

NATIONAL STANDARDS FACTSHEET

July 2010

What is moderation?

Moderation is the process of teachers sharing their expectations and understanding of standards with each other in order to improve the consistency of their decisions about student learning.

The moderation process helps teachers make dependable decisions about student progress and achievement. It improves decisions at one point in time, as well as over time.

Schools use moderation processes to increase assessment dependability.

The moderation process

- The moderation process begins with the planning of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Moderation involves a group of teachers discussing evidence of student learning.
- Assessments of the evidence are made using specific shared criteria.
- The criteria may be exemplified through annotated examples and other national resources (e.g. the Running Record DVD/booklet, the Diagnostic Interview and Getting Started Numeracy Development Project Books and New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars).
- Moderation may involve teachers within a group, within and across a school, or from different schools.

Schools design their moderation processes to suit their situation and needs. They consider factors such as:

- the purpose, learning area, and context of the moderation
- the size of the school
- the number of student samples to be included
- how the moderation will occur over time
- how the school will document its moderation processes as part of its assessment procedure.

Why is moderation important?

Making reliable, valid, evidence-based decisions

Moderation helps teachers to increase the dependability of the assessment information they gather. This improves the decisions they make about student learning.

Teacher-guided moderation between students helps them to develop their skills of self and peer-assessment. Moderation has a direct, positive impact on teaching and learning as both teacher and student develop shared expectations and understanding of what quality work looks like and what criteria define it. Both students' and teachers' assessment capability can be enhanced.

This information can also encourage the development of teachers' self-review skills and inform professional development decision-making.

Moderating OTJs

The previous section describes how overall teacher judgments (OTJs) involve many forms of assessment evidence. When teachers draw together evidence to form an overall teacher judgment there is a need to ensure consistency of those judgments between teachers.

To accomplish this, schools need to establish a moderation process within their assessment programme. The process needs to consider how teachers interpret National Standards as well as how they make their judgments from the assessment information they have gathered.

Moderation will involve professional discussions amongst staff within a school and, where appropriate, across a cluster of schools. Teachers can justify their OTJ in terms of the dependability of the evidence and the process used to determine the OTJ.

Moderation supports assessment for learning

The moderation process engages teachers and students with the principles of assessment for learning.

Recognising where assessment for learning is interwoven through the moderation process is important so school leaders can value and emphasise this with teacher moderators.

Learning conversations

- Teachers and students discuss their interpretations of achievement criteria using evidence.
- Teachers and students compare samples of work with exemplars.
- Teachers and students clarify current skills, knowledge and understanding, past improvements, and future learning goals.
- Students receive dependable achievement information to act on.

Teaching conversations

- Teachers learn from each other so curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge improves.
- Professional learning needs can be identified when analysing the achievement data or through the moderation.
- Classroom teaching and learning programmes can be adjusted to meet student learning needs.
- Individual and collective student achievement trends become clearer.

Partnership conversations

- Evidence of learning can be confidently shared.
- Reliable information is used to make teaching and learning decisions, which helps when communicating with other professional agencies.
- Dependable information can be discussed with parents, families, and whānau.
- Dependable achievement information influences strategic directions, including budget allocation and professional development planning.

Assessment practice improves

- Systemic and individual teacher decisions are made with increased confidence.
- Reliability, validity, and fairness within the process are enhanced, so achievement decisions are defensible.
- Dependable information is recorded and used for a variety of teaching, learning, and reporting purposes.

Making consistent decisions over time

Making consistent, reliable, and valid decisions across different points in time is important when schools report student progress or compare cohort data with historical information.

Assessment judgments can change over time. This is called 'assessment creep'. All schools experience variables that challenge the consistency of practice such as staff changes, changes in student numbers, or changing education demands.

Consistent moderation over time can prevent this in a number of ways:

- Always applying the same standardised criteria ensures consistency over time.

- Where nationally standardised criteria or exemplars are available, these become the same external reference used each year or each time. These exemplars would be used within the practice phase of the moderation process.
- Moderators will change over time but the same criteria and associated references will remain and continue to guide decisions.
- To augment this approach schools add their own school-based student samples to incorporate local flavour, contexts or cultural richness to the exemplar collection.

