



# Making assessment rigorous, fair and consistent: moderation in an academic English program

Elisabeth (Beth) Hutton  
Education Program Manager  
Pre-enrolment English Program (PEP)  
The University of Adelaide- English Language Centre

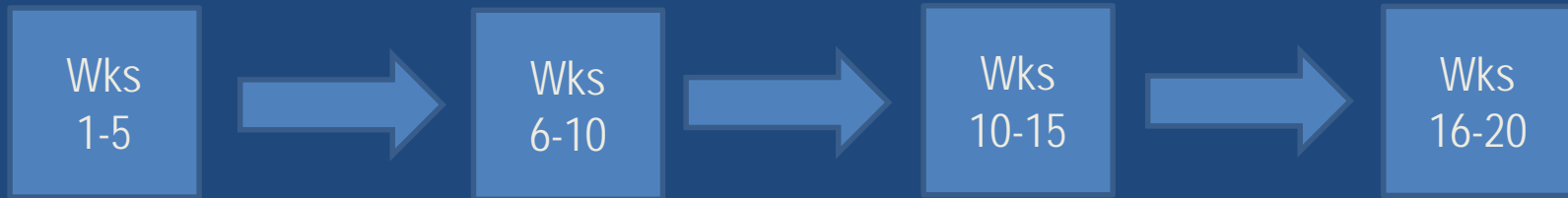
# Outline

- PEP- program overview
- Challenges and issues
- Moderation and stages in the assessment process
- Moderation practices
- From verification of marks to blind marking
- Blind marking in PEP
- Challenges
- Moderation as PD
- Feedback from teachers
- Conclusion

# Pre-enrolment English Program (PEP)

## A brief introduction

- 20-week program



- PEP Advisory Committee (PAC) - academic oversight
- Curriculum & final assessment process redesign project

