



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

Must examiners meet in order to standardise their marking? An experiment with new and experienced examiners of GCE AS Psychology.

Nick Raikes, Jane Fidler and Tim Gill

Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association annual conference, Manchester University, September 2009

When high stakes examinations are marked by a panel of examiners, the examiners must be standardised so that candidates are not advantaged or disadvantaged according to which examiner marks their work.

It is common practice for Awarding Bodies' standardisation processes to include a "Standardisation" or "Co-ordination" meeting, where all examiners meet to be briefed by the Principal Examiner and to discuss the application of the mark scheme in relation to specific examples of candidates' work. Research into the effectiveness of standardisation meetings has cast doubt on their usefulness, however, at least for experienced examiners.

In the present study we addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the effect on marking accuracy of including a face-to-face meeting as part of an examiner standardisation process?
2. How does the effect on marking accuracy of a face-to-face meeting vary with the type of question being marked (short-answer or essay) and the level of experience of the examiners?
3. To what extent do examiners carry forward standardisation on one set of questions to a different but very similar set of questions?

We found that while Standardisation improved marking accuracy for both new and experienced examiners, marking both short-answers and essays, the benefit of including a face-to-face meeting in the Standardisation process was variable, small and questionable. We also found that the effects of Standardisation on one set of questions – with or without a meeting – carried forward into improved marking accuracy on other, very similar questions, implying that some transferable examiner learning had taken place.

We concluded that it would be reasonable for examining bodies to explore whether Standardisation can be achieved using more cost-effective and efficient methods than face-to-face meetings.



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
Local Examinations Syndicate