**Strategic Selection Scenarios**

Below are some scenarios to illustrate how, based on an assessor’s capacity to make accurate assessment judgements, strategic selection of student work to verify can reduce moderation workload.

The ability to make accurate assessment judgements is based on:

* experience of standards-based assessment
* experience of the standards assessed
* subject expertise
* external moderation history
* access to quality benchmark exemplars
* whether the task has been previously used, is modified, or new.

Strategic selection falls in to four broad categories:

**M** – Minimum sample size (at least 1 student’s work – the pieces of work where the assessor has least confidence in their assessment judgement)

**P** – Purposeful selection at grade boundaries (Highest N/Lowest A, Highest A/Lowest M, Highest M/Lowest E)

**S** – Sufficient sample size to be confident in assessment decisions

**D** – Standard cannot have results reported so should not be assessed.

## **Scenarios**

A department sits and marks work together to establish grade boundaries. Each assessor marks their classes’ assessments. The department meets again to discuss any other work at grade boundaries. The Head of Department does a final sample of 8 pieces of work (from the whole cohort, or sometimes from each assessor).

If the marking meeting establishes clear grade boundaries, the Head of Department should consider each assessor’s assessment judgment experience and decide if their work is verified following category M, P, or S. There is no need for the further sample.

Each department moderates work at grade boundaries and then the school requires all Excellence work to be moderated to provide certainty and confidence for assessors, in light of students clambering for Excellence endorsements, school awards and prizes, and parental pressure for Excellence grades

The work at grade boundaries may be reduced to category M if an assessor has suitable assessment experience. The Excellence moderation should only happen for a justifiable reason, such as inaccurate Excellence judgements identified through external moderation, and be reviewed once the reason has been resolved.

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*Original for MNA Seminars 2019*

An assessor has a small class (10 students), so they moderate all the students’ work.

It is likely they are having more work verified than is required. Depending upon the assessor’s assessment experience they may only need to moderate the one piece of work they are most unsure about, or they may need to focus on grade boundaries, or require other pieces (categories M, P or S).

An assessor goes to visit a assessor at another school, so they take 15 pieces of work to make the visit worthwhile.

It is likely they are having more work verified than is required. Depending upon the assessor’s assessment experience and accuracy of judgements they may only need to moderate the one piece of work they are most unsure about, or they may need to focus on grade boundaries or require other pieces. (categories M, P or S). They could consider emailing work, sharing in the cloud, or waiting until they have several standards to moderate.

An inexperienced sole assessor in a department has a friend in another school in the same subject area. The assessor sends all work for verification; 30 samples.

It is likely they are having more work verified than is required. They would currently fall in category S and need to ensure they send as many pieces of student work to be verified to an experienced assessor to be confident in their decisions and keep student work for benchmark exemplars. This would build up their judgement capacity so in future they can reduce the amount of work they require verifying.

An experienced assessor does not have a colleague at their school who has the necessary subject knowledge at Level 3 to verify their judgements. As they are an experienced assessor, they do not ask anyone to moderate their work.

D - If no moderation occurs results cannot be reported to NZQA, and the standard should not be assessed. If they are an experienced assessor as well as an experienced assessor, they could fall in category M and find a suitable verifier for the pieces of work they are most unsure about.

A large department with 10 assessors verifies multiple samples from every assessor. The Head of Department has no appetite for treating assessors within the department differently though is aware of only one weak link. They also want a means of keeping tight control on assessors.

\*Although the Head of Department may hold this opinion, NZQA’s view is that strategic selection of samples of student work for grade verification meets the requirements for moderation and also addresses teacher workload. All teachers must have judgements verified, but the Head of Department should consider each assessor’s assessment judgment experience and decide if their work is verified following category M, P or S. Requiring additional samples to be moderated exceeds NZQA’s requirements and is a matter for the school to consider.

