

Board of Senior Secondary Studies

###### Teacher Guide

###### Meshing: Best Practice for Creating a Rank Order in Tertiary Language Courses

**Foreword**

The Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies would like to thank the following teachers for their valuable contributions in producing this document.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Heike Craig | Daramalan College |
| Juliette Bornas | Dickson College |
| Kate Lofthouse | Marist College |
| Antonietta Martiniello | Merici College |
| Rhiannon Richards  | Canberra Girls Grammar School |
| Miyuki Shino | Narrabundah College |

**Purpose**

This guide provides direction on creating a rank order of students in Tertiary language courses where multiple courses are in the same scaling group.

**Background**

The scaling of course scores is based on colleges producing a valid rank order list. Producing a valid rank order list in Tertiary language courses requires meshing both within and across languages as well as within and across Beginning, Continuing, and Advanced courses.

Meshing is the process whereby students are allocated their position in the whole scaling group ranking. When several language courses are in the same scaling group, firstly the ranking of students within each course must be accurate, then the rank of each student in the full group (comprising all students in all courses in that scaling group) must also be accurate. In this circumstance, it may be necessary to compare the relative performance of a student in Beginning Chinese with that of a student in Advanced French.

Schools need to mesh accurately each course in a scaling group every assessment period so that the scaling group list is a legitimate ranking of the students involved. It is this rank and the ***gap*** between scores that is crucial. It is important that teachers do not clump student scores together unless the students are of similar performance level. High performing student scores need to be significantly different and on top of the scaling list.

Schools are responsible for meshing assessment item scores to form unit and course scores. Best practice for creating a rank order of students in Tertiary language courses in the same scaling group hinges on the following understandings:

* **Creating an accurate rank order in Tertiary language courses is a planned event**

Unit outlines and assessment must be established before delivery to ensure that accurate meshing occurs. Teachers of languages must ensure that the rigor and approaches to assessment tasks are comparable. Students studying Beginning language units must be extended as much as students studying Advanced language units.

* **Language performance**

Assessment must accurately measure a student’s language performance; not simply proficiency. Studying languages at Beginning or Advanced can be equally challenging. For example, a student with no language background studying a Beginning language course may face the same challenge making a simple argument as a student studying an advanced course who analyses complex texts in the target language. Assessment tasks should be designed so that the Beginning student is challenged to the same extent as the Advanced student.

* **Scores and grades have different meanings**

Scores and grades have different meanings. Grades are an absolute measurement against standards. For example, it is possible for all students in a class to get an A grade because they meet the A grade achievement standard as documented in the Language Framework. Scores are relative. For example, a score is a measure of a student’s relative performance in relation to other students. So a student getting 98 is achieving at a markedly higher level to the student getting 88 but both students may achieve an A grade.

**How to rank students studying a senior secondary language course**

Assigning a numerical value to student performance in assessment items in senior secondary language courses creates a rank order. To mesh accurately scores:

* drawing on evidence, establish how individuals in all language courses compare with each other based on prior performance
* ensure rigor in each assessment task so that it significantly distinguishes student achievement
* ensure approaches to assessment tasks are comparable in each language and at each level
* moderate assessment.

Figure 1, below, shows meshing both within and across languages and Beginning, Continuing, and Advanced courses. To mesh language courses, teachers have had to decide (based on evidence from the assessment) that Martha Reed (97.5) is significantly better than Jane Caldwell (91.5), but Sam Jimenez (88.5) and Santiago Sanders (88) showed very nearly the same level of achievement.

**Figure 1**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Beginning French** | **Beginning Chinese** | **Advanced Chinese**  | **Advanced French**  | **Continuing French**  | **Continuing Chinese** |
| 1 | 97.5 | Martha Reed |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | 96.5 | Dean Castro |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 95.8 | Winifred Hardy |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  | 93.6 | Ian Mann |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  | 92.2 | Sue Dawson |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 91.5 | Jane Caldwell |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 88.5 | Sam Jimenez |
| 8 | 88 | Santiago Sanders |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  | 81.5 | Liz Fry |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 81 | Roger Bryan |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 79 | Morris Graves |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 78 | Alvin McKinney |  |  |
| 13 | 77 | Doris Schwartz |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Step 1: Drawing on evidence, establish how individuals in all language courses compare with each other based on prior performance.**

A variety of data sets may be used including NAPLAN, Allwell, linguistic testing, trial AST. This informs parameters for each language course.

