

Teacher-based Assessment at the Upper Secondary Level of Education — an Exploration of the Interaction between ‘Teachers as Assessors’ and ‘Teachers as Moderators’

Upper secondary schooling is characterised by high-stakes assessment systems used to certify students’ achievements at the conclusion of this period of education. In Australia, as in many other countries, whether the assessment system consists entirely of school-based assessment components, externally marked assessment components, or a combination of school-based and externally marked assessment components, the judgments about students’ achievements are typically made by teachers.

This paper examines the teacher-based assessment system as it has evolved over the past 30 years in an Australian statutory assessment authority with legislative responsibilities for assessment and certification of the achievements of upper secondary students. It maps the variety of methods that are used at present to moderate school-based and external assessment components. Importantly, it explores the nature of the relationships between two pivotal roles performed by the teacher: assessor (of the standard of work of his or her own students) and moderator (of the standard of work of other teachers’ students). It interrogates these relationships in relation to three goals: being fairer to students; building the capacities of teachers to understand assessment processes and thereby improve learning; and strengthening public confidence in the fairness of the judgments. The paper suggests that a teacher-based assessment system can be a solid basis for achieving these goals.

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This paper argues that as the judgments about upper secondary students' achievements are almost exclusively made by teachers in many upper secondary assessment authorities, it is appropriate to refer to this assessment system as 'teacher-based assessment', and that this form of assessment should be acknowledged, encouraged, and valued.

This paper explores the nature of the relationships between two pivotal roles that the teacher performs, as demonstrated in the assessment processes conducted by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA). These are assessor (of the standard of work of the teacher's own students) and moderator (of the standard of work of other teachers' students). SSABSA is a statutory authority of the State Government of South Australia, and has the legislative responsibility for curriculum, assessment, certification, reporting, and research into upper secondary education. SSABSA administers the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), a baccalaureate-style qualification awarded to students who complete particular requirements, generally in their final 2 years of upper secondary education.

The assessment system used for the SACE presents a particularly rich base for exploring the nature of the relationships between the two assessment roles of teachers. This is because over the past 30 years a diverse range of subjects has successively been included in the upper secondary curriculum. These subjects have varying assessment schemes, some consisting entirely of school-based assessment components and others consisting of a combination of school-based and external assessment components. Operating on the combinations of assessment components is a variety of moderation methods. Thus the diversity of subjects, combinations of assessment components, and variety of moderation methods within by the SACE provide a fertile ground for exploring the nature of the interaction between the roles of 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator'.

Although it is clear what 'teacher as assessor' means, a broad view is taken in this paper of what constitutes 'moderation'. It includes, but goes beyond, a view of moderation as: "the process of reconciling or reducing differences in the judgements and standards used by different raters within a rating procedure, usually at meetings of raters at which performances at relevant levels are rated independently and then discussed" (McNamara, 2000, p. 144) to incorporate the process of making judgments of (other teachers') students' work produced under external assessment conditions. It includes, for example, the marking of an external examination paper. Thus it goes beyond "social moderation ... which describes a family of methods for bringing standards into line through the exercise of professional judgment" (Linn, 1993 in Newton, 2005, p. 111). In this paper, moderation processes are taken to apply to both school-based and external assessment components.

The paper begins with a brief account of the evolution of the current upper secondary curriculum and assessment system in South Australia over the past 30 years, to situate its construction and practice in its sociocultural, linguistic, economic,

and political bases. This will be followed by a presentation of an overview of the assessment system — the possible combinations of school-based and external assessment components in an assessment scheme, the variety of moderation methods, and the roles teachers assume as judges. One SACE subject is given as an example for each of eight categories that reflect the combination of assessment components and moderation methods adopted. These categories are investigated to determine the nature of the interaction between ‘teacher as assessor’ and ‘teacher as moderator’ in relation to three goals:

1. being fairer to students;
2. building the capacities of teachers to understand assessment processes and thereby improve learning;
3. strengthening public confidence in the fairness of the judgments.

It is suggested that a teacher-based assessment system can be a solid basis for achieving these goals.

Situating the Curriculum and Assessment System

Understanding any curriculum and assessment system requires situating it in its sociocultural, linguistic, economic, and political frames. In doing so, it is important not to cast the past in terms of the present, but to understand that the past, the present, and the future are connected; that the present is fashioned by the past, and the past is revisited and reread in the present (Mercurio, 2003, p. 20).

