Signature Assignment Review and Calibration - Overview

The Assessment Committee has asked that each program review and calibrate on all signature assignments and rubrics at least once during a 4-year period. The initial 4-year period started in fall 2014 and ends in spring 2018. There are 2 main (and interrelated) parts to this process: 1) reviewing the assignment and rubric; 2) calibrating on scoring the assignment.

Reviewing and calibrating on signature assignments involves 7 simple steps:

- **Prepare**: Identify the signature assignment, rubric and at least 2 samples of student work.
- **Choose a facilitator**: Consider having the faculty member who is the lead instructor for the course with the signature assignment lead the discussion.
- **Examine materials**: Independently and silently examine the signature assignment and rubric.
- **Read**: Independently and silently read each student work and make notes to later explain scores.
- **Score**: Independently and silently record scores on the scoring sheet.
- **Share**: One at a time, share scores for each of the rubric categories (without explanation) as the recorder completes the group’s score sheet.
- **Discuss and Reflect**: The facilitator invites the group to consider where the differences in the scores occurred and why people scored differently for each criterion—particularly the highest and lowest scores.

This packet of materials includes:

- FAQs about the review and calibration process (p. 2-4)
- A discussion guide for how to engage in the process (p. 5) and tools for capturing scores (p. 6-7)
- A table for documenting your review and calibration process for each signature assignment (p. 8)

If you would like additional assistance preparing for or facilitating your calibration meeting, please let us know (5-2506 or ced-assessment@csulb.edu) that as well.
Reviewing and Calibrating on Signature Assignments
Frequently Asked Questions

When do we review and calibrate on signature assignments?

The college Assessment Committee has asked that programs review and calibrate on each of their signature assignments and rubrics at least once in a four-year cycle (Fall 2014-Spring 2018, etc.). The committee felt this frequency was sufficient to ensure assignments were relevant and consistently implemented while also being manageable for programs.

What do we mean when we say “review” and “calibrate on” signature assignments?

When we say review, we mean that program faculty sit together and discuss the assignment and the associated rubric. They consider whether the assignment reflects the related program SLO, whether it’s current for the field and aligned with other program content, and whether rubric criteria are relevant and appropriately weighted.

When we say calibrate, the goal is to check if the assignment and the rubric are clear enough to lead to a consensus among faculty grading a given student’s work. We want to ensure grades on a given assignment are likely to be aligned across faculty teaching sections of the same course and/or grades on an assignment reflect a rough consensus among faculty about what constitutes “A” work, “B” work, and so on.

What do we need to engage in review and calibration?

1. The program faculty (including part-time colleagues) who can contribute to the conversation (see other FAQs)
2. Current copy of the signature assignment and rubric (1 per participant, electronic copy attached to this email)
3. At least 2 copies of student work exemplars at different levels of performance (1 copy of each exemplar per participant, attached to this email)
4. Discussion guide (attached on page 5 of this document)
5. A scoring record sheet (1 for the facilitator and 1 for each faculty to record their individual scores, attached on page 6-7 of this document)
6. Calibration Process Documentation (attached on page 8 of this document)

Why do we review and calibrate on signature assignments?

Reviewing signature assignments (including rubrics) has the following benefits:

- It ensures they are fair, current, relevant, aligned with the program learning outcomes, and reflect faculty expectations.
- Reviewing student work exemplars allows faculty to take a more fine-grained look at student work and discuss expectations about student performance. This then informs instruction and the curriculum.
The calibration process has several benefits and desired outcomes:

- It helps to ensure that signature assignments, rubrics are clear and the scoring results are accurate, consistent, and free of bias.
- It means that student performance data on signature assignments reflects a consensus in the expectations of program faculty (not solely those who taught the course), meaning faculty can be more confident in interpreting the data for use in program improvement.

**We only ever teach one section of a course. Does that mean we cannot review and calibrate on a signature assignment?**

Definitely not! It’s important to remember that the signature assignment is a program assignment, reflecting a program outcome and therefore the expectations of the program faculty. Therefore, it is meaningful to include other colleagues in review and calibration even if they did not teach the course. Reviewing other courses in your program helps with curriculum alignment as well. See “Who Should Review...” below.

The other important thing to remember is that assignments usually get reviewed once every 4 years. Thus, it’s likely that at least one other person will have taught a course during that period – and it’s good to include at least them in the review and calibration process.

**When/where do we review and calibrate on signature assignments?**

There is no single “right” place or time to review and calibrate – when and where you do so depends on the program faculty and your decisions about who needs to be involved in the process. Some possible forums for calibration include:

- A program meeting
- A department meeting – where faculty can break into program groups
- A portion of time set aside at the annual Beyond Compliance workshop each fall

When and where programs review and calibrate depends on who you want to involve, how many signature assignments you have, and other factors. If you’re involved as a professor in multiple programs, it’s possible you’ll review and calibrate a couple of times in a given year.

