

## How well does qualitative moderation (review) work?

Studies conducted by education authorities responsible for senior secondary certification on the comparability of levels of achievement support the view that qualitative moderation processes work very well. Qualitative moderation is carried out successfully in various forms in other Australian states.

## Who does the qualitative moderation (review)?

Teachers from senior secondary colleges carry out qualitative moderation with designated Subject Group Leaders guiding the processes on the day. Significant issues arising from moderation days are referred to Board Committees. The Assessment and Certification Committee informs and advises the Board about assessment and moderation issues. The Vocational Education and Training Committee updates and advises the Board on current issues in vocational education. Board subject panels are closely involved in curriculum development and qualitative moderation processes. The Board's committees and the subject panels are supported by officers of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

## Who is responsible for comparability?

System checks and balances help to maintain and monitor comparability of Unit Grades and Scores. The Board provides guidelines for efficient, effective and accountable assessment procedures to establish and maintain standards and ensure consistency of decision-making. Each college has responsibility for deciding Unit Grades and Scores. Students have the responsibility for checking their own grades and scores.

## More Information

There are staff members in your college who can explain and give advice on this brochure or any other in this series.

Other pamphlets in this series that are available are:

Publication	Explanation
<a href="#">What's the AST?</a>	Explains the ACT Scaling Test and its role in your assessment program.
<a href="#">What's the ATAR?</a>	Explains the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank and details how it is calculated.
<a href="#">Your rights to appeal</a>	Explains the processes available for having results for Year 11 and/or 12 assessment tasks, units or courses reviewed.
<a href="#">What certificates could you obtain?</a>	Explains all the different certificates you could be awarded at the end of Year 12, and what's on them.
<a href="#">What's Plagiarism? How you can avoid it</a>	A guide to what constitutes plagiarism and how you can avoid it. Citation and referencing examples are included.
<a href="#">What's Plagiarism? How you can avoid it Advice for Teachers</a>	A guide to what constitutes plagiarism. Procedures and strategies for dealing with plagiarism and where to find resources and further information.
<a href="#">Equitable Assessment and Special consideration in Assessment in Years 11 and 12</a>	A guide to reasonable accommodation in assessment for students with special circumstances. (Student and Teacher versions)
<a href="#">What additional programs are available?</a>	A guide to additional programs available for senior secondary students in the ACT.

Further information may be obtained at: <http://www.bsas.act.edu.au>

Enquires may also be directed to the:  
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 Phone: (02) 6205 7181  
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*What's*

Moderation?



**BSAS**

**BOARD OF  
SENIOR  
SECONDARY  
STUDIES**

Australian  
Capital Territory

# What's

# Moderation?

This pamphlet explains moderation of achievements in college-based assessment:

- What is moderation?
- Why is moderation necessary?
- How is moderation carried out?
- How well does moderation work?
- Who does the moderation?
- Who is responsible for comparability?

## What is moderation?

Moderation is a set of processes designed and implemented by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies to:

- provide system wide comparability of grades and scores derived from college-based assessment
- form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary colleges
- maintain the quality of college-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (ACT BSSS) uses two methods to ensure that these goals are achieved:

- Qualitative moderation - unit grades from portfolios of student assessment are moderated by peer review against system wide criteria
- Statistical moderation - scores from student assessment within T courses are placed on the same scale using results from the ACT Scaling Test (AST).

This document focuses on the processes of qualitative moderation. Statistical moderation is dealt with in other ACT BSSS publications including another pamphlet in this series - What's the ATAR?

The broad processes of moderation include:

- Establishment of system wide assessment requirements, criteria and standards in Board Course Frameworks
- Accreditation of college courses from which students' results may be recorded on Board certificates
- Validation of portfolios of student assessment responses (Year 11 and 12) to establish standards and maintain comparability of assessment outcomes
- Feedback to colleges about consensus-based grade decisions
- The development of college action plans to address problems arising from the review process.

Qualitative moderation (review) involves teachers in and across colleges reaching consensus about students' unit grades through consultation, negotiation and reference to published criteria and standards. The moderation process takes place twice each year. In March, the student responses from the previous year's Year 11 cohort are reviewed. In August, the student responses from the first semester of Year 12 are reviewed. This means that Year 11 and Year 12 student work from the same cohort of students is reviewed twice.

Courses classified as A, T, M, C and V are submitted for moderation. H courses (university courses) are also submitted but are not part of the college based moderation model.

## Why is moderation necessary?

Moderation is necessary for producing valid, credible and publicly acceptable Board certificates in a college-based curriculum and assessment system. Colleges accommodate a diversity of students' needs. Local development of learning and assessment experiences to meet these needs is encouraged and supported by the Board. Moderation provides for comparability of standards across senior secondary colleges, each of which offers a large number of accredited courses.

The public, the tertiary education sector and industry in the Australian Capital Territory expect a particular level of achievement in one college to have the same meaning as the same level of achievement in the same subject area in every other college. Unit Grades and Unit Scores must be comparable, so that scores and the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank are meaningful and grades are valid for the system.

## How is qualitative moderation (review) carried out?

Frameworks are approved following writing by teachers, members of subject panels and officers of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies. Teachers develop courses based on approved Frameworks and submit the courses to subject panels for accreditation. Teachers provide learning and assessment experiences for students as outlined in the accredited course, and prepare presentations of portfolios of students' assessment responses for validation (by colleagues) on moderation days. These colleagues provide advice to colleges about the quality of the college decisions on standards of student work and the quality of assessment practice.