



ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING: LOCAL MODERATION/SHARING THE STANDARD

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If the moderation exercise is to live up to the principles of AifL, the focus must be on measuring work against pre-set success criteria, aligned with the learning intentions which the activities were designed to address. Success criteria might take the form of generic 5–14 level descriptions or be 'customised' to that particular activity.

1 LOCAL MODERATION

- **Staff use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on pupils' progress**

The aim of 'Local Moderation' is to provide quality assurance of teachers' judgements at school and authority level through local moderation and the use of 'benchmarking' tools as part of self-evaluation, so that assessment judgements can be trusted and standards can be shared. It supports the drive to make assessments dependable (ie valid, reliable and comparable).

Moderation of assessment judgements is a staff development opportunity, which can provide additional insight into the way the curriculum is presented, and data which can be used as evidence of the quality of teaching and learning within the school. It is the process of moderating pupils' work that is important. Any folder of evidence which follows moderation activity is a record of that process and, as such, has greatest value for those who participate in the process. Different approaches can be taken to moderation, depending on what participants wish to achieve.

1.1 Some purposes of moderation

- To develop a clear understanding of specific level-related criteria within an attainment target or a specific strand of an attainment target – detailed examination of individual samples of pupils' work.
- To provide a benchmark against which to measure other pupils within a class – looking at a selection of work from a single pupil which exemplifies a particular level in a single subject area.
- To develop a folder of evidence to demonstrate agreed standards to interested parties (pupils, parents, school board, inspectors) – a planned programme of moderation activities across a range of subjects, the results of which are catalogued and maintained.
- To check progress in specific subjects through the school – looking across samples of work, for example from an 'average' pupil in each year group to see what progress is being made. This could also be carried out in cluster groups.
- Ultimately to provide a picture of progress across the entire 5–14 range.

Teachers engage in informal moderation when they discuss what they have done in class, how pupils have carried out tasks and when they share their judgements regarding the pupil outcomes. Within AifL– Assessment is for Learning, this type of

informal moderation is augmented by more formal moderation sessions in departments, in schools, in associated groups of departments or schools, and across associated groups both in and across local authorities.

2 MANAGING MODERATION SESSIONS

- ***Staff talk and work together to share standards in and across schools***
- ***Staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress and to plan for improvement.***

Moderation sessions provide opportunities for staff to carry out detailed examination of individual samples of pupils' work in order to develop clear understanding of specific assessment criteria and agree assessment judgements. However, in order to ensure that such sessions fulfil these objectives and to enable staff to develop confidence in their own and others' judgements, they need to be carefully managed.

The following guidelines may help to ensure that the process of moderation is successful.

3 GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING MODERATION SESSIONS

3.1 Who is in charge?

Someone needs to have responsibility for co-ordinating moderation sessions – this could be someone with responsibility for assessment or someone with responsibility for the subject to be moderated – ideally it should involve both.

3.2 Set the session in context

Work with headteachers, senior management team, and heads of department to take account of any national or local authority plans for moderation and the school development plan or other curriculum development initiatives.

3.3 Inform staff of action points:

- the date and time for the session
- the focus for the session (subject/topic/strand/level or age range)
- what pupils' work has to be gathered (how many, how long)
- what annotation is expected (eg learning intention, nature of the task, contextual information such as prior learning, support, any necessary note of what pupils said or did)
- make clear how/when/where the samples are to be collected prior to conducting the session as photocopying is often required.

3.4 Tasks for moderation co-ordinator

- Collect the work samples and check to ensure that the focus has been met and that the range of attainment appears to cover the appropriate success criteria.

- Ensure samples are numbered and, if necessary, photocopied to provide sufficient copies for all participants. Possibly scan samples to enable projection.
- Plan the session to ensure that there is time both for small group and whole staff or department discussion (see model agenda for Moderation Meetings).
- Use annotation sheets to record key points and the judgements made.
- Consider any other issues which might be relevant, eg allocation of staff to specific groups, or assigning group leaders to record key points or decisions or to provide feedback.

3.5 During the moderation session

- Discuss each sample noting the key features of the pupil's work and then discuss the success criteria met.
- Justify the overall judgement (often by explaining which elements of the success criteria have been met).
- Discuss next steps or ways forward (linking into formative assessment: Our ... staff are fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help).

One way of handling the process is for the moderation co-ordinator to ask each group to indicate which success criteria they judge have been met by each sample. This gives immediate insight into the agreement between groups. Where there is disagreement the moderation co-ordinator can then ask each group to justify the attainment they have acknowledged, and discussion continues until groups agree on the most appropriate award.