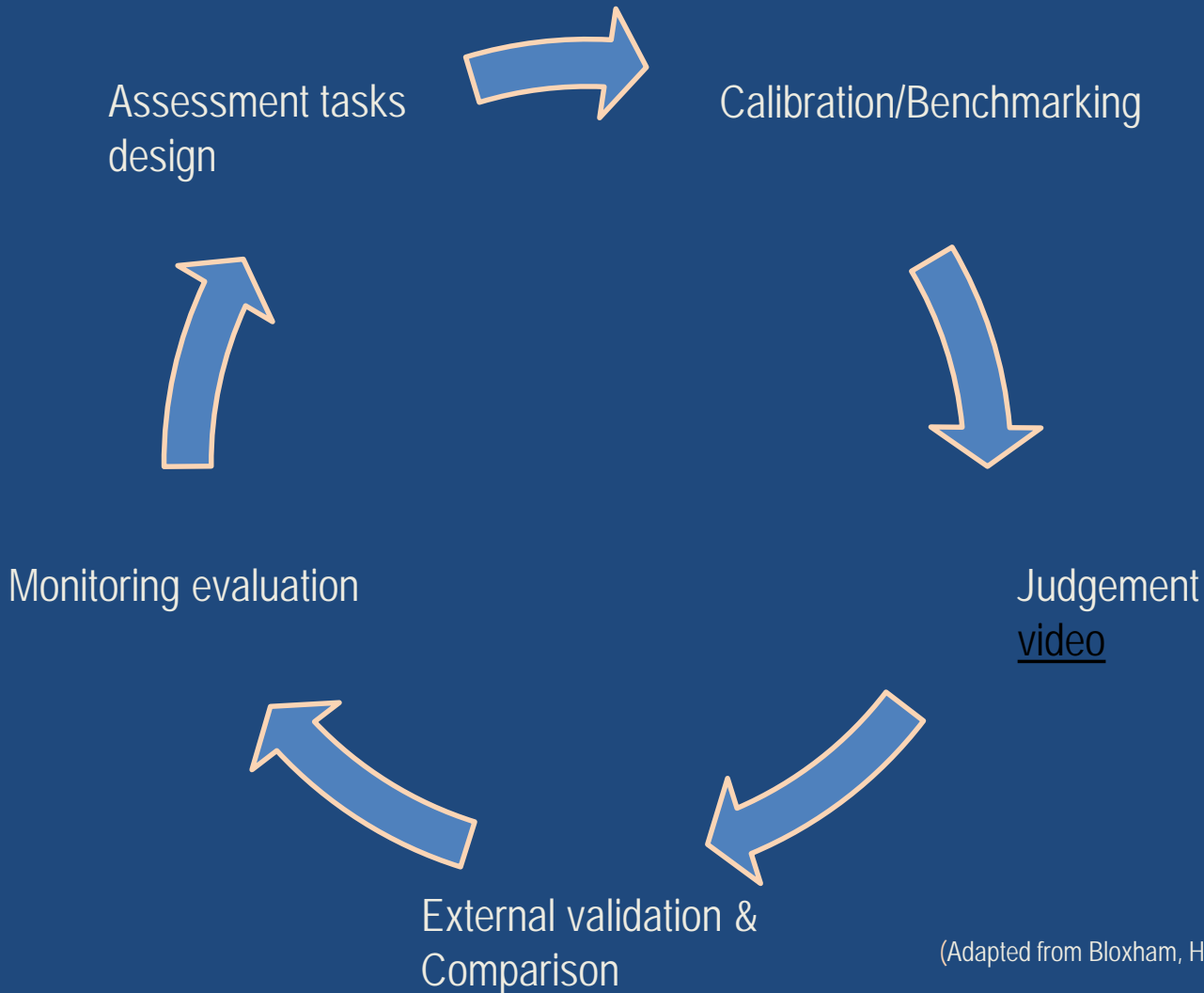


# Challenges and issues

- Increased teachers accountability
- Limited time for induction
- Large assessing team
- Teaching staff – different standards
- Difficulties associated with achieving and maintaining consistency
- The type of work assessed- rely on the subjective judgement of teachers.
- Different interpretations of assessment criteria

Serious concerns about standards & considerable variation among the teachers in terms of marking, feedback and interpretation of the rubrics;

# Moderation practices and stages in the assessment process



(Adapted from Bloxham, Hughes & Adie, 2016)

# Informal moderation

Consistency, fairness & validity – through discussions & moderation practices (Sadler 2010, in Watty et al, 2014).

Formative tasks: Blogs, reports, OPs, seminars, practice essays, Integrated Reading & Writing tasks

Summative task: Final Independent Research Paper OP

Moderation methods:

- Peer-review
- Teachers as external assessors
- Meetings/at workstations in the staff area

Teachers develop a sense of belonging & connectedness (Crimmins et al, 2016).

# Formal moderation process

- Practice Exam Essay (formative)
- Referenced Essay (summative)
- (Final Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW) (summative)
- Final Exam Essay (summative)
  - Structured
  - Guidelines to be followed
  - Teachers allocated in groups

Final moderation with Consultancy Panel(s): 2 academics members of the PAC; where there is a difference in grades they discuss and moderate those exams

# Formal moderation process - Stages

Stages	Who	What
Stage 1	Small group of teachers and coordinator	Select 3 exams as samples-borderline/representing grade classification (F P C)
Stage 2	Teacher individually	The 3 samples are marked (rubric/grades & justification)
Stage 3	Small groups + facilitator	Discussion/clarification (calibration) consensus/ facilitators make notes
Stage 4	Facilitators meeting	Discussion/clarification (calibration) consensus/notes/S-drive



# Formal moderation process

## Final Exam Essay

### Exam day

- Pre-marking moderation

### In the following week

- Final Exam Moderation session with Consultancy Panel(s)  
Consultancy Panel: 2 academics members of the PAC; where there is a difference in grades they discuss and moderate those exams

### Final Exam marking moderation:

- Until 2014: verification of marks
- From 2015: blind- marking

# Verification of marks x blind marking

## Before - Verification of marks

Original grades and comments were visible;  
Verifier influenced by original marker grades  
and comments

Using original grades as an 'anchor' (Garry,  
McCool& O'Neil, 2005)".

Some of the verifiers never disagreed  
with the original marker.

There was discussion during the process-  
power relations between teachers which  
impacted on verifiers judgement.

In a few occasions, the class teacher  
confronted the markers;

Some sessions were long because of the  
discussion teachers had during the  
session.

## Now - Blind marking

Rubrics are placed in envelopes before  
the session; no annotations on exam  
papers; Second markers don't know the  
grades and are not influenced by the  
original grades or comments.

Second marker reads and grades the  
exam; they have to make a decision;

