5.3.1 Moderation, Validation, and External Referencing Policy

1.0 Rationale

This policy outlines the validation of courses, curriculum alignment, assessment mapping, external referencing, moderation of assessments, and support for students' academic progress at Acknowledge Education (AE). It emphasises the importance of validation, moderation, and external referencing to maintain educational excellence and align with established quality assurance processes.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff involved in course development, delivery, and support at AE and students undertaking courses.

3.0 Regulatory Context

3.1 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

The regulatory standards include evaluating and enhancing institutional quality assurance through monitoring, review, and improvement, as outlined in Standards 5.3.1, 5.3.4, and 5.3.7. Additionally, Standards 1.4.1, 1.4.3, and 1.4.4 address the specification of learning outcomes.

The Standards related to learning outcomes (Section 1.4) and course design (Section 3.1) mandate that the course and its learning outcomes align with the appropriate qualification level. This alignment necessitates referencing against the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level classifications.

To facilitate internal and external referencing processes, the collection of student progress data is obligatory (Standard 1.3.5).

3.2 National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (2018)

Standard 6 addresses the need to ensure support services are available for students to access learning support consistent with the requirements of the course, mode of study and the learning needs of students.

4.0 Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework

AE understands the importance of moderation, validation, and review in ensuring robust teaching and learning experience at the college. We acknowledge that these processes are closely intertwined with course design, delivery, student support and engagement. To achieve effective academic delivery and facilitate continuous improvement, AE integrates moderation, validation, and external referencing throughout course design, delivery, and support phases, and is guided by overarching principles.

Given the interconnected nature of these processes, this policy emphasises the utilisation of AE's Higher Education Quality Assurance framework to provide clear direction on how validation, moderation, and external referencing are implemented and embedded within AE's practices.

4.1 Guiding Principles

4.1.1 Justification and Accountability

AE recognises the importance of accountability in the assessment process and is committed to ensuring that academic staff and AE as an organisation can justify decisions in any public or private defence of grades awarded.

4.1.2 Equity

AE is dedicated to ensuring that assessments are fair, transparent, and unbiased, providing equal opportunities for all students to showcase their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

AE acknowledges the need for consistency and uniformity in assessing students' work to ensure fair judgments and moderation decisions.

4.1.3 Quality

AE views moderation as continuously assessing and improving assessment practices, ensuring high quality and effectiveness. AE acknowledges that assessment moderation is an ongoing platform for growth and advancement embedded in unit and course design and delivery.

4.1.4 Planned

AE recognises the importance of careful planning for effective moderation. Therefore, an annual moderation schedule is developed, encompassing internal and external moderation processes. This consistent approach to moderation promotes shared knowledge and fosters a culture of continuous improvement, curriculum development and course alignment.

4.2 Validation

Course validation is a crucial process overseen by the Academic Board, ensuring that new and existing courses at AE align with established standards and educational requirements.

4.2.1 The Academic Board supervises developing and reviewing new and existing courses, ensuring their alignment with established standards and educational requirements.

4.2.2 AE will regularly conduct independent reviews of its courses to assess curriculum alignment and assessment mapping.

4.2.3 AE will appoint an external reviewer every four years to assess and provide feedback on each course.

4.2.4 Course Advisory Committees will meet annually to review the relevance of the courses.

4.2.5 Monitoring student cohorts' retention, progression, and completion rates is conducted to validate course effectiveness, relevance, and alignment with educational standards.

4.2.6 Student unit evaluation data will be employed to assess and confirm the effectiveness of the individual units of study.

4.3 External Referencing

The policy section on external referencing highlights AE's commitment to engaging with external organisations and industry partners to benchmark, validate, and enhance the quality and relevance of its courses.

4.3.1 Benchmarking with external organisations will be coordinated as required to ensure AE's courses remain up-to-date and relevant.

4.3.2 Student educational performances will be assessed regularly by industry partners to validate the effectiveness of the courses.

4.3.3 Alumni surveys will track graduate outcomes and inform program development.

4.3.4 AE will act on feedback and recommendations from external referencing to address any identified issues or gaps in the assessment processes.

