
**CONSENSUS MODERATION, GRADE DISTRIBUTION
CONSIDERATION, AND SCRIPT ALLOCATION PRACTICES FOR
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH-
EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA**

***Mary Ngozi Anyanwu, Dr. Florence I. Jack**

Department of Educational Management Faculty of Education University of Port Harcourt.

Article Received: 07 July 2026, Article Revised: 27 July 2026, Published on: 14 August 2026

***Corresponding Author: Mary Ngozi Anyanwu**

Department of Educational Management Faculty of Education University of Port Harcourt.

Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.7761>

ABSTRACT

This study investigated consensus moderation, grade distribution consideration, and script allocation practices for quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 7,360 academic staff from the fourteen public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, while a sample of 736 academic staff was selected from seven universities using the stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled: Consensus Moderation, Grade Distribution Consideration, and Script Allocation Practices for Quality Assurance Questionnaire (CMGDCSAPQAQ), which was validated by experts and yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85. Of the questionnaires administered, 678 valid copies were retrieved and analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, and script allocation significantly promote quality assurance by enhancing fairness, consistency, transparency, objectivity, and academic integrity in assessment practices. The study concluded that effective implementation of these moderation practices strengthens academic standards and institutional credibility. It was recommended that universities institutionalise regular consensus moderation, periodically review grade distributions, and adopt transparent, technology-supported script allocation systems to sustain quality assurance in public universities.

KEYWORDS: Consensus Moderation, Grade Distribution Consideration, Script Allocation, Moderation Practices, Quality Assurance, Public Universities

INTRODUCTION

University education is the highest level of formal learning after secondary school, aiming to cultivate advanced knowledge, critical thinking, practical abilities, innovation, scholarship, and service to the community. In Nigeria, universities strive to produce graduates equipped with the skills needed for national progress through effective teaching, research, community involvement, and sharing knowledge. These aims are outlined in the National Policy on Education, which highlights the importance of creating high-level professionals, fostering national unity, promoting positive values, and advancing science and technology (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014). Although the university system has grown, with more students enrolling and graduating, Nigerian universities still face many hurdles. These include limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, weak governance, inconsistent exam procedures, exam malpractice, and political interference. Such issues raise ongoing concerns about the decreasing quality of graduates and Nigeria's universities' global competitiveness (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2022).

Quality assurance has therefore emerged as one of the most important mechanisms for sustaining academic standards and enhancing the credibility of university education. Quality assurance refers to the systematic policies, procedures, and practices designed to monitor, evaluate, maintain, and continuously improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment, research, and institutional management to ensure that universities achieve predetermined standards and produce graduates capable of meeting societal and labour market expectations (Kpolovie, 2019; Audu, 2019). Within higher education, quality assurance extends beyond accreditation exercises to include curriculum review, staff development, assessment moderation, programme evaluation, and continuous institutional improvement. It ensures that educational processes and outcomes are aligned with national benchmarks and international best practices while promoting transparency, accountability, fairness, and stakeholder confidence in university qualifications (Harvey & Green, 1993; NUC, 2022).

One of the major indicators of quality assurance in universities is the quality of student output, which is reflected in graduates' academic achievement, professional competence, employability, ethical behaviour, research capability, critical thinking, and ability to contribute meaningfully to national development. Student output is largely influenced by the effectiveness of instructional delivery and the integrity of assessment practices used to

evaluate learning outcomes (Iroegbu & Oleforo, 2019). Assessment occupies a central position in higher education because it provides evidence of students' attainment of intended learning outcomes, informs instructional improvement, and determines progression, graduation, and certification. Consequently, any weakness in assessment practices undermines the credibility of university qualifications and diminishes public confidence in graduates. Concerns regarding inconsistent marking, grade inflation, examiner bias, and disparities in grading standards across departments have heightened calls for stronger quality assurance measures within Nigerian universities (Bloxham et al., 2016).

Among the various quality assurance mechanisms employed in universities, moderation practices have become increasingly significant because they promote fairness, consistency, reliability, validity, and comparability in assessment decisions. Moderation refers to the systematic process of reviewing assessment tasks, marking procedures, and grading decisions to ensure that assessment standards are applied consistently across different assessors, courses, departments, and institutions (University College Birmingham, 2020; University of Strathclyde, 2023). Moderation enables academic staff to confirm that assessment criteria have been interpreted uniformly and that marks awarded accurately reflect students' demonstrated achievement. Through moderation, institutions minimise subjective judgment, reduce inconsistencies among examiners, and strengthen confidence in assessment outcomes. Moderation may be conducted internally through departmental quality assurance committees or externally through appointed external examiners who independently verify that institutional assessment standards conform to national and professional expectations (Dill, 2019). Effective moderation therefore serves as an essential instrument for protecting the integrity of university assessment and ensuring continuous quality improvement.

