UWS Standards Moderation Project
Draft Plan of Action.

Focus
This project is about testing the validity and reliability of assessment regimes through peer review and moderation.

In this project teams of discipline experts from a set of partner universities will review:
- the comparative quality of the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment items and tasks used in common units of study in different fields of education;
- the reliability of marking in these units.

Packages of the above components will be de-identified and evaluated for both their validity and reliability by teams from a partner university who are expert in the area assessed.

The project will be used to surface, critique and consolidate the indicators being used to set the standards for learning outcomes, assessment processes, assessment items and marking in specific disciplines.

The project deliverables will include:
- A range of discipline-specific and adaptable moderation strategies for inter and intra institutional use for the purposes of assuring and enhancing QA processes relating to academic achievement standards in the disciplines;
- A validated, reliable and cost-effective method for assuring the quality and relevance of student outcomes and the consistency of academic standards in Australian higher education whilst at the same time promoting sector diversity and responsiveness.

The Project has direct links to the government’s search for a valid and efficient way to assure consistent sector standards and to the ALTC Discipline Standards Project. It is seen as being a more telling and relevant approach to assuring standards than the use generic skills tests like the GSA or situated ones like those proposed in the OECD’s AHELO project.

Partners
Confirmed: Griffith, La Trobe, CDU, UWS, Macquarie
Requests for involvement from UWA, Melbourne, QUT, UTS.

Action Plan steps
For each selected field of education and program of study, in each partner institution:

1. The PVC/DVC signs off on the plan below and confirms the active engagement of the relevant Dean;

2. The PVC/DVC contacts the relevant HOS to outline the project (along the lines of what was piloted with the UWS Head of the School of Accounting).

3. The HOS then:
   (a) Confirms/suggests partner universities with a common course/program underway in the field of education being studied and notes if s/he knows the HOS at each institution;
   (b) Identifies a set of final year undergraduate units which partner universities are also delivering (in rank order of priority if necessary);
   (c) Identifies who would be the moderation/review team for their School.
4. A briefing teleconference is held with the players - PVC/DVC plus the HOSs and the UWS Coordinator to sign off on the unit to be given focus, clarify the following steps, set timelines and give contact details to the UWS moderation project coordinator (The PD for this person is given at Attachment One)

5. The HOS in each institution gathers the following materials together for the unit of study to be given focus in the study:
   (a) the outline and learning objectives/outcomes for the selected unit;
   (b) the criteria being used in assessment;
   (c) a list of the assessment items being used (exams, essays, work-placements etc);
   (d) a single, randomly selected and de-identified sample of marked assessment items at each of the following grade levels or their equivalent - a fail, pass, credit, distinction and high distinction (i.e. five sample items). Only the UWS coordinator would know the grades originally allocated and the grades subsequently allocated to each item by the moderating team from the partner institution).

6. These are sent via the PVC/DVC at that institution to the UWS coordinator.

7. Sets are de-identified and sent to the evaluation team at a different partner institution for appraisal. It is important that the evaluating team does not know the originating institution for the set.

8. In terms of validity, each team evaluates:
   a. how relevant, clear and comprehensive the focus of the unit is (as seen in its unit outline and list of outcomes);
   b. the extent to which the assessment criteria being used are not only relevant but are seen to be testing performance an appropriate third year university standard;
   c. how appropriate the assessment items are.

   In providing a report on their conclusions each team is asked to give their reasons for making these judgements and to make suggestions for improvement.

9. In terms of reliability, each team then 'blind marks' the deidentified assessment samples for the unit with a view to confirming consistency of grading. This would be done using the assessment criteria provided by the originating institution.

10. The results for steps 7 and 8 are forwarded, with all of the materials, back to the UWS Coordinator who, with the project team, analyses the results. Particular focus will be given to the indicators used to make judgements about the standards of the outcomes, criteria and assessment items; along with the extent to which there is a high level of intermarker reliability.

11. It may be desirable to hold a joint workshop on the above. This, for the accounting pilot, would be hosted by Macquarie University in about June 2010 and would involve key players from each of the partner institutions including the relevant A/Dean, Head of Program and an expert marker in the unit given focus.

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PVC (Quality)

Stuart Campbell
PVC (Learning & Teaching)

March 10th 2010
Attachment One

UWS Coordinator, Standards Moderation Project

Main duties

Facilitate communication among the partner universities;
Maintain an archive of correspondence, resources, and other relevant documentation;
Monitor project timelines and advise the project leaders of potential slippages;
Collect from the project partners’ documentation on learning outlines, outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment tasks;
Collect from the project partners marked assignments;
Analyse and prepare reports on documentation prepared by partners;
Assist in preparing and running workshops.