It is only possible in this brief paper to be reminded that “no educational institution stands apart from the society which establishes it” (Karmel, 1971, p. 25); to note, for example, that:

- Standard Australian English is the medium of instruction;
- students can attend upper secondary schools administered by the government, independent, or Catholic Education authorities;
- school subjects, vocational education and training competencies, and community learning form the basis of the learning;
- assessments are used primarily for certification and selection purposes;
- certification and selection decisions are based on performance in school subjects, and not on general ability or aptitude tests;
- completion of upper secondary education is considered by the South Australian community as an entitlement and an expectation of all its citizens and highly desirable for their social and material well-being.

The nature of the current SACE curriculum and assessment system — including the diverse range of subjects and assessment and moderation methods — can be understood as a construction of its past/present/future. The precursor to SSABSA was the Public Examinations Board of South Australia (PEBSA) (1969–83). The PEBSA offered matriculation students subjects that were entirely (100%) externally assessed by examination until 1977, and consisted of 75% external assessment and 25% moderated school-based assessment from 1977 to 1983. During this period the Education Department of South Australia provided an alternative set of subjects for

those students who were not necessarily university bound. These subjects were composed entirely of school-based assessment components. In 1984 the South Australian Government established SSABSA, a single authority, to develop and accredit the curriculum and to undertake the assessments. SSABSA inherited the PEBSA and the Education Department subjects and instituted a system where subjects could have a maximum of 50% external assessment. Thus from 1984 subjects could be composed entirely of school-based assessment components (100%), or a combination of school-based assessment (50%) and external assessment (50%). With the introduction of the SACE in 1992–1993, a more hybridised system of school-based and external assessment components evolved. At present, some subjects have 100% school-based assessment, while others can have 70% school-based assessment and 30% external assessment.

In the 1970s standards were established through written examinations that were set and marked, usually by small teams of teachers and university lecturers, under the guidance of university academics. There was virtually no interaction between the teachers and the external markers of the examinations. Feedback of a general nature was given to teachers via a written chief examiner's report. The combination of school-based and external assessment components after 1984 created new relationships between teachers (in this paper, referred to as 'teachers as assessors') and external markers ('teachers as moderators'). By 2005, 96% of those providing assessments of school-based or external assessment components of students' achievements in the SACE were practising teachers. The nature of the relationships between these 'teachers as assessors' and 'teachers as moderators' has changed dramatically over the past 30 years.

Assessment Overview

Table 1 below provides an overview of the assessment system in place in 2006. It shows that in all SSABSA-accredited subjects, assessment tasks are grouped into school-based or external assessment components that are moderated in some way (e.g. by supporting teachers to interpret the standards, by visiting the school to see live performances or products, by considering student materials at a central venue, by adopting statistical linking methods, or by ensuring that assessment tasks are carried out under uniform conditions). Those who undertake the moderation are usually teachers who are appointed in various capacities (e.g. moderators, supervisors, markers, oral examiners).

An assessment scheme for a subject typically consists of three or four assessment components. For each assessment component, the relationship of the learning outcomes to the assessment task, the conditions under which the assessment must be taken, the criteria that will be used when judging performance, and the weighting of the assessment component within the overall assessment are specified.

Table 1: Assessment Overview, SSABSA, 2006

| ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS | |
|--|--|
| School-based Assessment Components | External Assessment Components |
| <i>For example:</i> written examinations essays oral presentations performances | <i>For example:</i> written examinations practical examinations oral examinations investigations |
| MODERATION METHODS | |
| Support moderation <i>For example:</i> visits website correspondence assessment plan marking workshops | |
| Final moderation <i>For example:</i> visit central statistical | External assessment (Final moderation) <i>That is:</i> conducted under uniform conditions SSABSA-appointed marker each student's work is marked student remains anonymous to marker |
| ASSESSMENT PANELS | |
| Support moderators Final moderators | Examination setters and vettors Supervising examiners Markers Oral examiners |

Adapted from Chief Assessors' Manual 2006, SSABSA, Wayville, p. 4.

Judgments are made on each assessment component. For many of the components, both school-based and external, more than one judgment is made. Scores from all components are then aggregated to provide a final raw score. Final raw scores are used as the basis for determining grades. The processes used by SSABSA-appointed experts to determine these grades are not the focus of this paper.

