

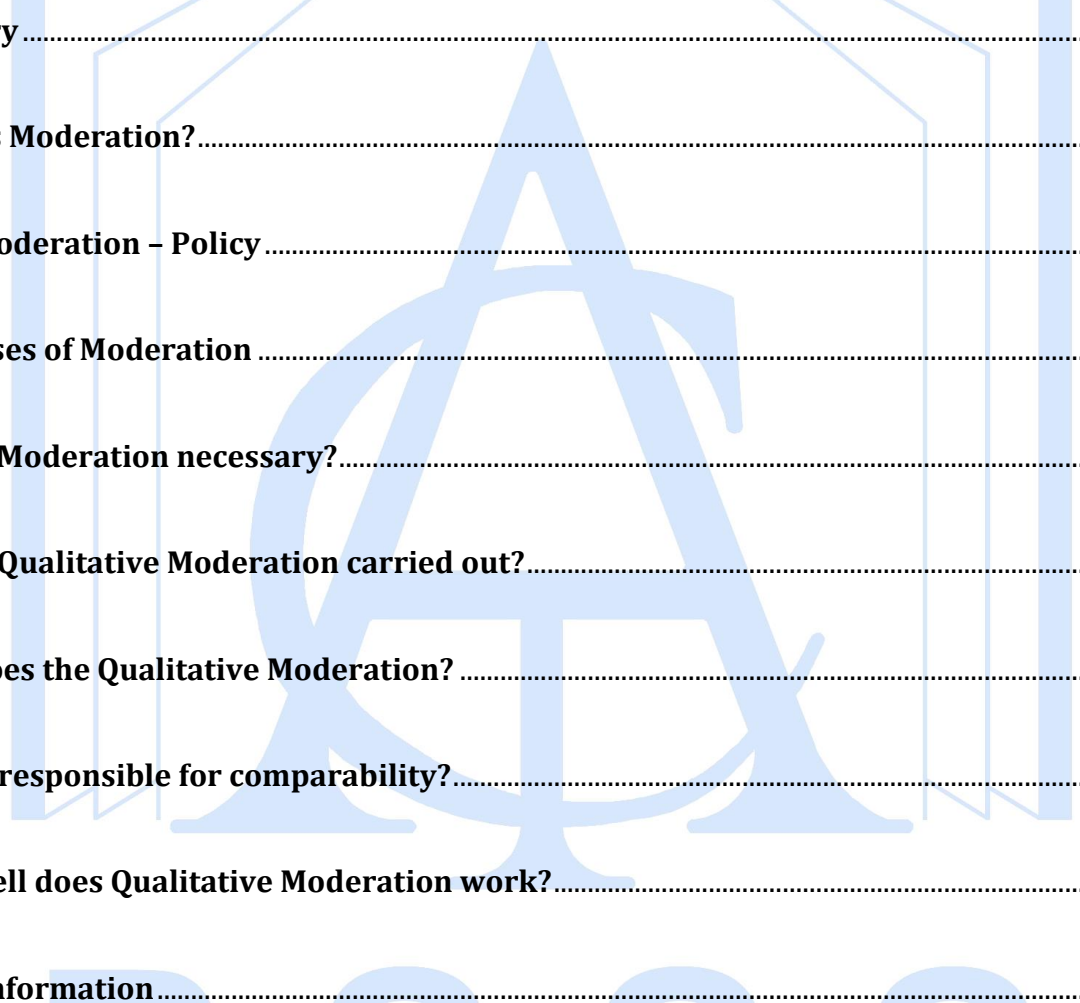


# What is Moderation?



## BOARD OF SENIOR SECONDARY STUDIES

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# Glossary

Accreditation	The fact of being officially recognized, accepted or approved of <sup>1</sup> by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies
Board Committee	A group of teachers or relevant professionals who collect information to inform the Board of Senior Secondary Studies on matters concerning Assessment and Certification (ACC), Curriculum (CAC), Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Innovation (INC).
Framework	System documents for Years 11 and 12 which provide the basis for development and accreditation of any course within a designated learning area. Frameworks provide a common basis for assessment, moderation and reporting of student outcomes in courses based on the framework.
Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance refers to the checking of systems and processes, as well as providing guidance on assessment related issues, to ensure reliability and comparability across schools in senior secondary assessment.
Qualitative Moderation or Peer-review (social) Moderation	The collaborative process of teacher led reviews of student work to compare grades and ensure reliability and validity across the ACT certification system.
Quantitative Moderation	Quantitative Moderation involves scaling and meshing of marks, as well as using a scaling test such as the AST.
Standards-referenced assessment	Standards-referenced assessment describes a student's performance in terms of a defined standard of achievement for a unit. The standards describe a range of levels of achievement (Achievement Standards), as detailed in the Framework documents.
Validity	The quality of being based on truth or reason <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/accreditation>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/validity>

# What is Moderation?

Every year, colleges close for 2 days whilst teachers meet for Moderation Day. During this time an important aspect of the ACT Senior Secondary System is taking place. What is the purpose of these days?

