

## Moderated Grading Sessions

### What is a Moderated Grading Session?

- Moderation is a quality assurance process that ensures appropriate standards.
- It is a process for ensuring that marks or grades are awarded appropriately and consistently.
- Moderation involves checking and reviewing assessment schemes, items and assessor judgments.
- It is essentially a form of feedback to markers to help them align their marking standards with those of other markers.
- Typically involves all graders and prof (or head TA) and sometimes another member of teaching community (librarian, lab tech, writing specialist, etc.) getting together to create / refine assessment criteria / rubric, mark a variety of sample papers, compare grades, discuss criteria for grades, arrive at consensus standards

### Stages of moderation

#### Preparation

1. Discuss the reading and the question / assignment and identify possible/probable lines of argument, potential problems, etc. “What might we expect to see in a strong essay on this topic? What can we expect to see in a weak one?”
2. Discuss what you hope students to learn from the assignment, particularly in terms of “writing”
3. Discuss the rubric / grade sheet and consider how to work with it in relation to the requirements of the question and the expectations.

#### Standardizing

4. Read and evaluate a small number of sample essays (photocopies prepared in advance—if possible, a cross-section from high quality to low), all markers working on the same paper at once, then comparing evaluations and comments. Goal: a consistent standard.
  - Focus on marginal comments, rubric, annotation practices
  - There are different methods for going around the group (criterion by criterion; TA by TA; anonymized)
5. Any questions re: the use of the rubric or gradesheet that arise from working with it should be discussed and settled. Only when general agreement has been reached should the group proceed to the actual evaluation.
  - revising or adapting rubric is absolutely fine, probably inevitable
  - this exercise should raise the group’s confidence, not shatter it

- discussion is key: the point of this is to make sure everyone is on the same page

### **Follow-up**

6. During the evaluation process, markers should stay in touch:
  - Share problems, questions, concerns
  - Notify group (if possible, emailing files) about outstandingly good or unusually poor papers
  - If there's any reason to believe that the group is drifting from the agreed-upon standard, a meeting to re-standardize may be necessary
  - Even without that concern, a final meeting to compare results and cross-check a few papers is a good idea if doable
  - Questions to ask include 'How consistent were we?' and 'How can we do better next time?'

### Why is this successful?

- The amount of effort required depends on factors, such as the degree of subjectivity, variability in student work, the amount of inconsistency that can be tolerated, marker numbers, past experience of markers, and the time and cost that can be afforded.
- Because it is collaborative
- Because it involves open and transparent communication among assessors
- Because it provides constructive feedback and professional support
- Because it ensures group understanding of the rubric and goals
- Because it provides tools for ongoing, formative assessment that aligns students' knowledge, skills, attitudes with course's assessment criteria, thereby allowing students to progress from novice to expert