As implied, 'support moderation' is a situation where the teacher is able to get advice about any aspect of the curriculum or its assessment from a designated moderator. The support can be face-to-face (i.e. the moderator visits the school) or by correspondence (telephone, email, written feedback). Teachers of subjects whose assessment scheme consists entirely of school-based assessment components have access to support moderation.

Although support moderation involves supporting the teacher to understand the requirements of the curriculum statement and interpreting the standards of students' work, final moderation (including external assessment) are about making final judgments on the standards. There are four methods of final moderation: visit moderation, central moderation, statistical moderation, and external assessment.

Visit moderation: 'Teachers as moderators' visit the school site to view student materials or products (e.g. drama or dance performances, visual arts artefacts, or design and technology products) in order to make a judgment. In some subjects, the 'teacher as assessor' has already assessed the student materials or products.

Central moderation: Samples of students' works are sent to a central location, where groups of 'teachers as moderators' discuss and make judgments on this work that has previously been marked by the 'teachers as assessors'.

Statistical moderation: The judgments of the 'teacher as assessors' are statistically adjusted by the results obtained by the class in external assessments marked by 'teachers as moderators'.

External assessment: Includes written examinations; practical examinations, such as exhibitions and musical performances; oral examinations; and investigations, a research report usually presented in written form, undertaken over several months. 'External assessment' is defined as having the following distinguishing characteristics: assessments are administered and conducted under uniform conditions, judgments are made by a SSABSA-appointed marker(s) (i.e. 'teacher as moderator(s)'); judgments are made on each individual student's work, not a sample of students' work; judgments are made without knowledge of the student's background.


Combinations of Final Moderation Methods

SACE subjects can be placed into one of eight categories according to the combination of final moderation methods that are used for the subject (see attachment 1). These categories are set out in Table 2 below, with a sample subject shown for each category.

The order in which the categories have been placed reflects the nature and degree of the interaction that occurs between 'teacher as assessors' and 'teacher as moderators'. In general, the 'teachers as assessors' teaching subjects using category 1 combination of moderation methods are more likely to have face-to-face interaction with 'teachers as moderators' than those teachers using category 8 combinations. It needs to be pointed out that all teachers in all subjects have access to support materials and online communities and are able to contact SSABSA person to obtain clarification of assessment requirements. However, the focus of this paper is on the degree of direct *interaction* or *relationship* between two assessment roles — 'teacher as assessor' and

‘teacher as moderator’ — not the nature, source, level, or quality of information that a teacher can receive to better undertake his or her task.

Table 2: Year 12 Subjects (full-year) placed into Categories according to Combination of Final Moderation Methods

| Category | Final moderation methods* (C, V, S, E) | Form of external assessment (where applicable) | Support moderation | Sample subject in this category | Approximate no. of subjects in this category | Degree of interaction between Teacher as Assessor and Teacher as Moderator |
|----------|--|--|--------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | C | | yes | Mathematical Applications | 19 | High  Low |
| 2 | CE | investigation | yes | Studies of Societies | 14 | |
| 3 | VC | | no | Art Practical | 6 | |
| 4 | VEC | practical & written | no | Drama Studies | 3 | |
| 5 | VE | two practicals | no | Extension Studies | 4 | |
| 6 | VES | written | no | Physical Education | 1 | |
| 7 | ESC | written | no | Modern History | 11 | |
| 8 | ES | written | no | Mathematical Studies | 10 (plus 43 languages subjects**) | |

Key: C: central moderation

V: visit moderation

S: statistical moderation

E: external assessment (eg. written examination, practical examinations, investigations, oral examinations)

* There may be more than one assessment component for each final moderation method.

** These languages subjects have both written and oral external examinations.

To draw attention to the *interaction* or *relationship* of the two roles assumed by teachers — assessors and moderators — in the examples that follow, occasional reference will be made to the former as ‘Judge 1’ and the latter as ‘Judge 2’. Where there is more than one ‘teacher as moderator’ making a judgment, as is the case with double-marking of essay questions in examinations, the third judge will be referred to as ‘Judge 3’.

Category 1: Mathematical Applications

In Mathematical Applications there are three school-based assessment components: (1) Skills and Applications Task, (2) Portfolio, and (3) Examination. All three assessment components are centrally moderated.

