

Policy on Moderation and Double-Marking

| | | Version |
|----------------|--|---------|
| Original Date | 2019-20 | 1.0 |
| Approval Date | 2025-26 | 1.1 |
| Effective Date | 2026-27 | |
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| Purpose of Policy |
| This Policy provides clear instruction and guidance on moderation and double-marking, key processes which are used to ensure that appropriate (fair, valid and reliable) and rigorous standards are applied to summative assessments consistently across a module. |
| Scope of Policy |
| This policy provides guidance to staff on implementing these internal moderation and double-marking processes in undergraduate and postgraduate taught summative assessments, including taught doctoral programmes. This policy should be read in conjunction with the <u>Assessment and Feedback Policy</u> , <u>Policy on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Modules</u> , <u>Policy and Procedure for the Late Submission of Coursework</u> , and <u>Policy and Procedure on Extensions to Coursework Submission</u> . |

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Policy on Moderation and Double-Marking

Introduction

1. The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education notes the expectations for higher education providers to provide clear processes for those involved in internal quality assurance of assessments, namely moderation and double-marking. The aims of these processes are to ensure that appropriate (fair, valid and reliable) and rigorous standards are applied to summative assessments consistently across a cohort, and to minimise the risk of errors in marking processes.
2. The marking of all summative assessments should be in alignment with published assessment criteria, appropriate level descriptors, Subject Benchmark Statements, and, where applicable, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. Clearly specified written assessment criteria and should be developed to ensure students and markers have a shared understanding of the assessment criteria. At honours and postgraduate levels, the criteria should be discussed with an external examiner before the assessment is undertaken for the first time.
3. This approach to marking is commonly referred to as 'criteria-referenced', where students' work is assessed against explicit criteria. The University does not endorse a 'norm-referenced' approach to marking, where a fixed proportion (or narrow range of proportions) of students are awarded grades within each grade band.

Scope

4. This policy provides guidance to staff on implementing these internal moderation and double-marking processes in undergraduate and postgraduate taught summative assessments, including taught doctoral programmes. These processes, conducted internally by staff, are carried out in addition to the quality assurance process conducted by External Examiners, where duties include approving assessment design, moderating the achievement of students set by the University and/or PSRBs for all modules to ensure comparability of standards. Guidance on the role of External Examiners can be found [here](#).
5. This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#), [Policy on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Modules](#), [Policy and Procedure for the Late Submission of Coursework](#), and [Policy and Procedure on Extensions to Coursework Submission](#).

What is moderation?

6. The process of moderation is independent of the marking of individual assessments and is a process that aims to ensure that the marking of assessments is fair, valid, and reliable, and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently across students' work, within and across markers.
7. Moderation will take different forms, depending on the nature of the assessment, level of study, and credit-weighting.

When is moderation required?

8. Appropriate moderation processes are required for all summative assessments. The process of moderation usually takes place after all marking has been conducted. Time should be allocated to the process for all summative assessments so that moderation, and any actions from moderation, will be completed prior to the return of grades and/or feedback to students within the agreed period. (Note that the University expects feedback on coursework to be returned to students within 15 working days of an assessment submission).
9. It is important to communicate upfront the moderation process to all markers, and the need for markers to be available during the moderation period to respond to any points made by the moderator.

Internal moderation

10. The appropriate method of moderation will depend on the discipline, the nature of the assessment and the assessment's credit weighting.
11. Internal moderation is the process of reviewing a sample of work to check that grades and feedback consistently align to the set assessment criteria for the level of study. This internal moderation process is followed for modules of 20 credits or less, whereby a sample of assessments are moderated, rather than double-marked.
12. The process of internal moderation should be conducted only by suitably qualified University staff (determined by the Department). The process of internal moderation, described below, should be used for all summative assessments, unless double-marking is more appropriate.
13. **For an assessment that has been marked by one marker:** A sample of the marked assessments should be reviewed by a moderator. The sample should include at least 10% of the marked assessments and should cover the full range of grades awarded by the marker. In addition to this sample, all assessments that have been graded a 'Fail' should be included in the sample for moderation. Where the total number of assessments is 10 or fewer, the whole batch should be moderated. The moderator should be provided with the complete list of grades

awarded and summary statistics for the assessment (e.g. mean mark, standard deviation, minimum and maximum marks). Appendix 1 provides guidance on generating these statistics in Myplace.