4.4 Moderation

This policy section emphasises the importance of maintaining consistency, fairness, and accuracy in assessment outcomes through ongoing reviews, collaborative assessments, and adherence to established standards for assessment, grading and feedback moderation.

4.4.1 Assessment Moderation

i) Regular assessment moderation processes will ensure consistency, fairness, and accuracy in marking across different assessors, units, and campuses.

ii) Moderation of assessment tasks, including assignments, exams, and feedback, will be performed to verify alignment with learning outcomes and standards.

4.4.2 Grading Moderation

i) The Student Progress Committee will implement grading moderation procedures to consistently apply grading criteria and standards across different assessors and units.

ii) Moderation of final grades will be conducted each trimester by the Student Progress Committee to verify their accuracy and fairness.

4.4.3 Quality Assurance Moderation

i) Quality assurance moderation activities will be undertaken to assess the overall quality and effectiveness of course delivery and educational practices.

ii) Peer reviews and observations of teaching sessions will be conducted to maintain high teaching standards and identify areas for improvement.

4.4.4 Feedback Moderation

i) Feedback moderation processes will be implemented to ensure constructive and consistent feedback is provided to students on their assessments.

ii) feedback will be moderated to verify its clarity, relevance, and alignment with assessment criteria.

4.5 Support and Collaboration:

This section also highlights the institution's commitment to proactive support for students and staff to maximise quality assurance.

4.5.1 AE will ensure the recruitment of highly qualified and competent staff in accordance with AE's Academic Teaching, Training and Administration Staffing Policy and AE Professional Development Policy.

4.5.2 As outlined in AE's Academic Teaching, Training and Administrative Staffing Policy, all student-facing staff, including academic and pastoral care staff, will be aware of their responsibility to be available to students.

4.5.3 Senior teaching staff or Course Coordinators will mentor new staff members to promote a high standard of teaching, marking consistency, and minimise subjectivity among markers.

4.5.4 Lecturer and trainer guidelines will be updated each trimester to ensure lecturers are well-informed about marking procedures and equipped to provide constructive feedback to students.

4.5.5 The Academic Leadership Team will evaluate all student applications for review or remark of assessments, special consideration, and academic-based appeals to identify patterns indicating assessment or course delivery issues.

4.5.6 All students will be informed about the process to apply for extensions to assessment due dates or special consideration applications through the

orientation process, student handbook, college website, learning management system (Moodle) and student management system (RTO Manager).

4.5.7 Students identified as at risk of failing to meet satisfactory course progress will be provided additional support and guidance to maximise their opportunities for academic success.

4.5.8 All students can attend academic workshops or access individual academic support to assist with academic writing skills.

4.5.9 All students will complete a study skills program before engaging in any higher education course at AE.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Academic Board:

- the development and review of new and existing courses.
- Ensures academic excellence, validity, and relevance of the courses.
- Reviews significant changes to academic units.

5.2 Course Advisory and Review Committee

- Meets annually to review the relevance of the course.
- Provides input and recommendations regarding course development and review.

5.3 Dean

- Coordinates benchmarking with external organisations.
- Coordinates industry partners' evaluation of AE students' educational performance.
- Takes appropriate actions based on feedback and recommendations from external referencing.

5.4 External Reviewer

- Appointed every four years to review each course.
- Conducts an external review of the course's curriculum alignment and assessment mapping.

5.5 Unit Designer

- Ensures that assessment tasks used in the unit align with the unit's learning outcomes and the appropriate level of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

5.6 Unit Coordinators (or Senior Lecturers):

- Responsible for ongoing assessment validation at the unit delivery level.
- Conduct spot checks on marking across units to ensure consistency.
- Provide exemplars to demonstrate standards and help calibrate understanding of assessment criteria.
- Mentor staff members to ensure high teaching standards and marking consistency.
- Review and approve unit contents, assessments, and marking rubrics each trimester.

5.7 Teaching and Learning Committee:

- Reviews newly proposed assessment tasks.
- Provides recommendations to the Academic Board.