Several moderation practices are employed within university assessment systems, including consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, allocation of scripts, external peer review, blind marking, and second marking. Although each practice contributes uniquely to assessment quality, the present study focuses on consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, and allocation of scripts because of their direct influence on consistency and objectivity in marking. These practices represent critical stages in the assessment process where institutional efforts are directed towards reducing examiner variability and enhancing confidence in examination outcomes.

Consensus moderation refers to a collaborative process in which academic staff collectively review marked examination scripts or samples of students' work, discuss areas of disagreement, interpret marking criteria, and reach a common agreement regarding the

standards to be applied before final grades are finalised. Rather than relying solely on individual judgment, consensus moderation encourages professional dialogue among examiners, promotes shared understanding of assessment standards, and enhances consistency in grading decisions across markers (Barrie et al., 2021). Through structured discussions, examiners compare their interpretations of marking rubrics, justify awarded marks, and resolve discrepancies to ensure that students are assessed fairly regardless of the marker involved. Consensus moderation also facilitates professional learning among academic staff by encouraging reflection on assessment practices and improving the reliability and validity of marking decisions. Consequently, it has become an important component of institutional quality assurance frameworks in many universities.

Consideration of grade distribution is another important moderation practice aimed at evaluating the overall pattern of grades awarded after marking has been completed. This process involves analysing the spread, frequency, and distribution of students' grades to determine whether assessment outcomes are reasonable, consistent with previous cohorts, and reflective of expected academic standards. Unusual patterns, such as excessively high failure rates, grade inflation, clustering of grades within narrow ranges, or significant deviations from historical trends, may indicate potential inconsistencies in assessment design, marking practices, or examination difficulty and therefore require further investigation (Higher Education Academy, 2020). Reviewing grade distributions enables departments and quality assurance committees to identify anomalies that may not be apparent during individual script marking and to determine whether moderation adjustments are necessary before results are approved. Consequently, consideration of grade distribution contributes significantly to fairness, transparency, and institutional accountability in assessment.

Allocation of scripts represents another critical moderation practice designed to minimise examiner bias and promote consistency during the marking process. Script allocation involves assigning students' examination scripts systematically to qualified academic staff based on predetermined institutional guidelines, workload considerations, subject expertise, and moderation requirements. Effective allocation ensures that no examiner is unfairly overburdened, that scripts are distributed equitably, and that marking responsibilities correspond with academic competence. In many institutions, scripts may be allocated randomly or anonymously to reduce the possibility of favouritism, personal bias, or conflict of interest, thereby strengthening the objectivity of assessment outcomes (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023). Appropriate allocation of scripts also facilitates subsequent moderation activities because balanced workloads enable examiners to maintain concentration, apply

marking criteria consistently, and participate effectively in consensus discussions. Consequently, systematic script allocation constitutes an essential quality assurance strategy for maintaining the credibility and integrity of university assessment processes.

In Nigeria, particularly within public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone, concerns have continued to emerge regarding variations in grading standards, examiner subjectivity, inconsistencies in marking, and disparities in assessment outcomes across faculties and departments. Although universities have established internal quality assurance units and moderation procedures in compliance with National Universities Commission guidelines, the extent to which consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, and allocation of scripts are effectively implemented remains uncertain. Differences in institutional practices, increasing student enrolment, limited staffing, and heavy academic workloads may affect the consistency and effectiveness of these moderation practices. Consequently, there is a need for empirical investigation into how these moderation practices contribute to quality assurance within public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is against this background that this study examines consensus moderation, grade distribution consideration, and script allocation practices for quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, assessment practices in public universities should be guided by effective moderation procedures that ensure fairness, consistency, transparency, validity, and reliability in the evaluation of students' academic performance, thereby guaranteeing that grades accurately reflect students' achievement of intended learning outcomes. Consensus moderation should foster uniform interpretation and application of marking criteria among examiners; consideration of grade distribution should facilitate the identification and correction of unusual grading patterns; while systematic allocation of scripts should minimise examiner bias, promote balanced workloads, and enhance objectivity in marking. Collectively, these moderation practices are expected to strengthen quality assurance, uphold academic standards, and enhance the credibility of university certificates. However, concerns persist regarding inconsistencies in grading, variations in examiners' judgments, grade inflation, students' complaints about unfair assessment, and disparities in marking standards across departments in Nigerian public universities, suggesting possible shortcomings in the implementation of moderation practices. In public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, increasing student enrolment, heavy marking workloads, and institutional