Support Moderation

All teachers in the subject, whether experienced or less experienced, are offered a contact moderator to support them during the teaching year. Contact moderators write to the teacher introducing themselves, stating their role in the moderation process, and offering contact details such as mobile phone, email address, and preferred times of contact. The teacher exchanges similar contact information with the moderator, including information about his or her level of experience in teaching this subject. What is hoped for is the establishment and development of a professional, collegial relationship between the teacher and contact moderator. The contact moderator becomes the first port of call for the teacher when needing clarification on a curriculum or assessment issue.

Nearly all the contact moderators are practising teachers of the subject who undertake this task as a part-time activity. The contact moderators make up a team of moderators who consider the materials at the end of the school year at final central moderation (see below).

Teachers are required to set and mark eight assessment tasks during the year for Assessment Component 1. The teacher (Judge 1) has the opportunity to receive oral and written feedback on the suitability of these tasks (in terms of nature, scope, and complexity) from the designated contact moderator (Judge 2). Written feedback on these assessment tasks is sent to the teacher and to the principal of the school.

Teachers are required to set and mark two directed investigations and two projects for Assessment Component 2. At the end of the first semester, the contact moderator is sent a sample of marked student work and provides feedback to the teacher and to the principal of the school on the application of the criteria for judging performance.

Teachers are required to set an examination for Assessment Component 3 that takes into account the scope of what has been taught and the interests, aspirations, and abilities of the students. The draft examination paper is sent to SSABSA for approval before students present for the examination. Members of the moderation team consider the draft examination paper, and written feedback provided once again on the appropriateness of the examination paper to the teacher and to the principal of the school.

Central Moderation

At the end of the school year, 'teachers as assessors' are required to send a representative sample of marked student work to a central venue for final moderation. At this meeting, 'teachers as moderators' determine whether the scores awarded for the three assessment components are aligned to the performance standards. It is perhaps significant to point out that the contact moderators are given the task to judge the materials from those schools they had serviced during the year. This is a conscious decision as the contact moderators have already developed some understanding of the teaching programs that are in place.

In summary, for Mathematical Applications (a Category 1 subject), a subject with all school-based assessment components, there are opportunities for close interaction between 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) and 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2). The quality of the relationship is often dependent on the quality of the personal communication skills of the teacher and the moderator. For example, where an excellent professional, working relationship is established over the year, the teacher is more likely to feel comfortable about seeking clarification on an issue from the moderator. Moreover, the relationship can be strengthened over 3 or 4 years as moderators are not as a matter of course given a different set of schools each year.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers are thankful for the support they receive from 'their moderator'. Even experienced teachers appreciate regular feedback on their setting and marking of assessment tasks as this reassures them that they are giving their students every opportunity to succeed.

It should be clarified that changes to scores are made at final moderation by Judge 2. These changes to scores stand. It is hoped that the interaction between 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' is of sufficient quality that the former is making sound assessment judgments as the year progresses.

Category 2: Studies of Societies

In Studies of Societies there are four assessment components: (1) Course Work, (2) Oral Task(s), (3) Group Task, and (4) Investigation. The first three are school-based assessment components, and the fourth is an external assessment component.

Similar processes are followed for the first three assessment components as those described for Mathematical Applications. That is, the teacher (Judge 1) is encouraged to develop a professional, collegial relationship with his or her moderator (Judge 2) (support moderation). As for Mathematical Applications, it is expected that contact moderators will establish and develop an excellent working relationship with the teachers. And similarly, at the end of the school year, the 'teachers as assessors' of Studies of Societies are required to send marked samples of work for the three school-based assessment components to a central venue for consideration by the 'teachers as moderators' (central moderation).

For the external assessment component, the investigation, students are required to write a 2000-word report on a social issue on the basis of their own research. This report is prepared over several months. The 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) is required to mark these reports. All of the reports are then submitted to SSABSA for external marking by a 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2). Where there is no significant variation between the judgments, an average is taken. Where there is significant variation, a third opinion (Judge 3) is sought.

Category 3: Art Practical

In Art Practical there are three school-based assessment components: (1) Practical Studies, (2) Practical Extension, and (3) Investigative Study. The first two assessment

components are visit moderated, and the last is centrally moderated, following similar processes to those discussed under Category 1: Mathematical Applications.

For the first two assessment components, 'the teacher as moderator' (Judge 2) visits the school where the students' visual arts products are displayed. Before any visits, all the 'teachers as moderators' attend a benchmarking meeting at which the standards of student work from a chosen school are discussed, marked, described, and photographed. This benchmarking meeting provides the standards by which students' work from all schools is assessed.