14. **For an assessment that is marked by more than one marker:** Moderators should be provided with a sample of marking from each individual marker, as well as the complete list of grades awarded and summary statistics for each marker and the assessment as a whole (e.g. mean mark, standard deviation, minimum and maximum marks). The sample should include at least 10% of the marked assessments and should cover the full range of grades awarded. In addition to this sample, all assessments that have been graded a 'Fail' should be included in the sample for moderation. Appendix 2 shows examples of effective moderation practice where an assessment is marked by multiple markers.
15. **For a module that is delivered by more than one teaching team (for example, in more than one geographical location, or via two different modes of delivery):** a separate sample should be moderated for each cohort completing the assessment.
16. **For assessments that are marked using highly structured and objective marking schemes:** Moderation may simply involve procedural checking to ensure the marking scheme is appropriate and is applied consistently across a sample of marking.
17. **For assessments that are marked automatically:** Moderation will involve checking that the system is accurately assessing answers to each question and calculating overall marks correctly, for example in assessments such as multiple-choice examinations and assessments that are conducted online and marked automatically.
18. **For assessments that do not require the production of any material artefacts:** Suitable arrangements must be made for appropriate moderation, such as direct observation of a sample of the assessments via either the presence of a moderator at the time of the assessment or via access to a recording. This would be considered where an assessment does not result in the creation of a material or physical artefact, for example where oral assessments, presentations, assessment on placements, live performances, or practical demonstrations, are used. Where direct observation or viewing a recording is not feasible, involve a second marker in assessing students' work. For example, two markers can be present during student presentations, following which, the two markers agree a single mark.
19. **For assessments that are marked by external tutors, visiting lecturers/new staff, or postgraduate students:** The moderation processes will be more robust, usually through sampling a greater proportion of marked work. It is important to communicate upfront the moderation process to all markers, and the need for markers to be available during the moderation period to respond to any points made by the moderator.

Double-marking

20. Unseen double-marking is where an assessment is independently marked by two markers who do not have access to the grades or comments of the other marker.
21. Seen double marking is the process where an assessment is independently marked by two markers, but the second marker has access to the marks or comments of the first marker.
22. Double marking will only be used following the conditions below, or where Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) bodies require it.
23. The method of double-marking must be used for all summative assessments with a credit weighting of 40 credits or higher.
24. Unseen double-marking must be conducted for highly weighted summative assessments, and for dissertations or final year projects, where the student is known to the first marker.

Resolving differences in marks and feedback between moderators and markers

25. Moderators may disagree with a marker's marks and/or provided feedback. This disagreement may be minor (reflecting only a small grade difference) and limited to only isolated cases, or it may reflect more consistent disagreement in the marks awarded, perhaps pointing in a single direction (for example, grading is considered too generous or too harsh in line with the assessment criteria). It may also be due to greater variability in the extent to which grades align with the assessment criteria.
26. In addressing differences, moderators must not recommend the adjustment of individual grades of sampled assessments unless the marker has specifically requested that an individual's grade be checked.
27. Moderators may require a marker to review of all marked assessments within a specified range or grade band, or that all marking carried out by an individual marker is reviewed.
28. Moderators may request changes in the content, tone, or detail of feedback, to improve the alignment between grades and feedback, the usefulness of the feedback (for example, to ensure comments support the development of future work), and between feedback and the assessment criteria.

Resolving differences in marks between double markers

29. Where two markers have a difference in marks, a discussion should take place regarding the strengths and limitations of a piece of work and how it aligns with the assessment criteria with a view to agreeing the final mark. Markers are expected to discuss any difference between their marks with reference to the marking criteria for the assessment. If the two markers are unable to reach an agreement, the assessment may be referred to a third marker. The third marker must

mark the work independently without access to the grades and comments of the original markers. The third marker must then consider the grades and comments of the original markers before recommending a final mark. A record of how marks have been agreed must be maintained.

Scaling of marks

30. Scaling of marking will be undertaken only in exceptional circumstances, for example, where evidence has been provided that a set of marks for an assessment do not accurately reflect student attainment of the learning outcomes being assessed. It is anticipated that in most cases the examiners will be satisfied with module performance, and no scaling of marks should be considered necessary. However, and exceptionally, in cases where module performance indicates a deviation from normal expectations, the Programme Leader and Module Leader should investigate reasons as to why this may be the case. Appendix 3 provides more information on the procedure that should be followed if a set of marks require scaling.

