessment.

DEFINING MODERATION FOR AND OF ASSESSMENT

Moderation is the practice of teachers or students sharing and developing their understanding of what learning looks like by examining examples of different types and quality of students' work and comparing these with formal standards and success criteria (the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards). The practice gives teachers and students the collaboration structure and processes to look closely at evidence (student work samples) to establish:

- what is to be learned?
- how is learning progressing?
- what will be learned next?³

Moderation enables discussion about:

- how to interpret the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards
- what students need to learn to meet Standards
- what success looks like.⁴

Moderation is an assessment practice, but it is also a technique that strengthens other assessment practices. It provides a structure and process for teaching teams, teachers, classes and individual students to develop a shared and deep understanding of learning intentions, success criteria and the curriculum standards on which assessment is based.⁵

Collaboration underpinned by evidence is at the heart of successful assessment practices, and evidence of student learning is key to this. Evidence is directly observable: you should be able to see it, touch it or hear it.⁶

Moderation can be used by both teacher and students:

¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). *Teacher Moderation: Collaborative Assessment of Student Work*. Retrieved 27 February 2018:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Teacher_Moderation.pdf

Masters, G (2015) 'Rethinking formative and summative assessment' *Teacher*, ACER. Retrieved 27 February 2018: <https://www.teachermagazine.com.au/columnists/geoff-masters/rethinking-formative-and-summative-assessment>

² DET – Professional Practice Note 14 – Using Metacognition to Support Student Self-Regulation and Empowerment: (insert hyperlink when available)

³ DET – Professional Practice Note 6 – Formative Assessment: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Professional_practice_note_6_formative_assessment.pdf

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). *Teacher Moderation: Collaborative Assessment of Student Work*. Retrieved 27 February 2018: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Teacher_Moderation.pdf

⁵ DET Assessment in practice – Moderation: <http://www.insight.vic.edu.au/assessment-in-practice/moderation>

⁶ Griffin, P (2009). (op. cit), p.58

- **Teacher moderation** is a process by which teachers, usually with different experiences and from across a range of year levels, meet to review student work samples based on the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards.
- **Student moderation** is a process of embedding learning intentions and empowering students to self-identify what success looks like. This might be via examination of (de-identified) student work samples, use of rubrics to self-assess or peer-assess, and collaborative identification of learning goals.

Moderation can be linked to data walls⁷, as both approaches create vehicles for robust discussions about evidence of student learning. Both moderation and data walls feed into the design of learning and actionable classroom strategies. Moderation also helps build collective efficacy – that is, teachers' collective power to improve learning outcomes for students.

USING MODERATION

The purpose of moderation is to make consistent, valid, evidence-based decisions.

Moderation can be used within an improvement cycle:

- **before assessment** to build agreement around what achievement of standards looks like and plan the teaching and learning program
- **as assessment** to establish student understanding, monitor progress, and adjust a learning program
- **after assessment** to support consistency of teacher judgement and alignment with curriculum standards.⁸

Using moderation before assessment, to align curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting

Schools can use moderation to align curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting with the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards.

For example, a moderation can be used:

- as one step in the design of summative assessment tasks
- to develop marking guides for a learning area or subject that use student work samples to show how student achievement can be linked to the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards
- to determine learning intentions and describe a learning continuum using the Victorian Curriculum F-10
- to identify phases within a learning continuum and develop a rubric that breaks up complex learning into small, increasingly complex segments which support collection of evidence of student learning and consistency of assessment practices.⁹

Incorporated into a whole school planning process, moderation supports consistent teacher judgements, accuracy of reported results and effective gathering of evidence of student learning.¹⁰

Using moderation as diagnostic assessment to establish students' current levels of understanding

Moderation can also be a part of diagnostic assessment:

- a rubric developed in a moderation process can be also used to gather information about student understanding prior to starting a unit of work
- a teacher can collect evidence of students' current achievement levels which can be compared against the rubric as part of a moderation discussion within a teaching team