The teacher (Judge 1) marks Assessment Component 1: Practical Studies and Assessment Component 2: Practical Extension. Before the moderator begins his or her deliberations, the teacher is invited to provide the moderator with contextual information about any of his or her students that should be taken into account. At the completion of the moderation process, both teacher (Judge 1) and moderator (Judge 2) discuss the final scores. Face-to-face dialogue using the criteria for judging performance and the standards of work is actively encouraged. The teacher is shown the benchmark samples to assist the discussion. Where there is disagreement in the interpretation of the standard, the marks awarded by the 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2) stand.

Category 4: Drama Studies

In Drama Studies there are four assessment components: (1) Practical Examination, (2) Written Examination, (3) Report, and (4) Discussion. The first two assessment components are external assessment components, while Assessment Components 3 and 4 are centrally moderated following similar processes to those discussed under Category 1: Mathematical Applications.

The Practical Examination requires students to be assessed at a live performance, at which both the 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) and the 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2) must be present. Where there are more than ten students to be assessed, two moderators (Judges 2 and 3) are present. Both teacher and moderator(s) judge the performance of each individual student. Teacher and moderator compare and discuss their judgments against the criteria for judging performance. The moderators (Judge 2/3) stand, although they may be adjusted slightly in the direction of the teacher's marks (Judge 1) if this is considered, after face to face discussion about the standard of the performances, justifiable. Thus, this external assessment component gives the teacher (Judge 1) the opportunity to have a face-to-face professional discussion with the moderator (Judge 2). The teacher has an opportunity to discuss curriculum and assessment issues with the moderator, usually a fellow Drama Studies teacher, using his or her own students as a basis for the discussion.

For the second external assessment component, the students sit for a written examination in which they answer essay questions on aspects of the course. These answers are double-marked by 'teachers as moderators' (Judges 2 and 3).

Category 5: Extension Studies

In Extension Studies there are three assessment components: (1) Proposal and Discussion, (2) Folio, and (3) Exhibition. In this subject, the student designs and undertakes his or her own study of a researchable question. Assessment components 1 and 3 are externally assessed (practical examination) by a visit of the 'teachers as moderators' to the school. Assessment component 2: Folio is moderated at the time of the visit of the 'teachers as moderators' for assessment component: 3.

For Assessment Component 3: Exhibition, the student is required to present the findings of his or her research to an audience that includes the 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1), the 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2), and any invited members from the community who are able to participate in the assessment as audience. Both teacher (Judge 1) and moderator (Judge 2) assess the live presentation of the research findings. The aim is to reach a consensus of the score that the student should receive. Where this does not occur, the score of the 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2) stands. Assessment Component 1: Proposal and Discussion, follows a similar process to that used for Assessment Component: 3. This moderation method allows for face-to-face professional dialogue.

Category 6: Physical Education

In Physical Education there are four assessment components: (1) Practical Work, (2) Integrated Tasks, (3) Examination, and (4) Issues Analysis.

A 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2) visits the school to moderate Assessment Component 1: Practical Work. Students are required to play two sports for assessment in front of the moderator. The 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) has previously assessed the students' skills in these two sports and gives these marks to the moderator. The teacher provides the moderator with a briefing on the standard of skills of the individual students. The teacher identifies for the moderator students who have been placed in the top grade of marks, in the middle grade, and so on. The teacher (Judge 1) may take the opportunity to discuss with the moderator (Judge 2) any student performances that he or she believes are on the borderline between one grade and another.

Students' achievements in Assessment Components 2 and 4 are statistically moderated, that is adjusted, against the results received by that class in the external Assessment Component 3: Examination.

Category 7: Modern History

In Modern History there are three assessment components: (1) Examination, (2) Course Work, and (3) Individual History Essay.

The scores for the performances of students in Assessment Component 2: Course Work provided by the 'teachers as assessors' (Judge 1) are statistically moderated

against the scores obtained in the double-marked Assessment Component 1: Examination (Judges 2 and 3). Scores for students' achievements in Assessment Component 3: Individual History Essay provided by the 'teachers as assessors' (Judge 1) are considered by the 'teachers as moderators' (Judge 2) at a central venue (central moderation).

Thus, for this category of subjects, the moderation methods used are: external assessment, statistical, and central. There is no 'support moderation' offered to teachers of this category of subjects. Although teachers have access to support materials, online professional communities, and are able to attend marking workshops, there is perhaps less opportunity for interaction between 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' than offered in other moderation methods.