5.8 Student Progress Committee

- Conducts post-marking meetings to assess marking profiles and identify performance patterns.
- Considers actions, including grade alterations or whole group re-marking.
- Ratifies final grades before they are made available to students.

6.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Accountability	The responsibility of academic staff and AE as an organisation to provide justifications and explanations for decisions made in the assessment process, ensuring the ability to defend grades awarded in public or private settings.
Academic Leadership Team	An academic leadership team typically refers to a group of individuals overseeing a course's academic, administrative functions. Can include course coordinators, senior lecturers (where appointed as delegates and Heads of Department.
Alignment	Ensuring that courses, curriculum, and assessment mapping are in accordance with established standards and educational requirements.
Benchmarking	The process of comparing courses, curriculum, and educational practices with external organisations and industry partners to assess their quality, relevance, and alignment with industry standards and best practice.
Consistency	The quality of maintaining uniformity, fairness, and reliability in assessment outcomes, grading, feedback, and teaching practices.
Course Advisory and Review Committees	established by the Academic Board comprising appropriate academic and management staff members, including senior members with relevant expertise, experience or standing and independent industry and academic representation.
Efficient	Ensuring that assessment processes are streamlined and effective, saving time and resources.
Equity	Ensuring fair, transparent, and unbiased assessment processes that provide equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities.
External Referencing	Engaging with external organisations and industry partners to benchmark, validate, and enhance the quality and relevance of courses.
Fair	Ensuring that assessments provide equal opportunities for all students, and are transparent, unbiased, and discrimination-free.
Moderation	“a process for assuring that an assessment outcome is valid, fair, and reliable and that marking criteria have been applied consistently

	/[and that the] benefits considered to accrue from effective moderation … include improved reliability. resulting from the opportunity to discuss differences in the interpretation of criteria and marking schemes (Partington, 1994).
Course Advisory and Review Committees	established by the Academic Board comprising appropriate academic and management staff members, including senior members with relevant expertise, experience or standing and independent industry and academic representation.
Quality	The standard of excellence and effectiveness in assessment, course delivery, educational practices, and learning outcomes.
Reliable	Ensuring that assessments produce consistent and dependable results that can be trusted.
Student Progress Committee	a subcommittee of the Academic Board. Members of the Student Progress Committee will include the Dean, the Course Coordinators, and the Quality Assurance Manager.
Validation	The process to review, assess, and ensure that new and existing courses align with established standards and educational requirements.

7.0 Related Documents

Document Name
AE Delegation Framework
Staff Code of Conduct
Student Code of Conduct
AE Professional Development Policy
1.3.3 Course Progress Policy (HE and VET)
1.3.4 Course Progress Procedure (HE and VET)
3.2.1 Higher Education Professional Equivalence Policy
3.2.2 Academic Teaching, Training and Administrative Staff Policy and Procedures
3.2.3 Teaching Staff Engagement and Assessment Procedure
5.2.1 Fostering Academic Integrity Policy
5.2.2 Fostering Academic Integrity Higher Education Procedure
5.2.3 Fostering Academic Integrity VET Procedure
5.3.2 HE Moderation, Validation and External Referencing Procedure

8.0 Policy Information

Policy Name	Moderation, Validation and External Referencing Policy
Document Number	5.3.1
Purpose	To establish a comprehensive framework for ensuring the quality, consistency, and relevance of courses and assessments. It emphasises the importance of validation, moderation, and external referencing to maintain educational excellence, align with regulatory standards, and provide support for students' academic progress.
Audience	☒Staff | ☒Students| ☒Public
Category	Institutional Quality Assurance

Subcategory	Monitoring, Review and Improvement
Approval Date	18/8/2023
Effective Date	18/8/2023
Last date of endorsement	18/8/2023
Next Review Date	Under review as at April 2026
Policy Advisor	Narelle Whatley
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Contact	Quality Assurance Manager regulatorcompliance@ae.edu.au

9.0 Change Log

Date	Version	By	Notes
26/06/2023	1.0	Narelle Whatley (Dean)	Policy developed