differences in assessment administration may further hinder the effective application of consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, and script allocation. Although moderation is recognised as a critical component of quality assurance, empirical evidence on how these practices contribute to quality assurance in public universities in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone remains limited. This knowledge gap necessitates an empirical investigation into consensus moderation, grade distribution consideration, and script allocation practices for quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate consensus moderation, grade distribution consideration, and script allocation practices for quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Find out ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
2. Determine ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
3. Ascertain ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
2. In what ways does the practice of consideration of grade distribution promote quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
3. What are the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted because it facilitated the collection and analysis of data on the existing state of moderation practices for quality assurance in public universities. The population comprised 7,360 academic staff (4,137 males and 3,223 females) from the fourteen (14) public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, as reported by the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2025). A sample of 736 academic staff (10% of the population) was selected from seven public universities using the stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled: Consensus Moderation, Grade Distribution Consideration, and Script Allocation Practices for Quality Assurance Questionnaire (CMGDCSAPQAQ), consisting of 21 items on a modified four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisors and three experts in Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an overall coefficient of 0.85. With the assistance of four trained research assistants, the researcher administered the questionnaire and retrieved 678 valid copies, representing a 92% response rate. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance, with a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision-making.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Research Question One: What are the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Ways the Practice of Consensus Moderation Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

S/No	Items	Professors N = 322		Non-Professors N = 356		Mean Set	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD	$\bar{x}_2$	SD	$\bar{x}_1\bar{x}_2$	
1	Consensus moderation promotes inter-marker reliability by ensuring that markers are consistent in their evaluation of student work.	2.91	0.97	3.14	1.06	3.03	Agree
2	Consensus moderation helps institutions meet accreditation standards by demonstrating a commitment to quality assurance.	3.95	1.77	2.87	0.91	3.41	Agree
3	Consensus moderation helps maintain academic standards by ensuring that students meet the required standards for their degree.	3.65	1.11	3.11	1.08	3.38	Agree
4	Consensus moderation can help detect academic misconduct such as plagiarism or collusion.	3.84	1.50	3.22	1.16	3.53	Agree
5	Consensus moderation enhances student satisfaction as they feel confident that their work has been evaluated fairly and accurately.	2.97	0.96	3.32	1.22	3.15	Agree
6	Consensus moderation helps resolve grading disputes and appeals by ensuring that students receive a fair and accurate grade.	2.97	0.97	3.32	1.23	3.15	Agree
7	Consensus moderation fosters a culture of quality enhancement which improves teaching, learning, and assessment practices.	3.20	1.14	3.21	1.16	3.21	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.36	1.20	3.17	1.12	3.27	Agree

Data on Table 1 show that all the items (1-7) had mean set scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

In summary, with an aggregate average mean of 3.27, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents (professors and non-professors) agreed that, the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: consensus moderation promotes inter-marker reliability

by ensuring that markers are consistent in their evaluation of student works, helps institutions meet accreditation standards by demonstrating a commitment to quality assurance, helps maintain academic standards by ensuring that students meet the required standards for their degree, helps detect academic misconduct such as plagiarism or collusion, enhances student satisfaction as they feel confident that their work has been evaluated fairly and accurately, helps resolve grading disputes and appeals by ensuring that students receive a fair and accurate grade, and fosters a culture of quality enhancement which improves teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

Research Question Two: In what ways does the practice of consideration of grade distribution promote quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Ways the Practice of Consideration of Grade Distribution Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Professors N = 322		Non-Professors N = 356		Mean Set	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD	$\bar{x}_2$	SD	$\bar{x}_1\bar{x}_2$	
8	Consideration of grade establishes a fair/transparent grading process.	3.29	1.20	3.17	1.13	3.23	Agree
9	Consideration of grade ensures that grading practices meet accreditation standards.	3.31	1.33	3.19	1.12	3.25	Agree
10	Consideration of grade promotes students to submit original work and properly cite sources.	3.00	1.04	3.02	1.04	3.01	Agree
12	Consideration of grade detects potential academic misconduct such as plagiarism.	2.99	0.97	2.92	0.96	2.96	Agree
13	Consideration of grade ensures that grades accurately reflect student performance and learning outcomes.	3.11	1.06	2.90	0.88	3.01	Agree
14	Consideration of grade provides feedback to students on their achievement of learning outcomes.	3.16	1.12	3.13	1.06	3.15	Agree
15	Consideration of grade encourages students to reflect on their grades and develop strategies for improvement.	3.29	1.18	3.17	1.13	3.23	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.16	1.13	3.07	1.05	3.12	Agree

