

## Assessment Validation and Moderation Policy and Procedure - ELICOS

### Purpose

This policy is in place to make sure that the assessments of the ELICOS courses provided by Northwest Pty Ltd are taken as equivalent to results from large-scale exams such as IELTS or PTE for the purposes of determining progression to studies in other fields. Assessment at Northwest Pty Ltd (for ELICOS) has following purposes:

- To provide an accurate measure of student progress, which will help ensure that instruction is appropriately targeted,
- To help provide confidence that a student who finishes their course with a certain level of English has achieved a level consistent with other students leaving at the same level, and consistent with other measures of what that level is, and
- To determine whether a student is ready for progression to a further course.

This validation and moderation policy helps support these objectives while at the same time aiming to avoid a large time burden on staff.

### Scope

All ELICOS students and staff involved in the promotion, recruitment, admissions, academic delivery, and the management or administration of the ELICOS courses.

### Policy

Methods of validation, moderation and benchmarking will be employed to make sure the assessments for the Northwest Pty Ltd ELICOS courses to meet the learning outcomes and to be concordant with the results of IELTS/PTE or equivalent. These methods have procedures to follow and the outcomes are documented and implemented accordingly.

### Procedure

#### Validation

Assessment at Northwest Pty Ltd ELICOS is a peer review process following NEAS guidelines, supervised by the Academic Manager.

Validation will be carried out for each assessment instrument at these points:

- During the process of its creation but before administration to students,
- During the continuous review and evaluation process (see Course Review and Evaluation Policy and Procedure) – each assessment will be re-validated at least once every two years even if it has not changed, to ensure that it still aligns with the course content and learning objectives, and remains relevant to the needs of the students, or

- As part of any significant adjustment made outside the review and evaluation cycle and before administration to students.

The assessment validation will follow the procedure:

- The validation panel involves at least three experienced teachers working collaboratively. The author of the assessment (if written in-house) should be available to answer questions but otherwise will not be involved in the validation process.
- Conclusions from the validation meeting will be recorded on a copy of the standard NEAS validation template ([https://online.neas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Template\\_Assessment-Validation\\_201807.docx](https://online.neas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Template_Assessment-Validation_201807.docx)).
- A separate copy will be used for each assessment instrument.
- Validation should ensure that standard assessment principles such as fairness, flexibility and clear reference to criteria, are checked.
- The assessment writer (or person responsible for selecting the assessment if not written in-house) will then incorporate the changes decided in a new version of the instrument.
- Validation records will be kept on file for audit purposes and for reference when further adjustments are made.
- Feedback from the first use of each tool may lead to further adjustments, and further reviews will be carried out in accordance with the Course Review and Evaluation Policy and Procedure.

### **Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is the process of establishing that assessments at Northwest Pty Ltd give results that are comparable with other assessments deemed equivalent. It is closely associated with assessment validation and especially, moderation, as both these processes are essential if benchmarking is to be accurate.

Benchmarking will be conducted as the required by ELICOS Standards 2018 P4.1 c ii that formal measures are in place to ensure that assessment outcomes are comparable to other criteria used for admission to VET or other courses into which an ELICOS course allows direct entry without the need to take external exams such as IELTS or Pearson Test of English.

Benchmarking will be carried out in three ways:

- All students taking external examinations such as IELTS or PTE will be strongly encouraged to report their marks to Northwest Pty Ltd, either through including Northwest Pty Ltd in the list of institutions the marks will be officially reported to, or through asking the student to contact the college once they get their results. These results will be recorded, together with dates the exam was taken, and compared with results of course assessments. This information provides a further input into the moderation sessions described below.

- Students who progress through direct entry/articulation arrangements will be tracked (although currently no articulation arrangements). Northwest Pty Ltd will liaise with the receiving institution to gather information about how students perform in comparison with students who entered by other pathways, including by taking IELTS or other exams. This depends on the co-operation of the receiving institution. Northwest Pty Ltd will endeavour to include clauses in future agreements to include provision for this tracking.
- Benchmarking is facilitated by the fact that learning outcomes for the EAP course are aligned as much as possible with publicly-available descriptors for external exams deemed equivalent. Assessment results are based on judgements against these learning outcomes.
- Results from these processes will be considered during moderation and during course review processes.

### **Moderation**

Moderation is essential for ensuring that judgements made by all teachers are as consistent with each other as can be realistically expected.

To assist with this, a set of student work for reference will be built up under the supervision of the ELICOS Director of Studies/Academic Manager during early implementations of the course. This will comprise written work and recordings of students speaking, with their permission. It will be used to calibrate new teachers to the assessment system, and to assist with moderation. These samples should be clearly marked with the assessment decisions that have been made and checked through moderation. Borderline examples will be particularly useful. This reference samples will be updated when new assessments are produced or when assessment tasks are adjusted, or in light of particularly thorny decisions during moderation.

Moderation should be carried out in the following ways:

- Written work: a random selection of written work will be chosen by the ELICOS Academic Manager (or their delegate) for discussion at a moderation meeting. At the meeting, this will be discussed and, where the set of reference work mentioned above is ready, will be compared with that. These meetings will be held at least once every six months for any group of two or three adjacent levels on the same course. For example, a meeting may look at the Elementary and Pre-intermediate. The purpose of combing levels in this way, apart from efficiency, is so that work can be compared across levels, helping to keep level calibration consistent.
- Spoken work: ELICOS Academic Manager or the delegated experienced teacher will visit classrooms during assessment of spoken work in order to assist. He or she will also discuss some cases with the teacher, to provide guidance in borderline cases and to help ensure consistency. By visiting classes at different levels, the validator can help to ensure calibration of levels remains consistent.

These moderation processes may lead to recommendations to adjust assessment instruments, for example to improve clarity, reduce the possibility of multiple interpretations or to simplify administration. Any patterns or major issues brought to light through the moderation process should be discussed at the next level or course review meetings as per the Course Review and Evaluation Policy and Procedure.

No teacher should make assessment decisions before taking part in a moderation meeting involving the appropriate course/level combination.