Moderation is a set of processes designed and implemented by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) to ensure that teacher judgement, when assessing student work, is reliable and consistent across colleges. It is a quality assurance process. It maintains the quality of college-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

The ACT BSSS uses two methods to ensure the validity of Board certificates:

- Qualitative moderation (which occurs on Moderation Days) – where unit grades from portfolios of student assessment are moderated by peer review against system wide criteria (Achievement Standards)
- Statistical moderation – where scores from student assessment within T courses are placed on the same scale using results from the Act Scaling Test (AST).

Statistical moderation is discussed in other ACT BSSS publications including another pamphlet in this series – *What's the ATAR?*

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*Moderation allows for the comparability of grades and scores derived from college-based assessment.*

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3 <http://jillerricksondawson.blogspot.com/2014/09/ideal-collaboration-day-25.html>

# BSSS Moderation – Policy

## 5.1.1 Vision

Moderation will enrich the development of assessment through maintaining and enhancing the quality assurance and validation of assessment, as well as supporting excellence in pedagogy and a professional learning culture to encourage collaboration at school and system levels.

## 5.1.2 Principles

That moderation will:

- focus on evidence-based professional judgement of assessment
- enrich and refine teacher understanding of quality assessment and its development
- be transparent, informative, objective and lack bias
- enhance professional and public confidence.

## 5.1.3 Purpose

Moderation systems:

- ensure system wide comparability of grades on the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate
- ensure system wide comparability of scaled course scores on the ACT Tertiary Entrance Statement
- form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary schools
- involve the Board and schools in cooperation and partnership
- maintain the quality of school-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

*BSSS Policy and Procedures p. 49*

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*Moderation enriches the development of assessment*

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# Processes of Moderation

The broad processes of moderation include:

- Establishment of system wide assessment requirements, criteria and standards contained in the Board endorsed 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) through discussion, to establish standards and maintain comparability of assessment outcomes
- Feedback to colleges about consensus-based grade decisions
- Development of college action plans to address disparities arising from the review process.

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*Moderation involves feedback to schools and colleges*

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Qualitative moderation (or peer-review moderation) 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 Year 11 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 year group 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.

The public, the tertiary education sector and industry in the ACT 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 scores must be comparable, so that scores and the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) are meaningful and grades are valid for the system.

## How is Qualitative Moderation carried out?

Frameworks are approved following writing by teachers, members of subject panels and officers of the BSSS. 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.

## Who does the Qualitative Moderation?

All teachers of Years 11 and 12 carry out qualitative moderation with designated and trained Subject Group Leaders guiding the processes on the day. Any issues arising from Moderation Days are referred to Board Committees. The Assessment and Certification Committee (ACC) informs and advises the Board about assessment and moderation issues. The Vocational Education and Training Committee (VET) 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 BSSS.

# Who is responsible for comparability?

Everyone in the system has a responsibility.

- The Board has a responsibility to provide guidelines for efficient, effective and accountable assessment procedures to establish and maintain standards and ensure consistency of decision-making, through quality assurance processes
- Each college has a responsibility for deciding unit grades and scores
- Students have a responsibility for checking their own grades and scores in ACS.

# How well does Qualitative Moderation 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. Meiers, Ozolins, and McKenzie, 2007, p14<sup>4</sup>, note that if teachers are discussing student work, they are seeing the consequences of their teaching and so this professional development is directly linked to student achievement, rather than focusing on aspects of teaching.

Qualitative moderation is carried out successfully in various forms in other Australian states.



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<sup>4</sup> Meiers, M., Ozolins, C., and McKenzie, P., (2007). *Improving Consistency in Teacher Judgements: an Investigation for the Department of Education, Victoria*. Retrieved from: [http://research.acer.edu.au/tll\\_misc/19/](http://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/19/)



# 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 from the [BSSS website](#) are:

<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 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="#">Academic Integrity: Student Guide</a>	A guide to what constitutes plagiarism and how you can avoid it. Citation and referencing examples are included.
<a href="#">Equitable Assessment and Special Consideration in Assessment in Years 11 and 12: Teacher Guide</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.bsss.act.edu.au>

Enquires may also be directed to:

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