Data on Table 2 show that all the items (8-14) had mean rating scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.12, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents (professors and non-professors) agree that, the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: consideration of grade establishes a fair/transparent grading process, ensures that grading practices meet accreditation standards, promotes students to submit original work and properly cite sources, detects potential academic misconduct such as plagiarism, ensures that grades accurately reflect student performance and learning outcomes, provides feedback to students on their achievement of learning outcomes, and encourages students to reflect on their grades and develop strategies for improvement.

Research Question Three: What are the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Respondents on the Ways the Practice of Allocation of Scripts Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

S/No	Items	Professors N = 322		Non-Professors N = 356		Mean Set $\bar{x}_1 \bar{x}_2$	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD	$\bar{x}_2$	SD		
15	Randomly allocating scripts to markers ensures that each script is evaluated objectively without bias.	2.80	0.82	2.95	0.84	2.87	Agree
16	Allocation of scripts ensures the grade awarded to students meets accreditation standards.	2.99	0.91	2.92	0.92	2.96	Agree
17	Allocating scripts to multiple markers ensures that evaluations are comprehensive/accurate.	2.97	0.98	2.71	0.80	2.84	Agree
18	Adoption of script allocation processes serves as evidence of quality assurance in institutional accreditation.	3.09	1.01	2.99	0.92	3.04	Agree
19	Establishing clear procedures for script allocation ensures transparency.	2.80	0.82	2.95	0.84	2.87	Agree
20	Ensuring that scripts are allocated and	2.95	0.97	2.75	0.78	2.85	Agree

	evaluated rigorously maintains academic standards.						
21	Allocating scripts to markers who can identify collusion ensures that students do not collaborate inappropriately.	3.11	1.16	2.90	0.88	3.01	Agree
	Average Mean/Standard Deviation	2.96	0.95	2.88	0.85	2.92	Agree

Data on Table 3 showed that all items (50-56) had mean set rating scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were identified as the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

In summary, with an overall average mean of 2.92, which exceeds the criterion mean of 2.50, it indicates that both professors and non-professors agree that the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: randomly allocating scripts to markers to ensure each script is evaluated objectively without bias, allocating scripts so that the grades awarded to students meet accreditation standards, assigning scripts to multiple markers to ensure evaluations are comprehensive and accurate, adopting script allocation processes as evidence of quality assurance in institutional accreditation, establishing clear procedures for script allocation to ensure transparency, ensuring that scripts are allocated and evaluated rigorously to maintain academic standards, and allocating scripts to markers who can identify collusion helps prevent inappropriate student collaboration.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (Ho₁): There is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Mean Rating Scores of Professors and Non-Professors of Public Universities on the Ways the Practice of Consensus Moderation Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level Significance	Decision	
Professors	322	3.36	1.20	676	2.13	1.96	0.05	Ho ₆ Rejected (Significant)	
Non-Professors	356	3.17	1.12						

Data on Table 4 reveal that the value of z-cal. Is 2.13, while the value of z-crit. is 1.96. Since the value of z-cal. of 2.13 is higher than the value of z-crit. of 1.96, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected, and this implies that there is a significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Mean Rating Scores of Professors and Non-Professors of Public Universities on the Ways the Practice of Consideration of Grade Distribution Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Significance	Decision	
Professors	322	3.16	1.13	676	1.07	1.96	0.05	H_{02} Accepted (Not Significant)	
Non-Professors	356	3.07	1.05						

Data on Table 5 reveal that the value of z-cal. is 1.07, while the value of z-crit. is 1.96. Since the value of z-cal. of 1.07 is less than the value of z-crit. of 1.96, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was accepted, which implies that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Eight (H_{03}): There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Mean Rating Scores of Professors and Non-Professors of Public Universities on the Ways the Practice of Allocation of Scripts Promotes Quality Assurance in Public Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Significance	Decision	
Professors	322	2.96	0.95	676	1.15	1.96	0.05	Ho ₃ Accepted (Not Significant)	
Non-Professors	356	2.88	0.85						