⁷ DET – Professional Practice Note 6 – Using Data Walls: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Professional_practice_note_5_data_walls.pdf

⁸ Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design – Expanded 2nd Edition*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

⁹ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). (2018). Guide to formative Assessment Rubrics. VCAA. Retrieved 5 February 2019:

https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/foundation10/viccurriculum/formative_assessment.aspx

¹⁰ Department of Education Queensland. (2018) 'Assessment and moderation in Prep to Year 10'. Queensland Government. Retrieved 5 February 2019:

<https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculums/Documents/assessment-moderation.pdf>

- the teaching team can then identify what students are ready to learn and discuss how to set learning objectives, decide on an instructional focus and select effective strategies within each learning area.¹¹

Using moderation for student self-regulation, to monitor progress and adjust learning

Moderation supports students to develop important self-regulation and metacognitive skills including: self-reflection, self-questioning, and critical questioning. Students may use moderation:

- To set individual and collective goals. For example, teachers might invite students to use self-questioning to reflect on success criteria developed for a lesson, self-evaluate and set their own goals, and then follow this up with a group discussion that invites students to explore the thinking of others, develop critical listening skills and come to consensus about what they want to explore in more detail.
- To check for understanding. For example, a teacher might invite the class to discuss the assessment criteria and standards from a unit of work and use anonymous work samples from another class to discuss and rate the samples.
- To monitor own progress. For example, a teacher might give students a copy of a formative assessment rubric containing examples of phases within a learning continuum and invite them to align these to their learning goals.

Even very young children are able to use a wide range of metacognitive strategies to set goals and check for understanding.¹² Students with a strong self-regulation skills are able to reflect on their own knowledge, set goals and plan for increasingly complex learning tasks, habits which enable them to recognise and lead their own learning and teach others.¹³

Using moderation after assessment to support consistency of teacher judgements against the relevant achievement standards

After assessment, teachers can use moderation to ensure consistency of teacher judgement about student achievement. Effective moderation supports teachers to:

- develop deep understanding of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards
- gather evidence of student learning against the achievement standards from assessment tasks, assessment folios, and other examples of student work, and cross reference these with marking guides or rubrics that document the aspects of the achievement standard being assessed
- give students specific feedback that moves learning forward.

Moderation can be carried out at multiple points within the teaching and learning cycle. It supports consistent assessment based on evidence-based evaluation of student progress and generates reliable data that teachers can confidently discuss with students and their parents.

AN APPROACH TO SUCCESSFUL MODERATION

The following steps describe an approach to a successful teacher moderation process. Adapt these to set up a teacher moderation in your school. This could be completed with your professional learning team or team meeting:

Building the foundation

A shared understanding of student achievement will be firmly anchored in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and use the language of the continuum of student learning. This process will vary across schools, but it is based on teachers developing the skills and the tools to judge where students' work is on the continuum.

- Start with the Curriculum Achievement Standards for your level. As a group, look at the overall skills and knowledge described and break this down into a continuum of learning to be delivered over the teaching period.

¹¹ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). (op.cit)

¹² DET – [Professional Practice Note 14 – Using Metacognition to Support Student Self-Regulation and Empowerment](#)

¹³ Frey, N., Hattie, J., Fisher, D (2018), Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners, Grades K-12: Maximizing Skill, Will, and Thrill. Corwin, CA, pp. 96-113

- Use your continuum to inform your choice and design of assessment tools. You might be creating a rubric, writing a marking guide or developing a proficiency scale. Design your assessment tools around your common assessment tasks.

This process helps you, as a group of teachers, to build a shared language and understanding of what a student needs to be able to do to meet the achievement standard and how you, as teachers, will be able to recognise it. This is the foundation work for successful moderation.

Before moderation

- Decide on an assessment task that reflects the objectives of the learning program, is connected with the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and will identify students' understandings and gaps.
- Gather the assessment tools and resources to support assessment (e.g. rubrics, checklists, Curriculum Achievement Standards).
- Distribute copies of student work.
- Decide who will chair or facilitate the session.