When a group is formed for moderating OTJs, it (or members) may want to consider the following:

- The role of a leader to oversee the moderation process. This person could also be responsible for gathering samples of student work and guiding the group through discussions.
- Begin the moderation process at the planning stage of teaching with all teachers involved. In smaller schools this may be school-wide and in larger schools it may be within syndicates.
- Before teaching and learning, provide opportunity for all teachers to share their understandings, expectations and interpretations of National Standards. This provides opportunities for biases and prejudices to be aired and discussed, and shared expectations to be developed about how to arrive at an OTJ in relation to National Standards.
- Consider what supporting evidence will be used:
 - What assessment activities are used at different year levels?
 - Is practice consistent for assessment tools such as Running Records and NumPA?
 - Do moderation procedures for marking writing or tests need revision?
- It is a good idea for teachers to collaboratively make judgments about a sample of student work before assessing their own class's work. Teachers could gather several sets of evidence on which to base OTJs – focusing on difficult sets such as those they consider near the border between judgments, or with a high level of inconsistency between different sources of evidence.
- After the teaching and learning process, teachers:
 - make OTJs about their own students' achievement
 - collate samples for the moderation process and provide copies to other teachers
 - meet to discuss their judgments of a sampling of students' achievement based on the evidence they have
 - have, through discussion and clarification, come to an 'agreed' judgment of each student's achievement in relation to National Standards. This may not always be achieved, but the aim is to reach a greater level of consensus over time.
- Useful follow up questions:
 - How high was the level of comparability across teachers?
 - Was the overall teacher judgment of the first, fifth, middle, and last student sample (for example) consistent and fair?

Roles

The moderation leader's role

- Plan the moderation session to ensure that there is time for discussion in small groups as well as across groups.
- Determine how the samples of learning will be gathered and how many. This can be achieved in a number of ways: e.g. every 5th or 7th piece, or samples teachers consider represent the top, middle, and bottom of their class.
- Establish what annotation is expected (e.g. learning intention, details of the task, support given) and make clear how/when/where the samples are to be collected prior to conducting the session.

- Keep a record of the process and retain annotated samples with the judgment reached. These should be kept in a file for future reference.

Student role

- Students can actively participate in selecting evidence (e.g. samples of their work) that best demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.
- Participating in the moderation process benefits students by supporting teaching and learning goals. The process develops students' understanding of the desired outcomes and success criteria, and is closely linked to developing and using the skills of self and peer-assessment.

Teacher role

- Within the classroom setting, teachers should provide opportunities for students to participate in the moderation process.
- At the syndicate or school level, all teachers participate in the moderation process.
- A moderation leader should be identified as this is a crucial role requiring particular skills, knowledge, and recognition.
- Willingness to engage in critical debate and the ability to use evidence to challenge viewpoints should be encouraged and valued.
- The process of moderation can build teachers' content knowledge through these professional exchanges.
- Teachers share their expectations and interpretations in order to clarify their understandings about what students have achieved and where their next learning steps are situated.

School role

- Schools may need to review their assessment cycles to incorporate regular moderation.
- Schools need to provide regular opportunities for teachers to share their interpretations and understandings of criteria.
- School leaders need to actively support the moderation process.
- Schools should ensure their assessment practices and moderation processes are recorded in sufficient detail.
- Schools need to develop consistent and cohesive policies and procedures for moderation, and ensure sustainability of practice.

Questions for discussion

- What moderation processes are currently used in our school and what can we take from these to other learning areas where reliable information is important?
- Who leads or should lead the moderation process and how?
- How is our school going to get an effective moderation process established and where could we go to for support?
- How involved are students in the moderation process? How can we support them to moderate their own work within their classrooms?
- Does our school already have annotated exemplars available for teachers to use as references?
- Have our moderation processes been recorded and do we use them to maintain a consistent approach?
- Which school(s) would be suitable for networking with to extend our moderation processes further? How consistent are decisions across schools?
- Who could assist our school in this way so interested groups can have confidence in the school's assessment system?