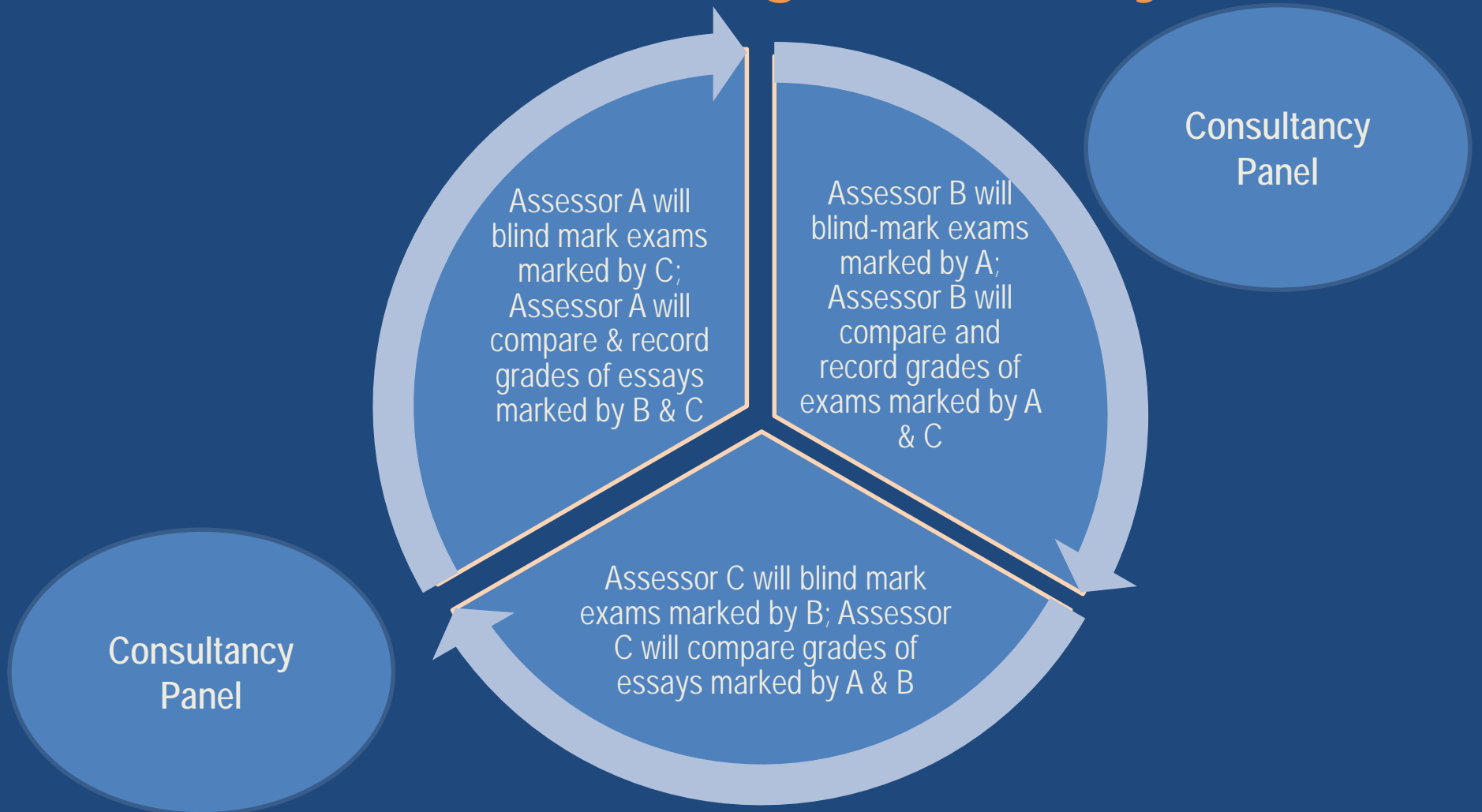
First markers don't know the second  
marker grades. There is no discussion  
during the session.

Codes are used to preserve the  
anonymity of the markers;

The teachers blind mark (second marker)  
and compare grades (recorder)

# Formal moderation process

## Blind marking - Role Play



# Blind-marking - groups



Final exam essay-moderation groups- Blind marking - sem 1 2016



Final exam essay-moderation groups- Blind -marking - sem 1 2016

# Challenges

- Time investment:
  - To make up codes & email each teacher
  - To write a step-by-step process to guide teachers and facilitators
  - To prepare documents
  - To organise exam distribution
  - To allocate teachers to moderation groups where their students' exams are not being moderated;
  - To oversee the moderation session (AM & PM)
- Staff :
  - To make effective use of staff time
  - To ensure that teachers understand the process;
  - To ensure that teachers follow instructions (exams in alphabetical order)
- Budget:
  - To use resources effectively

# Screening Panel Sessions

- Moderate final results in some situations
- Academic representatives + class teacher(s)
- PAC oversight

Screening panel is not needed only when the student meets the criteria in all areas and successfully completes the PEP.

# Moderation as professional development

- Learn about marking standards through discussions (Reimann et al 2010, in Bloxam & Boyd, 2012).
- Have the opportunity to become familiar with the program, expectations, marking requirements/assessment criteria.
- Think about their marking.
- Reflect on their teaching practices.
- Have the opportunity to see how other teachers mark and justify their grades.

“... a systematic, situated moderation assessment process can demonstrate accountability and transparency in academic practice as well as helping sessional staff to connect, develop a sense of belonging, and develop teaching and learning knowledge and skill through regular professional conversations and calibration (Crimmins et al, 2016).

# Feedback from teachers

- Having never been a part of this moderation system, I liked it in the way it seemed to reduce bias in the marking.
- The instructions are very explicit and clear.
- The system worked really well and will run more smoothly when we are all more familiar with it.
- It seemed to me that the moderation today went easily. We just had to take it one step at a time to make sure we didn't get out of step. We had a few pauses to make sure we were doing the right thing.
- Thanks for the system. I thought it worked well in spite of my own mistakes which I blame on tiredness. It was possible to be completely objective and not be influenced by other markers.
- Moderation worked smoothly and efficiently. A good idea that the verifier did not know the grade given by the external marker. Important that all essays and rubrics stayed in alphabetical order -it saved time. Great planning.
- Generally it went smoothly but I had one teacher who struggled a fair bit with the different 'hats', which meant I took longer to mark my essays as I had to walk them through it several times over and over again.



# Conclusion



The PEP assessment process is as rigorous, fair and consistent as possible.

It benefits:

- The students
- The teachers
- The program

# References

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