Formative Assessment – Moderate

[Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The logo for the Victoria State Government. Formative Assessment – Moderate.]

NARRATOR: Hi, I'm Narelle. I will be presenting this video about how to moderate.

[A flow chart with three stages: Plan, Assess, Review. The Plan stage lists "describe a learning continuum," "develop a formative assessment rubric," and "design a task," unpacking parts 1 and 2 of the Guide to Formative Assessment Rubrics of the Victorian Curriculum, F to 10. The Assess stage lists "collect evidence," "moderate," and "interpret and uses evidence," unpacking part 3 of the guide. The Review stage lists "improve rubrics," "refine learning continuum," and "refine task," which is part of review and refine for best practice.]

NARRATOR: Moderate is the second video within the Assess section of the formative assessment videos. This video relates to part three of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Guide to Formative Assessment Rubrics. When it is time to moderate, you should already have collected evidence using your task and administration guidelines matched to a learning continuum and a rubric. By the end of this video, you will know about best practice in moderating using formative assessment rubrics.

Moderation is checking understanding of a rubric so judgments are consistent against criteria in the rubric, implementing processes to improve quality of moderation, choosing situations to moderate formative assessments, working with time constraints and reviewing unexpected results. Moderation is the process of assessors working together to ensure consistent judgments about the standard of student performance. These performances can be actual performances such as music recitals or drama presentations, or they can be products, like essays or artworks.

During the moderation, the different assessors reach consensus about the judgments made of the student performances. The outcome of moderation is that the judgments made about the quality of student performance are the same, no matter which assessor marks the work. This is important, irrespective of whether the results are being used for summative purposes, such as reporting, or the formative purpose of informing future teaching and learning. Disagreements between assessors during moderation often highlight different interpretations of a particular quality criterion. Often this is because the criterion wording is unclear. Once consensus is reached, the criterion wording can be refined for future users to communicate more clearly.

Moderation takes time - something teachers are always short of. So here are some ways to minimise the time spent on moderation. Firstly, moderation is necessary when different assessors are responsible for marking the same task to ensure consistency between markers. This means that moderation is not required if only one teacher is assessing the task and using its results. The benefits of moderation for formative uses can often be achieved by marking only a small sample of student performances. If a rubric has been used before, the language of the criteria will have already been refined. So moderation is most beneficial for the first use of a rubric.

When the consequences of inconsistent assessments are low, then moderation is less necessary. For example, if a teacher has flexibility within their own class and decisions can be changed easily. If a decision is made on the basis of an inconsistent result that cannot be easily changed, such as groupings for future learning that involve a great deal of organisational effort, then it is best to be confident in the results via a moderation process.

Moderation is carried out in many different ways, and this video draws on Australian research into moderation conducted by Wyatt-Smith, Klenowski and Gunn, which analysed recordings of teacher moderation meetings to tease out the complexities of the moderation process. They identified that moderation involves cognitive processes such as analysing the student performance, as well as the social processes involved in reconciling differences in judgments, with the demand of managing all these processes at the same time being a major contributor to moderation difficulties.

The dot points presented here help to reduce the demand of moderation processes, leading to a better moderation experience. Rubrics designed using part two of the Guide To Formative Assessment Rubrics are written to support the consistency of judgments, so these help make moderation more efficient by reducing the need for interpretation of criteria. Individually assessing student performance before beginning moderation helps balance the competing demands of making your judgments and comparing the judgments of different assessors by separating the two aspects of moderation. If the individual assessment happens prior to the moderation meeting, it reduces the pressure on assessors to make quick judgments to keep the meeting short. If moderation is framed as a comparison of judgments against criteria, rather than pitting assessors against each other, then the social processes become less demanding. The task is focused on finding evidence to support judgments against the criteria rather than personality differences that are likely to come into play.

Wyatt-Smith and her colleagues found that the attitudes and dispositions of teachers play a major part in how the moderation process plays out. They provided some examples of helpful and unhelpful attitudes and dispositions. Those found to be helpful are - wanting to help students through accurate assessment, belief that collaboration will improve assessment, therefore willingness to work through different views. Those found to be unhelpful are - expectations of 'average', 'excellent', expectation of performance based on prior knowledge of the student.

Now you're ready to decide if you will moderate, and if you decide to moderate, you'll be able to use best practice to do so.

[More information available at vcaa.vic.gov.au. Authorised and published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.]