

# Narrative 1

## Policies and Processes

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### Greg's story

Greg teaches a core subject from his university's undergraduate program. This subject is offered to domestic and international students in Australia and at three offshore partner sites. There are 450 students in the subject overall.

Local academics teach the subject offshore however Greg also travels to each country once per teaching period to teach a two-day block intensive. These intensives occur consecutively with Greg taking one day to travel between each country. One of the workshops occurs across a weekend so this is a very busy itinerary for Greg.

In country A the local academic has been working on the program for two years, however, in the other two countries there is a new academic teaching the subject.

When Greg gets to country A he meets with his local counterpart over dinner to discuss the assessment and marking criteria. The local counterpart sits in on Greg's teaching and contributes ideas. They both lead a discussion on the assignment and expectations.

In country B the local lecturer is not available to meet with Greg and does not come to the teaching sessions as she is also working at another educational institution and her contract with the partner institution does not stipulate a meeting should take place. Greg undertakes the teaching and gives the students all the information and help he can about the upcoming assessment item. He also will put this in an email to the lecturer when he gets back home.

When Greg gets to country C he is very unwell but manages to do his teaching and meets for the first time the new academic, who attends his teaching sessions. However, he finds that this academic has changed the assessment task considerably to fit local conditions and student learning style – it is now a set of short answers based on the first five chapters of the textbook rather than an essay where the student needs to take up and argue a position. Greg's marking criteria and guide does not fit this assessment.

**Question:** What could Greg have done about discussing standards and conveying information about marking criteria and guides with the academic in country B?

**Question:** What could Greg have done about the situation in country C?

**Question:** How could Greg have used his longer standing collegial relationship with the academic in country A to help support a teaching team approach?

**Question:** What policies and processes could Greg's university have put in place to support common understanding of standards, marking and moderation prior to Greg's teaching tour?

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Greg returns to Australia and has four days sick leave as he is still very unwell. When he gets back to work he finds that the academic from country A has been urgently trying to contact him about some academic issues to do with the first assessment item. He also has to urgently inform the academic in country C that the students must undertake the original assignment. He tries to make contact with the academic in country B to make sure she understands the assessment and marking. He also has imminent deadlines for a paper he is writing and for submitting his course materials for the next teaching period. He has several meetings to attend as well as teaching his internal class of 200 in this subject and managing his tutor, who will undertake some of the marking. Greg thus has 200 domestic assignments to mark or oversight his tutor's marking of and 250 transnational assignments, of which he has to moderate 10% with a 5 day turnaround as per his university's policy so that the offshore academics can adjust their marking if necessary.

The students from countries A and B have uploaded their assignments online so it is quite easy to see the standard of the work and the markers' comments. However, Internet connectivity in country C is sometimes difficult and many students could not upload their assignments. The 10% sample is faxed to him a week later and some material is blurry. He asks for them to be scanned and emailed. In the meantime Greg has fallen further behind in his work and has not met the 5 day turnaround on the moderation of assignments from countries A and B. Greg's Head of School has received a complaint email from one of the partner institutions and comes to see Greg about the delay.

Greg catches up with that moderation and then turns to the moderation from country C. The grades are much higher than those for all other cohort groups including Australia. Greg asks the academic by email to lower grades by 10% and asks for more assignments to check.

Greg staggers through the semester, feeling that he has not caught up with his workload. The exam is not despatched to the partner institutions until a few days before it is due to be held as there are concerns that some academics may teach to the exam. When the exam papers come in one cohort is marked exceptionally high and Greg feels he has no choice but to scale that entire cohort down.

There is no feedback from the partner institutions on the final grades and Greg is not required by his university to complete an evaluation or unit report. Few off shore students have submitted online evaluations of the unit.

When Greg has his performance review at the end of the year he does not mention the challenges he has had with the moderation of the unit and hopes his head of school does not raise it.

**Question:** What processes could Greg have implemented prior to or early in the teaching period that would have helped him deal with the moderation difficulties?

**Question:** What are your university's/work unit's policies on transnational moderation and response time to partner academics?

**Question:** What processes could Greg's institution implement to help 'close the loop' on the teaching period's moderation experiences and outcomes?