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Assessors attend a cluster group meeting for a subject area where assessors are sole assessors in a department. They mark and verify all student work, but external moderation consistently shows lack of consistent judgements.

They currently fall in category S and need to look outside the cluster for a suitable verifier to improve the group’s judgements, so they can develop their capacity and move into category M or P. Once their capacity increases if they are marking all the work together, they are already including verification in their marking process, as all the work is already being judged by a second experienced assessor.

The school requires verification of eight samples from each assessor.

They are possibly confusing the requirements for random selection for external moderation with the requirements for internal moderation. It is likely they are having more work verified than is required. Depending upon the assessors’ assessment experience and accuracy of judgements they may only need to moderate the one piece of work they are most unsure about, or they may need to focus on grade boundaries or require other pieces (categories M, P or S). The school should review its internal moderation policy/staff handbook and spend some staff development time working through strategic selection.

For a newly introduced subject with an assessor of poor practice all student work is verified.

S – The number of pieces of student work verified needs to be sufficient to give confidence in the assessment decisions. This may not be all the student work.

Every piece of student work is verified because of a history of poor moderation in a department.

They may be verifying more pieces of student work than is required. Depending upon the reasons for the poor assessment judgements they may just need to focus on grade boundaries or require other pieces (categories P or S).

A department randomly selects student work for their internal moderation, as it isn’t documented in the school policy to select grade boundaries (other more experienced departments are selecting at grade boundaries).  External moderation results for the department show a need for some improvement.

They may be verifying more pieces of student work than is required. Their current way of working, choosing student work randomly, does not give assurance of assessment judgements and does not support staff in improving their understanding of the grade boundaries for the standard. By targeting the verification sample and focusing on verifying grade boundaries, this may resolve the issue with their assessor decisions and reduce workload.

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An experienced sole assessor in a department, but with poor processes and outcomes.  There is little evidence of moderation happening – either missing student work or an incomplete moderation process.  They find it difficult to find someone with whom to verify work but have made a connection with another local school in the same situation to solve the problem for both schools.

Senior and/or middle management need to assist in supporting the assessor with professional development around making assessment judgements and finding suitable verifiers. Contacting their School Relationship Management at NZQA to find who else assesses the standards could be a useful starting point. Currently category D, but targeted support should make it category P or S.

Assessor is very experienced, provides professional support to other assessors in the region, has had “consistent/confident” for all moderation for the past four years – provides eight samples for verification – because the school requires eight.

M – The assessor is doing more verification than is required. They may need to verify as little as one piece of student work. The school should review its internal moderation policy/staff handbook to align with NZQA guidelines for strategic selection.

Assessor offers individualised assessment programmes to students – where only 1 or 2 students do a standard – they do not have this work verified.

D - If no verification occurs results cannot be reported, and the standards should not be assessed. They could fall in categories M, P or S depending upon their experience and using a suitable verifier. To help manage the workload they could consider clearly communicating to students a provisional grade and then moderating several standards at once with a verifier (or variety of verifiers) before submitting moderated grades to NZQA and students.

**Examples of good practice seen in schools**

* Department moderation meetings scheduled every fourth week as part of the school calendar – twice a term.  Having this time set aside assists assessors so they do not have to find extra time.
* Building up and updating a bank of benchmark exemplars to refer to when making assessor decisions.
* Sharing work for verification by email, cloud storage or in subject forums so time does not have to be set aside to travel to face to face meetings.
* Subject associations meet in a region so there is access to suitable verifiers and discussions build up everyone’s assessor judgement capabilities.
* Department mark together and check mark grade boundaries as they work so verification is an integral part of the marking process, not an extra step at the end.
* Department has two assessors act a ‘experts/champions’ for each course.  They would set assessment schedules, panel mark, and verify the grade boundaries – mainly those that assessors were unsure about.  This way they spread workload across the department.  The assessors rotate as ‘experts’ in each course.
* Schools in a region using coordinated in service training time to all meet at the same time in subject areas to verify work.

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