Category 8: Mathematical Studies

The three assessment components in Mathematical Studies are the same as in Mathematical Applications: (1) Skills and Applications Task, (2) Portfolio, and (3) Examination. The teachers' scores (Judge 1) for the first two assessment components are statistically moderated against the scores obtained for Assessment Component 3: Examination (Judge 2).

Although Mathematical Studies (Category 8) and Mathematical Applications (Category 1) share the same assessment components in name, the combination of moderation methods differs, as does the interaction between Judge 1 and Judge 2.

For Assessment Components 1 and 2 in Mathematical Studies, teachers are not required to have their assessment tasks approved by a contact moderator. As there are no contact moderators appointed for this category of subjects, advice about the nature, scope, and complexity of the tasks set for the first two assessment components is provided in the curriculum statement and support materials. 'Teachers as assessors' (Judge 1) of subjects in this category have fewer opportunities for interaction with 'teachers as moderators' (Judge 2).

Teacher as Assessors, Teacher as Moderators, and Achieving the Three Goals

Eight combinations of moderations methods have been explored to determine the nature of relationships and the degree of interaction, that can occur between the 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) and the 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2). Does the nature of the relationship and the degree of interaction between the 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' assist in:

1. being fairer to students;
2. building the capacities of teachers to understand assessment processes and thereby improve learning;
3. strengthening public confidence in the fairness of the judgments?

It has been shown that the nature of the relationship between 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' will vary, depending on the combination of moderation methods used. For subjects using category 1 and 2 combinations of moderation methods, teachers are given the opportunity to establish, develop, and sustain professional, collegiate, supportive relationships with 'their moderators'. Similarly, for subjects using category 3, 4, 5, and 6 combinations of moderation methods (which include visit moderation), teachers are able to have face-to-face discussions about standards with the moderators. For subjects using category 7 and 8 combinations of moderation methods, there are perhaps fewer opportunities for interaction between 'teachers as assessors' and 'teachers as moderators'.

It is important to point out that this discussion about the nature and degree of interaction between 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' pertains to the processes used in reaching the final raw scores. SSABSA-appointed experts using the final raw scores conduct additional quality assurance mechanisms that determine the final grade that a student will receive. This latter mechanism, although a crucial step in the judgment processes, has not been the subject of this paper.

It is argued that if a professional dialogue between 'teacher as assessor' and 'teacher as moderator' is established and sustained, the teacher will have a better chance of interpreting the intentions of the curriculum and its standards. This new knowledge will improve the teaching, which will, in turn, improve students' opportunities to learn and succeed. Thus, the argument is that students will receive fairer scores for their achievements because their teachers have taken the opportunity to thoroughly understand what is required for their students to succeed.

Public confidence is strengthened if the community can be assured that the assessments are warranted. The community expects that policies, processes, and protocols are in place and that they are followed. Parents, for example, can take heart from the fact that teachers are able to have contact with their moderator to ensure that they are interpreting the intentions and requirements of the curriculum faithfully. In country South Australia, parents are pleased that moderators visit the schools that their sons and daughters attend. This reassures them that the curriculum is being followed. Parents are also pleased to hear that principals of schools are provided with information about the discussions held between teachers and moderators. Most teachers, including experienced teachers, are pleased to be in regular contact with their moderators.

However, in some assessment systems, this interaction between 'teachers as assessors' and 'teachers as moderators' is seen as a negative, not a positive aspect of an assessment system. For some, public confidence may be undermined if there is close interaction between teacher and moderator. For others, public confidence derives from the use of a combination of the final moderation methods, including statistical and external assessment.

Conclusion

An aim of this paper has been to underline the fact that in many upper secondary education assessment authorities across the world the decisions about the standard of students' performances are made by teachers — either of their own students as 'teachers as assessors' or of the work of other teachers' students as 'teachers as moderators'. This — termed 'teacher-based assessment' — is an important characteristic of an assessment system. That these assessment systems are very much teacher-based should be acknowledged and valued. These are systems that will build the curriculum and assessment capacities of teachers and, in doing so, improve teaching and learning. This paper has shown that there are a variety of combinations of moderations methods that encourage professional interaction between teacher and assessor, particularly where the teacher assumes both roles — 'teacher as assessor' (Judge 1) and 'teacher as moderator' (Judge 2). Such systems incorporate professional development and pursue three desirable goals:

1. being fairer to students;
2. building the capacities of teachers to understand assessment processes and thereby improve learning;
3. strengthening public confidence in the fairness of the judgments.

