Policies and Procedures

USP
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE
SOUTH PACIFIC

Process for Moderation of Exams

During the STAR project, USP graduate outcomes, programme outcomes, and course learning outcomes were aligned, and rubrics designed to assess these attributes through seven outcomes Each programme underwent a review by writing the programme outcomes (seven USP outcomes + discipline specific), curriculum mapping, and course learning outcomes. The alignment of learning activities and the assessment criteria to the learning outcomes is still an "ad hoc" procedure in many disciplines based on the method used prior to the STAR process.

This paper recommends a process by which assessment(s) will be aligned to the learning outcomes of the course and gives a clear picture of the assessment level which will help to address many issues at an institutional level such as the retention rates, and pass rates.

The Process

The writing of learning outcomes in the courses was based on the verbs used in the Bloom's Taxonomy. In this taxonomy, generally for 100 level courses, the learning outcomes have most of the verbs from the Knowledge and Comprehension category, 200 level courses have most of the verbs from the Application and Analysis category, and 300 level courses have most of the verbs from the Synthesis and Evaluation category.

However, there is some overlap of the Bloom's taxonomy in all 3 levels; it is recognized that different kinds of verbs can also be used at all levels.

This process has brought consistency across the 100, 200 and 300 level courses helping develop students' skills at each level. However, to test this, students need to be assessed. **The next step is to align the assessment criteria** to the learning outcome.

At present there is no standard method of moderation of assessment held by the Faculty or the University except for the following guidelines:

1   Moderation of Examination Papers

1.1. The examination paper will undergo a moderation process.

1.2. The School Board will moderate the paper and processes to ensure that the questions are fair, at an appropriate level and test the specific required learning outcomes of the course.

1.3. During this process course coordinators are expected to ensure the following:

    a.   Before submitting the exam papers to SAS the School Board will carry out the following:
- ensure that the exam questions are aligned to the course learning outcomes;
- the questions are clear and unambiguous;
- detailed solutions/marking schemes for the questions are provided; and
- the weight of the topics and the marks allocated are aligned.

    b.   After marking the School/Unit board meeting will ensure the following
- look at a sample of papers from the mean, top and bottom marks against the marking scheme to ensure that marking was fair (normally a sample of 10% of the total number of scripts);
- find out from the markers if there were questions that majority of students did poorly in and see why this might have been the case;
- discuss possible reasons for either high or low failure rates and improvements for the future offerings; and
- any extra assistance provided by the course coordinators and the effectiveness of this
- consider all borderline cases in adherence to clause 7.2 of these Regulations.

    (Taken from Clause 3, Assessment and Associated Regulations, USP H&C)

    c.   A brief report of this for each course be brought to the Assessment meeting with the results.

1.4. The Examination Manual for Examiners and Supervisors has the following instructions on preparation of scripts:

Preparation of Scripts

    a.   *Typists & Secretaries in schools not to type Examination papers*
Examiners must prepare examination papers themselves and must not ask secretaries or typists in the schools or elsewhere to type their drafts or fair copies. See A.2.6.

    b.   *Moderation of Examination Papers*
Each section, under the leadership of the head of school, is responsible for assessing the end of semester examination papers for standards and coverage before they are submitted to the Examination office in SAS.

    c.   *The Examination Information*
The manuscripts(s) or the computer disc holding the examination questions must be accompanied by the examination information form (a copy of which appears at Appendix A) showing:
- Course code number and title;
- Time allowed;
- Materials required (e.g. 4- figure log tables, graph paper);
- The number of questions on the paper and the number of questions to be answered;
- Mark values of each question;
- Any instruction to candidates; and
- The expected number of candidates.

(Taken from Page 3, Examination Manual for Examiners and Supervisors: Appendix 2)

1.5. The moderation of the exam papers can be standardized by the following:

a. The exam questions should correspond to the course learning outcomes, and take account of Bloom's taxonomy in relation to the level of the course. The 100 level exam papers could have verbs from the Knowledge and Comprehension category, the 200 level exam papers could have verbs from the Application and Analysis category and the 300 level exam papers could have verbs from Synthesis and Evaluation category. There is likely to be some overlaps in the use of the verbs at all 3 levels.

b. The number of weeks spent on the topics taught in a course should play a factor in the percentage of questions in the final paper. This will ensure that what is taught and what is tested in proportion. Sections covered in the short tests will also need to be considered.

Table 1:

Question	Course Learning Outcomes	Topic	Number of weeks Topic taught (%)	Marks allocated	Total Mark Allocation By Topic	Type of Question (Blooms)
			14		100	

This table can be used for any assessment.

Note: Some learning outcomes may be tested in assignments and topic tests, therefore it *may not* be necessary to test them again in the final paper.

1.6. Types of questions and what they test in students.

a. In a **knowledge** question, the examiner wants you to recall DEFINITIONS, facts, or observations.
b. In a **comprehension** question, the examiner wants you to give a description, state the main ideas, or compare A with B.
c. In an **application** question, the examiner wants you to apply techniques and rules to solve problems that may have a SINGLE CORRECT ANSWER.
d. In an **analysis** question, the examiner wants you to break things down into component parts, identify motives or causes, make inferences, and find EVIDENCE to support generalizations.
e. In a **synthesis** question, the examiner wants you to bring ideas together, solve problems and make predictions.
f. In an **evaluation** question, the examiner wants you to give your opinions about an issue, evaluate and weight up based on evidence - judging the validity of a solution from multiple perspectives, the MERIT OF A SOLUTION, and the quality of a product.