**Step 2: Determine assessment items for the course.**

Assessment must accurately measure a student’s language performance; not simply proficiency. Studying languages at Beginning or Advanced language is equally challenging. Meshing is a planned event. To enable accurate meshing to occur, unit outlines and assessment must be established prior to teaching. Teachers of languages need to develop assessment tasks that are comparable in rigor and challenge both within and across languages in Beginning, Continuing, and Advanced courses. Comparable assessment may include common items, structure and time. For example, all responding tests in courses meshed together may consist of common weighted sections. Consider the following when determining comparable assessment items both within and across languages as well as within and across Beginning, Continuing, and Advanced courses:

* checking assessment and achievement standards requirements in the Language Framework
* using the same number, type and weightings for assessment items where feasible
* establishing common agreed criteria for marking student work
* ensuring that weightings are the same for similar assessment items across courses
* developing assessment items/marking schemes or solutions collaboratively and that are informed by achievement standards.

**Step 3: Moderate assessment.**

Moderation of student work should occur both within and across all languages and all levels.

Good assessment tasks differentiate between students. In practice, this means that assessment tasks make provision for high performing students’ scores to be significantly different and on top of the scaling list.

To mesh scores accurately, students must be ranked on their performance in each assessment task. When moderating student assessment tasks, check that students with similar performance are getting similar scores. It is this rank order and the ***gap*** between scores that is crucial. Moderation is key to ensuring that no course is unduly advantaged or disadvantaged in the overall list. Refer to Figure 2 for a visual representation of how the students should appear in the rank order list.

**Figure 2 Example of rank order list from figure 1**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Name** | **Raw Score** | **Course** |
| 1 | Martha Reed | 97.5 | Beginning French |
| 2 | Dean Castro | 96.5 | Beginning French |
| 3 | Winifred Hardy | 95.8 | Continuing French |
| 4 | Ian Mann | 93.6 | Advanced Chinese |
| 5 | Sue Dawson | 92.2 | Beginning Chinese |
| 6 | Jane Caldwell | 91.5 | Continuing Chinese |
| 7 | Sam Jimenez | 88.5 | Continuing Chinese |
| 8 | Santiago Sanders | 88 | Beginning French |

**How do we mesh language courses into one rank order?**

Schools are responsible for the assessment and meshing of assessment item scores to form unit scores. Schools are responsible for the assessment and meshing of unit scores to form course scores.

### **If the courses being meshed are already in the same markbook**

If the courses are in the same markbook then it is essential that they be meshed at the assessment item level.

* Entering all scores as a number out of 100 can make comparisons easier.
* Results in each assessment item must be comparable across courses. If Beginning Chinese and Advanced French are in the same markbook then a score of 50 in assessment item 1 must denote the same level of achievement in both courses.
* To ensure that the same scores represent the same level of achievement, teachers of the different courses must meet to moderate their assessment results. Student raw scores may need to be changed if two students of similar performance have gained significantly different results. Consult with OBSSS if this becomes necessary.
* Meshing at the assessment item level ensures that unit scores will come out overall with the correct rank order of students.

### **If the courses being meshed are not in the same markbook**

Follow the same steps as above. In cases of insufficient moderation where the rank order is incorrect after meshing then the Certification Officer may intervene to adjust the historical parameters to ensure that the rank order is correct.

**Conclusion**

Creating a rank order needs to be planned and monitored. This guide ensures equity for students in all language courses. Key considerations throughout the entire process include using evidence to establish prior performance, comparability of assessment and moderation of student performance.