If the focus of the session is sufficiently narrow (eg all samples relate to a common task such as still-life drawing or producing a tourist brochure – tasks which are differentiated by outcome), rank ordering the samples can be very effective. This can be done individually or in pairs; the rank order is then agreed with the whole group; then staff work either up or down through the samples deciding where the level of attainment changes. Approaching the task systematically in this way clarifies key points of progression.

It is important that the person managing the session ensures that detailed annotation which reflects the judgements made is completed during the session. Such annotated samples can then form part of a collection of evidence.

3.6 After the moderation session

The co-ordinator for the group will take all the annotation sheets from a moderation session, plus notes from the discussions and a record of the attainment agreed, so that he or she can organise the samples to provide a folder of evidence. The co-ordinator will check that the annotation provides all the contextual information needed, indicates the attainment agreed, provides clear justification for the judgements made and indicates possible next steps in teaching and learning.

4 PROVIDING A BENCHMARK

- ***Staff use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on pupils' progress***

Moderation sessions can also be used to provide a benchmark against which teachers may judge the attainment of their class. This is particularly useful where teachers are making judgements about pupils' attainment from a variety of different outcomes. This process can also be used to create annotated folders of evidence for each level achieved within the school for each subject.

4.1 To create the benchmark folder of evidence:

- Ask teachers to select a collection of work which they are confident represents the middle range of attainment within their class.
- Working with a colleague from a different class, teachers scrutinise the evidence and make a level judgement of attainment across the range of different outcomes. Together they record what the work shows; then they date and record the following:
 - the attainment the work demonstrates, measured against the pre-agreed success criteria
 - what they know that confirms their judgement (cross-referencing to the work and adding any ephemeral evidence provided by the teacher)
 - what else the work would have to demonstrate in order to meet the next highest set of criteria.
- Once a pair has decided the level of attainment, they share this information with the rest of the staff in order to have their judgements validated and confirmed. That collection of work then becomes the point of reference for that year group, and the teacher can then align the other work of the class in relation to the reference materials.
- If there is work which (a pair of) teachers remain unsure about, they will seek help from other members of staff to make judgement about performance at the end of the meeting.

5 LOCAL MODERATION AS A MEANS OF CHECKING PROGRESS AND MONITORING THE CURRICULUM

- ***Staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and to plan for improvement***

The moderation process can also be used to check what progress pupils are making within a school or department. This can be achieved over time by focusing on a selected subject (or a strand or aspect of a subject) at any one time. Given the selected focus, teachers from each class and/or year group select the work which could be described as representing the 'average' level of attainment within that class, as indicated above, and present this work to the rest of the staff for discussion and agreement.

This can be a powerful tool for identifying where progress exceeds, or fails to meet, expectations, and opens up discussion of the reasons for this. Where a school or

department was aware that there was a particular subject, strand or aspect of a subject, in which pupils' attainment failed to meet expectations, then this moderation approach will help staff to analyse what is preventing pupils from achieving success.

Over time, a school could check progress in a range of subjects (or a department the various strands or aspects of their subject) in this way. This could be one of the ways a school or department monitors its curriculum or assessment judgements.

6 FOLDERS OF EVIDENCE

- ***Staff talk and work together to share standards in and across schools***
- ***Staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning***
- ***Staff are clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like***

A folder of evidence is not an end in itself. Its value lies in the ongoing process of improving and developing staff expertise in assessment and their understanding of next steps in learning in order to provide better feedback to pupils.

6.1 Why keep a folder of evidence?

A folder is a manageable way to demonstrate the assessment judgements made by teachers. It promotes and demonstrates consistent interpretations of national standards. The process of developing a folder of evidence will:

- enhance the professional judgement of all teachers, by developing their knowledge of, and confidence in, their own and others' interpretations and application of national standards
- result in a collection of moderated outcomes which provides teachers with a point of reference when making judgements about levels of attainment
- improve teacher confidence in making assessment judgements about individual pupils on a day-to-day basis
- provide a manageable way to demonstrate shared standards to colleagues, parents, governors, local authority officers and HMI.

A school or department folder of evidence gives the headteacher, head of department and members of the school board confidence in the accuracy of assessment judgements reached within their school or department.

6.2 What should it contain?

The folder of evidence should demonstrate what the school or department staff understand by national standards in the context of the work done by their pupils. The folder of evidence should include:

- samples of assessed and annotated work reflecting the various strands of the curriculum

- samples drawn from all year groups in the school or department, including pupils with additional support needs
- a variety of forms of evidence, including scripting of teacher/pupil dialogue or video recording
- annotation or commentaries showing clearly why particular judgements have been reached by participants and indicating next steps in teaching and learning
- work which reflects the current curriculum and practice within the school. For this reason it will be necessary to review and edit the folder of evidence on a regular basis.