

## **Exploring how teaching academics construct consensus moderation: Listening to the discourse**

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It is well known that assessment requires academics to make judgements about student work. Moderation is an important aspect of assessment quality assurance and consensus moderation is one model whereby collaboration and discussion takes place to reach agreement on marks (Sadler, 2013). This presentation will explore academics' understanding, perceptions and experiences of consensus moderation. In order to hear the voices of academics, a series of nine focus groups were held for teaching staff with separate focus groups being held for continuing/fixed term academic staff (14 participants) and sessional staff (11 participants). Focus groups were used to provide participants with space to reflect on their understanding and experiences, and disrupt the power differential common between the researcher and participant. The focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Foucauldian discourse analysis, as outlined by Willig (2013), was used to identify and analyse discursive objects and practices, as well as subject positioning, in relation to consensus moderation. The academic staff who participated represented over 200 years of collective higher education teaching experience, yet only a small number had gained any professional qualifications in teaching, with knowledge of moderation being developed over time. They provided a variety of understanding and views of both moderation and consensus moderation and it was evident that there were many different forms of moderation practice taking place. The voices of academic staff including Unit Coordinators, part-time staff and sessional staff will be represented in this presentation whilst exploring the discourses that surround consensus moderation. The findings have implications for practice and can be used to inform assessment quality assurance processes.

### **Reference List**

- Sadler, R. (2013). Assuring academic achievement standards: from moderation to calibration. *Achievement Standards in Higher Education*, 20, 5-19. doi: 10.1080/0969594X.2012.714742
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology (3rd ed.)*. London, United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill Education, Open University Press.