

Part 3: Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses

Section 12: Marking, moderation and external scrutiny

Introduction

- 12.1 **Marking** is the process of assessing a piece of work, submitted or presented by a student, against agreed marking criteria and mark/grade descriptors to arrive at the award of a numerical score or grade for that piece of work.
- 12.2 **Moderation** is the process of reviewing the marks awarded to a full set of assessed work to provide assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately and consistently. According to the Quality Assurance Agency, “*Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking... It is separate from the question of how differences in marks between two or more markers are resolved and is not about making changes to an individual student’s marks*”¹².
- 12.3 **External scrutiny** is the process of providing external assurance, by way of the external examiner system, that academic standards are appropriate and comparable with the sector, and that the assessment process has been conducted fairly, consistently and in accordance with published policies and regulations.

Head of College management responsibility

- 12.4 It is the Head of College’s responsibility to ensure that the arrangements for marking, internal moderation and external scrutiny of assessment are in place and that these processes are undertaken in a timely and professional manner and in accordance with the academic and/or any course specific regulations.
- 12.5 It is the Head of College’s responsibility to ensure that all summative assessments are securely stored, retained and disposed of in accordance with the University’s Student Records Retention Schedule.

Anonymity

- 12.6 The University requires that in the case of formal examinations student anonymity is observed and maintained until the completion of the marking process for that assessment. Further guidance can be found within the Assessment and Feedback policy.
- 12.7 Where a student breaches his or her own anonymity (e.g. by writing his or her name visibly on an examination script), the student forfeits his or her right to anonymity and the University is absolved from the requirement to observe and maintain that student’s anonymity.

Marking

- 12.8 For each module, it is for the Head of School which owns that module to determine who is competent to act as a marker. A marker need not have taught on that module.
- 12.9 The Module Leader is responsible for organising the marking of that module, including determining the allocation of markers to assessment components, questions, or scripts as appropriate, and arrangements and mechanisms for internal moderation at the assessment level, moderation at the module level and third marking where required. The Module Leader shall make a record of these arrangements, which shall be retained and made available to the relevant External Examiner(s).

¹² UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning, Indicator 13

- 12.10 All assessments shall be marked by a marker. The marker does not have to mark either all assessments within the module or the work of all candidates (e.g. a marker may mark only a single examination question and in respect of only a sub-set of the students who answered that examination question).
- 12.11 In the case of each assessment, to the lowest level of granularity (e.g. an examination question or coursework essay), the marker shall evaluate the assessment against the agreed assessment criteria and mark descriptors and, using his or her academic judgement, award an appropriate mark (or grade or other outcome, as specified in the validated marking scheme for that module).
- 12.12 Where an assessment needs to be marked by one maker only (see below), the mark awarded by the marker will stand and the marking process is complete.
- 12.13 Double marking is defined as the complete re-marking of an element of assessment without reference to the original mark. Normally, double marking should be undertaken by a member of academic staff who teaches on the module, although another appropriately qualified member of academic staff may perform this role.
- 12.14 Double marking may only be applied in cases where the assessment component has a significant impact on the final degree mark, such as for dissertations or projects weighted at 40 or more credits, or where explicitly required by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

Internal Moderation - Assessment Level

- 12.15 Moderation at the assessment level is the process of confirming, or otherwise, the appropriateness of the original mark. Marks are not awarded at this stage of the moderation process and, due to moderation being only of a sample of assessments (see 12.17 below), marks cannot be changed.
- 12.16 Moderation at the assessment level is required to be undertaken only where the assessment component contributes a significant proportion of the overall module mark and is required to be undertaken only in respect of a sample of the students' assessments (see 12.17 and 12.18 below).
- 12.17 Moderation at the assessment level is required where the assessment component contributes a significant proportion of the overall module mark as follows:

Credit Size	Contribution of Assessment Component to Overall Module Mark
15 or 20 credits	Greater than or equal to 30%
30 credits or more	Greater than or equal to 15%

- 12.18 Where an assessment component is to be reviewed in accordance with 12.17 above, the minimum sample size is determined by the number of candidates registered on that module, as follows:

No. of Students Registered on Module	Minimum Percentage of Students' Assessments to be moderated
< 100	20% or 10 students' assessments, whichever is the greater
100 – 300	15%
> 300	10%

- 12.19 The sample size and sample must ensure a representative coverage of all of the markers involved, including the feedback and the mark awarded by the original marker.

Permanent Assessments

- 12.20 In the case of written or other assessments of which there is a permanent record, the sample must include assessments from the full range of marks achieved by the cohort and must include all assessments within two marks below the pass mark.
- 12.21 Where an assessment is to be reviewed the internal moderator, will review the assessment and the mark awarded by the original marker, and will either confirm or not that the mark awarded by the original marker to each assessment is appropriate.
- 12.22 All assessments in the sample that were marked by the same original marker will be reviewed by a single internal moderator.
- 12.23 Where the internal moderator confirms that the original mark is appropriate, that mark will stand, and the marking process is complete.
- 12.24 Where the internal moderator cannot confirm that the original mark is appropriate, the procedures as detailed under regulation 12.29 – 12.31 are to be followed.