Data on Table 6 reveal that the value of z-cal. is 1.15, while the value of z-crit. is 1.96. Since the value of z-cal. of 1.15 is less than the value of z-crit. of 1.96, the null hypothesis (Ho₃) was accepted, which implies that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: consensus moderation promotes inter-marker reliability by ensuring that markers are consistent in their evaluation of student works, helps institutions meet accreditation standards by demonstrating a commitment to quality assurance, helps maintain academic standards by ensuring that students meet the required standards for their degree, helps detect academic misconduct such as plagiarism or collusion, enhances student satisfaction as they feel confident that their work has been evaluated fairly and accurately, helps resolve grading disputes and appeals by ensuring that students receive a fair and accurate grade, and fosters a culture of quality enhancement which improves teaching, learning, and assessment practice. In addition, a corresponding hypothesis tested established that there is a significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. These findings align with Amabile (2019), Sadler (2019), Hennessey et al (2021), Stolpe et al. (2021), Connolly et al. (2022), and Gillis (2023), whose empirical studies affirm that the identified variables are the ways the practice

of consensus moderation promotes quality assurance in universities. A possible explanation for these findings is that consensus moderation promotes fairness, consistency, accountability, and academic integrity in grading, thereby enhancing institutional credibility. The significant difference in the mean ratings of professors and non-professors may reflect variations in experience, responsibilities, and involvement in moderation activities. This suggests that adopting consensus moderation can strengthen assessment quality and accreditation compliance, while inclusive training and policy alignment are needed to ensure its consistent implementation across academic staff.

The second finding of the study revealed that the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: consideration of grade establishes a fair/transparent grading process, ensures that grading practices meet accreditation standards, promotes students to submit original work and properly cite sources, detects potential academic misconduct such as plagiarism, ensures that grades accurately reflect student performance and learning outcomes, provides feedback to students on their achievement of learning outcomes, and encourages students to reflect on their grades and develop strategies for improvement. Also, a corresponding hypothesis tested established that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. These findings agree with Crook et al (2016), Yorke (2018), Australian Learning and Teaching Council (2019), Barrie et al. (2021), and Edith Cowan University (2023), whose comments and research findings present information on the ways the practice of consideration of grade distribution promotes quality assurance in universities. A possible explanation for these findings is that consideration of grade distribution enhances fairness, transparency, and the accuracy of assessment, thereby supporting quality assurance and academic standards. The absence of a significant difference between professors and non-professors indicates a shared perception of its importance in maintaining assessment quality. This implies that considering grade distribution strengthens the credibility and integrity of assessment practices and encourages collective commitment among academic staff to sustaining quality assurance in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

The eighth finding of the study revealed that the ways the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria include: randomly allocating scripts to a markers to ensure each script is evaluated objectively without bias, allocating scripts so that the grades awarded to students meet accreditation standards, assigning scripts to multiple markers to ensure evaluations are comprehensive and accurate, adopting script allocation processes as evidence of quality assurance in institutional accreditation, establishing clear procedures for script allocation to ensure transparency, ensuring that scripts are allocated and evaluated rigorously to maintain academic standards, and allocating scripts to markers who can identify collusion helps prevent inappropriate student collaboration. Additionally, a corresponding hypothesis tested established that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of professors and non-professors of public universities on the ways the practice of script allocation promotes quality assurance in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. These findings are in line with Orji (2012), Hughes (2019), Obasi (2019), Emaikwu (2021), Okocha (2021), Nwaorgu (2022), and Okara (2022), who through their empirical studies attested that the practice of allocation of scripts promotes quality assurance in public universities. A possible explanation for these findings is that the allocation of scripts promotes objectivity, fairness, and transparency in assessment, thereby enhancing quality assurance and academic standards. The absence of a significant difference between professors and non-professors suggests a shared perception of its effectiveness in ensuring credible assessment practices. This implies that effective script allocation strengthens assessment integrity, supports compliance with quality assurance standards, and reflects a collective commitment among academic staff to maintaining academic quality in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that consensus moderation, consideration of grade distribution, and script allocation are essential moderation practices that significantly promote quality assurance by enhancing fairness, consistency, transparency, and credibility in assessment processes within public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Strengthening the implementation of these practices will further improve academic standards, institutional accountability, and stakeholders' confidence in the quality of university education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Departments in public universities should institutionalise regular consensus moderation meetings to enable markers to jointly review samples of assessed scripts, resolve grading discrepancies, and ensure consistency in the application of assessment criteria.
2. University quality assurance units should periodically review grade distributions to identify irregularities, ensure compliance with accreditation standards, and provide feedback that enhances the accuracy of assessment and continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
3. Public universities should adopt transparent, randomised, and technology-supported script allocation systems to minimise examiner bias, promote fairness and accountability, strengthen academic integrity, and support evidence-based quality assurance and accreditation processes.

