



Best Practices in Online Multinational Moderation

Introduction

Item moderation involves convening a panel of experts who conduct a quality review of the items and suggest improvements. The panel

- ensures that the text, task and level of each item are aligned
- performs a quality control check and identifies any flaws in the items
- determines if the items should be kept as is; revised, or discarded



With Online Multinational Moderation, the panel of experts are from two or more nations and they conduct their item reviews virtually (not in-person).

Benefits

- Item moderation is an essential phase of the item development process and provides evidence in making a validity argument for a national STANAG 6001 test. A quality review by testing experts from other nations allows for input from different perspectives, brings a fresh eye to the review process, and leads to increased standardization across the nations; thus strengthening the validity argument.
- Online multinational moderation is cost effective because no travel or special logistics are required.
- The sessions can be recorded for later review.
- The online moderation sessions may be scheduled to allow enough time to amend, rework, and reflect on the items. The sessions can be spread out to accommodate the panel members' work schedules.

Challenges

- There can be problems with technology that lead to interruptions, a panel member's failure to connect, lagging, poor sound quality, etc.
- Turn taking can be more difficult virtually. People sometimes speak over each other, which then cuts off both speakers' voices.
- It is more difficult to create an environment where panel members feel comfortable expressing their opinions because they do not have the opportunity to make interpersonal connections among themselves
- Focusing online can be fatiguing. For this reason, sessions should last no longer than two hours.
- Scheduling may be a challenge because of different time zones.
- The online multinational moderation of a batch of items also requires a commitment by the members over an extended period of time to ensure continuity.



Preparing for the Moderation

- An online platform for collaborating should be used for uploading and storing the items, posting comments, working on documents collaboratively and host videoconferences. This platform must be accessible by all moderation panel members, so before making a final decision on the platform, panel members should confirm that they do not have any firewall or connectivity problems with accessing the platform, and can enable the audio and video.



Participation in the Multinational Moderation Effort

- To maximize discussion, the group size should be kept relatively small with up to six panel members
- The members should sign a statement of confidentiality stating that they will not discuss the items outside the panel
- Roles should be determined, such as panel member, moderation leader, minute taker, etc); these roles can/should be alternated between all parties
- Other testing personnel can attend as observers (for training purposes, for example); however, they should be silent observers

Three Phases

The moderation process can be broken down into three distinct phases: what should happen before the moderation occurs, during the moderation, and after the moderation session is finished.



Before the session

- First, test specifications should be submitted well in advance of convening the panel and any questions/issues with the test specs should be addressed right away.
- Next, the texts and items should be uploaded to the collaborative platform for review and comments by the panel members.
- Only one level should be moderated at a time.
- For reading or listening texts
 - The texts should have the source attached for the panel to review, if necessary
 - Unedited versions of the texts and an explanation for the edits should be accessible only if needed during the moderation session but not before.
 - The word count should be included for each reading text and the timing for each listening text
 - Items should not identify the key
- Panel members should:
 - Add comments to each item as necessary, but make comments brief
 - Add suggested revisions to items/distractors
 - Select a key
- The test items and comments from all the panel members should be in one single document or file in the collaboration platform. The file should be displayed on the screen during the moderation session and should be used as a guide for the discussions.

During the session

- The goal of the moderation session is to review each item and to collectively decide to **accept it as is**, **revise it**, on the spot, if possible, or **discard it**.
- The group leader should open the meeting, present the agenda, and ensure smooth flow of conversation.
- Moderation sessions should not last more than 1½- 2 hours.
- Sessions should be recorded for possible later viewing.
- Panel members should be as brief as possible in their feedback, clarifying their comments and/or providing additional rationale.
- Panel members with the same comments as another member should not belabor the comments to ensure time management unless other critical comments have not been stated.
- Test item writers should listen to comments and not respond unless a misunderstanding has occurred or clarification is needed.

After the session

- A panel member should write meeting notes with the final recommendations for the moderated items.
- Members should agree on the date of the next meeting and assign roles (who will moderate the meeting, record it, take notes, etc.) or they should decide that their goal has been reached and conclude the online moderation effort.