Ephemeral Assessments

- 12.25 In the case of ephemeral assessments (i.e. those assessments of which there is no permanent record, such as presentations, oral exams, critiques, performances etc.), the assessment level moderation shall take the form of an internal moderator sitting in on the assessment, observing the sample sizes as stated at 12.17 above.
- 12.26 In the case of ephemeral assessment, regulation 12.18 does not apply.
- 12.27 Where the internal moderator cannot confirm that the mark awarded by the original marker is appropriate, the mark is referred for third marking (see below).
- 12.28 Where the ephemeral assessment is recorded as part of the assessment process, it then becomes a Permanent Assessment and regulations 12.20 – 12.24 above apply.

Resolving internal moderation discrepancies

- 12.29 Where following the completion of the assessment level moderation process the internal moderator is unable to confirm that the mark awarded by the original marker is appropriate (see 12.22 above) another marker will review the sample of assessments in question, including the feedback and the mark awarded by the original marker, and will either confirm or not that the mark awarded by the original marker is appropriate.
- 12.30 Where the marker is able to confirm that the original mark is appropriate, that mark will stand, and the marking process is complete.
- 12.31 Where the marker is unable to confirm that the original mark is appropriate, all instances of that assessment marked by that original marker will need to be re-marked. In such cases, the relevant Head of School shall determine the process to be followed in respect of the re-marking and the arrival at a final mark. The original marker will not normally be involved in the re-marking. The Head of School shall report all such instances to the appropriate external examiner and to the Assessment Board.

Moderation - Module Level

- 12.32 Following the completion of the marking process, as defined above, the Module Leader shall review the marks awarded to the full set of assessments across all assessment components within that module.
- 12.33 The Module Leader may seek advice and assistance from members of the teaching and assessment team.

- 12.34 The purpose of this review is to ensure that the marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied. The review will therefore look at consistency of marks between and across markers, questions, assessments, assessment components, and the module as a whole and will seek assurance that there are no unexplained outliers.
- 12.35 Where this review identifies that the marking criteria may not have been fairly, accurately or consistently applied, the Module Leader shall report the matter to the relevant Head of School. The Head of School, in consultation with the Module Leader, shall determine the appropriate action to take, which may include the remarking of assessments. The Head of School shall report all such instances to the relevant external examiner and to the Assessment Board.

External scrutiny

- 12.36 With the exception of programmes that lead to an award at Level 3 or 4, external scrutiny is not required for modules at Levels 3 and 4. However, in accordance with paragraphs 12.29 and 12.32 above, the Chief External Examiner will be informed, and invited to comment, where issues of third marking or moderation are identified in respect of assessments at all Levels, including Levels 3 and 4).
- 12.37 In the case of all other modules, following the completion of the moderation process the relevant external examiner shall be invited to provide external scrutiny.
- 12.38 The arrangements by which external examiners will have access to students' assessments, should be determined in consultation between the Module Leader and the external examiner or the agreed point of contact.
- 12.39 The sample size of assessments to be made available to the external examiner shall normally be between 10% and 25% of the total and shall include work of students across the full range of marks.
- 12.40 Assessments provided to external examiners should be accompanied by the module descriptor and full schedule of assessment. The tabulation of all marks for all students in the module must be provided. External examiners are entitled to review any piece of module assessment within their remit. In the case of oral examinations, presentations or viva voce examinations, external examiners may observe a sample conducted by internal examiners or alternatively view an audio or visual recording.
- 12.41 The role of an external examiner in respect of external scrutiny of marking is:
- a) to confirm, or otherwise, that academic standards and the achievements of students are appropriate and comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiner has experience;
 - b) to confirm, or otherwise, that the assessment process has been conducted rigorously, fairly, and in accordance with the University's policies and regulations;
 - c) to confirm, or otherwise, that marking has been undertaken consistently and in accordance with agreed marking criteria.
- 12.42 Where an external examiner believes, on the basis of the sample they have seen, that work has been over- or under-marked, they may recommend to the Module Leader that all marks for that assessment, or awarded by a specific marker, be adjusted by a given margin. In all such cases, this must be reported to the relevant assessment board.
- 12.43 Where an external examiner believes, on the basis of the sample they have seen, that marking is inconsistent they may recommend to the Module Leader that the work of all students in the group be re-marked. In all such cases, this must be reported to the relevant assessment board.

- 12.44 External examiners should not be asked to adjudicate on or otherwise resolve differences between marks awarded by different markers or be used as a second or third marker.