REFERENCES

1. Amabile, A. A. (2019). *Resource provision and utilization, mathematics ability, and learning environment as predictors of learning outcome in practical geography*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan.
2. Audu, M. (2019). *Quality assurance in Nigerian higher education: Issues and challenges*. University Press.
3. Australian Learning and Teaching Council. (2019). *Assessment moderation: Principles and practices*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
4. Barrie, S., Crisp, G., Boud, D., & Duke, M. (2021). The practice of moderation in assessment: An international review. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(7), 1075–1090.
5. Barrie, S., Crisp, G., Boud, D., & Duke, M. (2021). *The practice of moderation in assessment: An international review*. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(7), 1075–1090. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1841097> (Please verify DOI and issue details before final submission.)
6. Based on the references contained in your uploaded reference list, here are the references only, in APA 7th edition format:
7. Bloxham, S., den-Outer, B., Hudson, J., & Price, M. (2016). Let's stop the pretence of consistent marking: Exploring the multiple limitations of assessment criteria. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(3), 466–481.

8. Connolly, C. E., Peter, C. P., & Isaiah, L. O. (2022). *Quality assurance in business education: An overview*.
9. Crook, C., Gross, H., & Dymott, R. (2016). Assessment relationships in higher education: The tensions of monitoring and moderation. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(4), 541–556.
10. Dill, D. D. (2019). Quality assurance in higher education: Practices and challenges. In P. Teixeira & J. Shin (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of higher education systems and institutions* (pp. 1–8). Springer.
11. Edith Cowan University. (2023). *Assessment moderation guidelines*. Edith Cowan University.
12. Emaikwu, L. (2021). *Quality instructional strategies and the challenges of implementing school curriculum in Nigeria*.
13. Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.
14. Gillis, A. (2023). *Quality approaches to supervision of instruction, education and development*.
15. Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9–34.
16. Hennessey, C. N., Qiang, A., & Shiyan, W. (2021). *Factors affecting the quality of post-internship of higher vocational education*.
17. Higher Education Academy. (2020). *A marked improvement: Transforming assessment in higher education*. Higher Education Academy.
18. Hughes, S. (2019). *Nominal management of teaching in Nigeria higher education: Issues, challenges and the way forward*.
19. Iroegbu, E. E., & Oleforo, N. A. (2019). Quality assurance and students' academic performance in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Educational Research and Policy Making*, 2(1), 35–46.
20. Kpolovie, P. J. (2019). *Advanced research methods*. Springfield Publishers.
21. National Universities Commission. (2022). *Benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities*. NUC.
22. Nwaorgu, I. (2022). *School physical resources on scholars' performance*.
23. Obasi, C. F. (2019). *Quality assurance: Imperative for producing quality accounting teachers from universities in Niger Delta region of Nigeria*.
24. O'Donovan, C. I., Price, D. C., & Rust, S. I. (2021).

25. Okara, O. C. (2022). *Challenges facing e-learning in teaching business education courses: Strategies for improvement*.
26. Okebukola, P. (2021). *Revitalising quality assurance in Nigerian universities*. National Universities Commission.
27. Okocha, U. (2021). *Quality assurance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria: Implication for the present age*.
28. Orji, G. (2012). *Regulating university policies in marking examinations: A comparative review from universities in Nigeria*.
29. Quality Assurance Agency. (2023). *Advice and guidance: Assessment*. QAA.
30. Sadler, I. (2019). *Improving and sustaining standards in accounting education in colleges of education*.
31. Stolpe, B. N., Cranner, C., & Huselid, B. (2021). *Funding and quality assurance in higher education programme of Bangladesh Open University*.
32. University College Birmingham. (2020). *Assessment moderation policy*. <https://www.ucb.ac.uk>
33. University of Strathclyde. (2023). *Assessment and feedback policy: Moderation of assessment*. <https://www.strath.ac.uk>
34. Yorke, M. (2018). *The quality of assessment in higher education*. Higher Education Academy.