During moderation

- Read the student's work aloud and discuss as a group.
- Assess using the criteria described in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards for the appropriate curriculum levels.
- Collectively discuss strengths, gaps, patterns and trends.
- Set goals and share teaching strategies. Plan next steps.

After moderation

- Deliver next steps.
- Begin cycle again and assess student progress to determine whether the instructional strategies were successful.
- Set new goals.¹⁴

ADVICE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Moderation is a key opportunity for teachers to participate in powerful professional conversations.

Challenging conversations invite teachers to work in teams and develop shared ownership of the strategies and solutions they use. Schools that use moderation often have a strong, open culture of challenging professional conversation about effective teaching. Teachers participating in moderation work in teams and develop a shared language and ownership of assessment practices and strategies.

School leaders play an essential role in creating the culture and resources to enable moderation. They can:

- set up a leadership team discussion about how to develop and implement strategies to enhance moderation of student work
- build in the structures and space to enable dialogues based on observation of what students do, say, make or write
- ensure that teachers understand the purpose of moderation, and how it fits into their assessment design
- model use of moderation as part of a planning, and as a repeat process, working in a regular, short-interval cycle (e.g. two weeks)
- encourage the use of moderation as a way for teachers to develop a shared language and consistent understanding of Achievement Standards in the Victorian Curriculum F-10
- actively encourage teachers to talk about what they can do to improve their teaching
- establish the role of moderation in criterion-based assessment, evaluation of learning gain, high expectations of all students, and solid understandings of what is expected of each student.

All of these actions emphasise the fundamental principle that all students can learn.¹⁵

¹⁴ Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education, (op. cit), p.3

¹⁵ See High Impact Teaching Strategy 10 – Differentiated teaching and Practice Principle 1 – High expectations for every student: DET – High Impact Teaching Strategies:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/hits.aspx>

DET - Practice Principles:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/principlesexcellence.aspx>

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Moderation is an effective way for teachers to build their own formative assessment skills.

- Teachers can use moderation to invite collaborative discussion on design of a learning program based on criteria identified in a set of Assessment Standards.
- Moderation allows teachers to collectively discuss results and come to shared understandings of student achievement.
- Teachers may find it useful to consider what data they use to analyse and evaluate student understanding.
- As moderation often involves teachers from different year levels, it can be a particularly rich way for teachers to discuss and apply high-impact teaching strategies based on evidence.
- Teachers within cultures that encourage challenging conversations can use moderation to give each other feedback: where to focus, where to adjust their practice, and what is working well.
- Teachers can engage students directly in their own moderation and develop their self-regulation ability by explicitly teaching the criteria they are looking for and introducing tools such as rubrics, or checklists.

EXTENDING MODERATION

Moderation could be part of an inquiry-based improvement cycle for a professional learning community (PLC) team.

Moderation reflects the [Practice Principles](#) on: High Expectations, Curriculum Planning, Rigorous assessment practice and evidence-based strategies.

Moderation can be used to embed and develop the [High Impact Teaching Strategies](#).

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PRACTICE

[Writing moderation at Irymple Primary School](#)

Irymple Primary School developed a moderation resource

based on the Victorian Curriculum to enable teachers to assess students' writing with consistency and accuracy across the school¹⁶.

[AITSL Moderating student work illustration of practice](#)

A Year 1 teacher works with a colleague to analyse a sample of student work. The teachers identify the strengths and areas for improvement in writing and set learning foci and instructional teaching strategies for future learning¹⁷.

OTHER SUPPORT

This note is part of a series of professional practice notes to support school based staff to continue improving their practice. See [Professional Practice Elements](#) for more information. For more information, or to share your feedback on this resource, please email:

professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au.

¹⁶ Writing moderation at Irymple Primary School. DET. Retrieved 5 February 2019:

<https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Resource/LandingPage?ObjectId=2757dfa2-186f-4f51-a64c-83a12a9a9027>

¹⁷ Moderating student work. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Retrieved 5 February 2019:

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/moderating-student-work-illustration-of-practice>