It seems a shame that in many assessment authorities, sophisticated, resource-intensive machinery is put in place to collect, randomise, and judge the standard of students' performances, and that such significant human and physical resources are often kept at arm's length from teachers in the interests of building public confidence by promoting erroneous views that judgments about students' achievements can always be reached objectively.

References

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Attachment 1

Table 3: Year 12 Subjects (Full-Year) Subjects According to Categories of Combinations of Final Moderation Methods

Category 1: Central Moderation

| <i>Central Moderation*</i> |
|---|
| Agricultural and Horticulture (4)** Communication for the Hearing-Impaired (4) Community Studies (1) Composing and Arranging (2) English as a Second Language (4) English Communications (4) Information Processing and Publishing (4) Information Technology (4) Justice and Society (3) Mathematical Applications (3) Media Studies (3) Music Individual Study (2) Religions in Australia (4) Small Business Enterprise (4) SSABSA-VET A (3) SSABSA-VET B (4) Sustainable Futures (3) Vocational Education A (3) Vocational Education B (4) |

* This bar gives an indication of the percentage devoted to this form of moderation. These subjects are 100% centrally moderated.

**Number of assessment components in this subject.

Category 2: Central Moderation and External Assessment

| <i>Central Moderation</i> | <i>External Assessment (investigation)***</i> |
|---|---|
| Aboriginal Studies (4) Australian Languages (4) Business Studies (3) Contemporary Issues and Science (4) Design and Technology Studies (4) Health Education (4) Home Economics (4) Information Technology Studies (4) Music Technology (2) Outdoor and Environmental Education (4) Philosophy (3) Studies of Societies (4) Tourism (4) Women's Studies (3) | |

*** This bar gives an indication of the percentage weighting of the final moderation methods. Subjects in this category are 70% centrally moderated and 30% externally assessed (by investigation).

Category 3: Visit Moderation and Central Moderation

| <i>Central Moderation</i> | <i>Visit Moderation</i> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Art Practical (3) Craft Practical (3) Dance (4) Design and Technology (3) Design Practical (3) Drama (4) | |

Category 4: Visit Moderation, External Assessment, and Central Moderation

| <i>Visit Moderation (practical examination)</i> | <i>External Assessment (written examination)</i> | <i>Central Moderation</i> |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Drama Studies (4) Visual Arts Studies (3) Dance Studies (4) | | |

Category 5: Visit Moderation, External Assessment

| <i>Visit Moderation</i> | <i>External Assessment (practical examination)</i> |
|--|--|
| Ensemble Performance (2) Extension Studies (3) Performance Special Study (3) Solo Performance (2) | |

Category 6: Visit Moderation, External Assessment, and Statistical Moderation

| <i>Visit Moderation</i> | <i>External Assessment (written examination)</i> | <i>Statistical Moderation</i> |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Physical Education (4) | | |

Category 7: External Assessment, Statistical Moderation, and Central Moderation

| <i>External Assessment (written examination)</i> | <i>Statistical Moderation</i> | <i>Central Moderation</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Agricultural and Horticulture Science (4) Australian and International Politics (4) Australian History (3) Classical Studies (3) Geography Studies (3) Geology (3) Legal Studies (3) Modern History (3) Nutrition (4) Psychology (3) Studies of Religion (3) | | |

Category 8: External Assessment and Statistical Moderation

| <i>External Assessment (written examination)</i> | <i>Statistical Moderation</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Accounting Studies (2) Biology (4) Chemistry (4) Economics (2) English as Second Language Studies (4) English Studies (4) 43 Languages (2), note external assessment (written examination and oral examination) Mathematical Methods (3) Mathematical Studies (3) Physics (4) Specialist Mathematics (3) | |

Table 4: Combinations of Moderation Methods

| Category | Moderation Methods | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Central | | |
| 2 | Central | External (investigation) | |
| 3 | Central | Visit | |
| 4 | Visit | External (written examination) | Central |
| 5 | Visit | External (practical examination) | |
| 6 | Visit | External (written examination) | Statistical |
| 7 | External (written examination) | Statistical | Central |
| 8 | External (written examination) | Statistical | |