In fall 2015, each program will have established its own calendar for when specific signature assignments and rubrics will be reviewed and calibrated on. You can find your program’s calendar at the following URL:  [http://www.ced.csulb.edu/assessment/program-assessment-documents](http://www.ced.csulb.edu/assessment/program-assessment-documents)

**Who should review and calibrate on signature assignments?**

As with when and where, there is no single answer to who should be involved in reviewing and calibrating on signature assignments – the answer depends on the program, the faculty, and even the specific signature assignment.

It is important to remember: these are program rubrics and SLOs. They reflect a consensus among program faculty about what students should know or be able to do and are inter-related with other courses in the program. Thus, while a signature assignment may reside in one course, multiple faculty in the program should be engaged in the review and calibration process.
When you initially develop a signature assignment, it is good to have ALL faculty review the assignment and the rubric – to be sure the expectations are aligned with program goals, that the assignment is current and relevant, and that it reflects any related prior and subsequent coursework.

Once it comes time to review and calibrate, you might consider some possible options:

- In general, it might be good to have the program coordinator participate in each review and calibration exercise. However, there also may be times when this isn’t necessary.
- If the assignment has broad relevance to all faculty in the program, then perhaps it is a good idea to have all faculty engaged in review and calibration. Or perhaps all faculty could review the assignment and rubric, but only selected faculty might calibrate (see below).
- Perhaps the program decides to have only those faculty who have taught the related course over the period of review meet to review and calibrate on the signature assignment. For courses with multiple sections, this could make sense; however it is critical to ensure that part-time faculty are able to participate as well.
- Another option is to have those who have taught the course in the period of review plus those who have some related expertise (or teach related courses) engage in the review and calibration process. This can prompt a rich discussion about the assignment, expectations, and student preparation across courses.

Remember that the goal is to be sure the assignment is current, reflects skills and knowledge desired by the program, and is graded in a way that reflects program standards. Even if just one person has taught the course over the period of review, faculty colleagues will have important contributions to make in the review and calibration process.
Appendix A

Discussion Guide
Signature Assignment and Rubric Calibration and Review Process

We recommend that you follow the following process in your calibration meeting. The process for calibrating on one signature assignment and rubric should take 60-90 minutes.

1. **Prepare**: Make sure you have the signature assignment and rubric and at least 2 samples of student work. The AO can provide these.

2. **Choose a facilitator**: The facilitator should explain and manage the process for the group. Consider having the faculty member who is the lead instructor for the course with the signature assignment lead the discussion.

3. **Examine materials**: Group members independently and silently examine the signature assignment and rubric.

4. **Read**: Group members independently and silently read each student work and make notes to later explain their scores.

5. **Score**: Using the rubric, group members independently and silently record their scores on the scoring sheet.

6. **Share**: One at a time, team members share their scores for each of the rubric categories (without explanation) as the recorder completes the group’s score sheet.

7. **Discuss and Reflect**: The facilitator invites the group to consider where the differences in the scores occurred and why people scored differently for each criterion—particularly the highest and lowest scores. Consider the following questions in your discussion:

**Calibration**

a. Where were the greatest and least variability in terms of scoring?

b. What does the group believe contributed to the variability identified in 7a?
   i. Different interpretations of the quality of student work?
   ii. The clarity of the assignment instructions?
   iii. The clarity of the rubric?
   iv. Something else?

**Review of Assignment and Student Work**

c. Is there general agreement that the signature assignment and rubric (Right content? Right criteria? Right weighting?) are a current and appropriate measure of the program learning outcome? If not, what changes are in order?

d. Looking beyond the rubric and criteria, how satisfied is the group with the quality of student work reflected in the exemplars? What are the strengths and weaknesses? (consider common errors or patterns of errors; what differentiates great work from average work, from below after work?)

e. Are there implications for instruction and/or curriculum in the program? What are they?

Adapted from Writing Calibration Protocol – Rhode Island Department of Education
## Appendix B

### Facilitator Scoring Sheet

Reviewing and Calibrating on Signature Assignments and Rubrics

Facilitator: ________________  
Signature assignment name: ________________

Date: __________  
Course: _________

Directions: Have each scorer record their scores for each criterion on a separate sheet of paper and pass those scores to the facilitator. Then record those scores here.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion 1</th>
<th>Scorer 1</th>
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<td>Criterion 10</td>
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Appendix C

Individual Scoring Sheet
Reviewing and Calibrating on Signature Assignments and Rubrics

Scorer name: ___________________________ Date: __________
Signature assignment name: ___________________________ Course: ______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Criterion 1</td>
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<td>Criterion 10</td>
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Appendix D

Documentation of Signature Assignment and Rubric Calibration and Review Process

Please:
1. complete the table below for each individual signature assignment and rubric on which you calibrate.
2. submit this documentation to the Assessment Office (ced-assessment@csulb.edu).
3. provide a revised signature assignment/rubric if changes were made.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date of Meeting:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Names of Faculty Present:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signature Assignment Name, and related Course and SLO:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are your findings regarding calibration on the assignment? How well calibrated are faculty? Where were the sources of any variability in scoring?</td>
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<td>Please describe any changes to be made to the signature assignment and/or rubric as a result and why.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please describe any plans for instructional or curricular changes based on the review of student work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>