

The Role of an External Examiner in Quality Promotion

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Introduction

- Student Assessment is one of the key responsibilities of lecturers.
- However, setting test and examination questions requires skill and some theoretical knowledge related to Measurement and Evaluation.

- Unfortunately, many lecturers do not have formal training as teachers and, hence, are not familiar with some important concepts that would enable them carry out assessment in a well-informed way.

Role of External Examiners

External Examining as a Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism is a long-standing University tradition

Overall External Examiners are expected to play the following roles as QA partners:

- approve the form and coverage of content (i.e. content validity) of proposed assessment instruments
- ascertain that the intellectual demand of the instrument(s) is appropriate for the level of students

- ascertain that the marking memorandum is consistent with the assessment instruments, and is adequately informative to any other examiner who may depend on it for the awarding of marks to candidates
- ascertain that continuous assessment (a) work has complied to minimum standards, and (b) marks have been awarded impartially, and in accordance with published guidelines, procedures and policies

- carefully proofread and scrutinize assessment instruments “for typographical errors, for grammatical cues that might inadvertently tip off examinees to the correct answer, and for the appropriateness of the reading level of the material” (Zurawski, 1998: 2).

After Assessment Process

- Ascertaining whether or not the assessment has been carried out in line with approved policies, procedures and regulations
- Assignment of marks has been done fairly and consistently
- That the overall standard reached by the group, in terms of both depth and breadth of responses, is comparable with peers taking the same course elsewhere in similar programmes of study (i.e. monitoring and benchmarking of standards)

- Moderating the marks given by the internal examiner(s), where necessary
- Participating, as may be required, in any reviews of decisions about individual students' awarded marks in the interest of impartiality
- Reporting to the academic partner, or any validation body, on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the assessment process, and making necessary recommendations for the specific group, or future groups. Such a report may also contain any matters of serious concern that the external examiner may have picked up during the process of his/her work

Objectives of the Paper

To illustrate how Item Analysis could be used by External Examiners to enhance the quality of reports submitted to institutions for which they serve as external examiners

Methods

- This was a Case Study, involving quantitative item analysis of examination results of a Teacher Education module for which the researcher was an external examiner
- All the 119 scripts, comprising the total number of students, formed the research sample for the study
- The item difficulty index of each item was calculated to determine its singular contribution to the validity of the assessment instrument
- Similarly, discrimination indices of each item were calculated to determine their singular contributions to the validity of the assessment instrument

Findings and Discussion

Q1	p	Q1	p
1.1	67	1.14	44
1.2	78*	1.15	42
1.3	81*	1.16	19**
1.4	28**	1.17	76
1.5	80*	1.18	62
1.6	40	1.19	53
1.7	75	2.0	21**
1.8	62	2.1	24**
1.9	35	2.2	13**
1.10	83*	2.3	71
1.11	48	2.4	13**
1.12	50	2.5	18**
1.13	63		



Interpretation

Key: * - Too easy (5 items)

** - Too difficult (7 items)

- 30-75 : Acceptable range
- Total Out of Range = 12
- Good items = 13

Inference: Approximately half of the items were not appropriate

Table II: Difficulty Indices for Free Response Items

Question	n	p
Q2	102	58
Q3	105	61
Q4	32	46
Q5	6	-
Q6	112	64

Inference: Save for Q5 where p could not be determined, the rest of the questions were good.



Discrimination Indices

QUESTION	D
Q1	0.44
Q2	0.38
Q3	0.36
Q4	0.57
Q5	-
Q6	0.63

Inference: All the questions, save for Q5, discriminated well

Conclusion

- It is evident that assessment instruments analysed to this degree of depth and breadth will contribute significantly to the quality of the assessment process, and in turn lead to graduates that are accurately certified for quality
- The presenter hopes that the audience will have picked something helpful for their own professional use in the future

Many thanks