Maintaining records of the moderation process

31. The process of moderation and associated outcomes must be recorded, as part of the record of an assessment and to support transparency and consistency in the steps taken to ensure quality assurance in the assessment of students' work. Records of moderation for all relevant assessments must be retained by Departments and made available to External Examiners. A template for this purpose is provided in Appendix 4.

Communication of moderation processes

32. Often students are unaware of the range of checks and balances in place to ensure quality assurance of assessment and feedback. It is good practice to communicate to students the programme level approach to quality assurance including moderation, as making transparent the range of measures taken is likely to promote trust. Example text for communication to students is available in Appendix 5. Staff may wish to edit this to reflect the approach within their own programmes.

Responsibilities for implementation

33. **Heads of Department** are responsible for ensuring that all staff within their area of responsibility are aware of this policy, and that the policy is implemented.

34. **Programme Leaders** are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the programme; that records of moderation and/or double-marking are provided to External

Examiners, and that scaling of marks is done only in exceptional cases and in consultation with the Head of Department. Programme leaders are also responsible for identifying any areas of development for staff and teaching teams relating to assessment and feedback arising from moderation and/or double-marking processes.

35. **Module Leaders** are responsible for setting the assessment and coordinating the moderation process (for example, making available summary statistics described in paragraphs 37 and 38); and, communicating the moderation process to all markers, including the timing for returning any amendments to marking; and communicating the moderation process to students.
36. **Markers of assessments** are responsible for completing marking within a time period that enables moderation to take place; providing the module leader with appropriate summary statistics (see Appendix 4), and actioning any comments made by a Moderator within the time period requested.
37. **Moderators** are responsible for ensuring the marking of assessments is fair, valid, and reliable, and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently across students' work, within and across markers. They do this through reviewing an appropriate sample of marked assessments and consider other relevant information, such as summary statistics for markers and the assessment as a whole. Moderators are also responsible for completing moderation and communicating the outcome of the process to the Module Leader within the agreed timeframe.
38. **Boards of Examiners** are responsible for responding to the comments of External Examiners following external moderation for which they are responsible.

Definition of Terms

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| External moderation | Moderation of summative assessments by an external examiner. |
| Internal moderation | The process of reviewing a sample of work to check that grades and feedback consistently align to the set assessment criteria for the level of study. |
| Scaling | The process of applying a numeric adjustment to a set of marks. |
| Seen double marking | Where an assessment is independently marked by two markers, but where the second marker has access to the marks or comments of the first marker. |
| Unseen double marking | Where an assessment is independently marked by two markers who do not have access to the grades or comments of the other marker. |

Appendix 1. Guidance on generating descriptive statistics to support moderation

Generate descriptive statistics for Myplace assignments

39. Descriptive statistics can be generated for Myplace assignments by using the "Activity statistics" link in the assignment administration menu. By default, this shows a bar chart of grades for the assignment in bands of 5 percentage points, and statistics such as mean and standard deviation for the grades given. Where classes are using groups, these charts and statistics can be generated per group, either by selecting a specific grouping or all groups. The data for the class as a whole and the selected groups can be exported to a CSV file for processing outside of Myplace.

Use Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics

40. The following 'functions' can be used to generate descriptive statistics for a set of marks in Excel. Returns the average (arithmetic mean) of the arguments. For example, if the range A1:A20 contains numbers, the formula =AVERAGE(A1:A20) returns the average of the marks in column A, rows 1:20. The table below shows the function for some useful descriptive statistics.

| Purpose | Statistic | Function |
|---|--------------------|------------------|
| Measure of central tendency for symmetrical distributions | Mean mark | =average(A1:A20) |
| Measure of central tendency for skewed distributions | Median mark | =median(A1:A20) |
| Measure of dispersion in the data from the mean | Standard deviation | =stdev(A1:A20) |
| The lowest mark in the data | Minimum mark | =min(A1:A20) |
| The highest mark in the data | Maximum mark | =max(A1:A20) |

Appendix 2. Procedure for the Scaling of marks

41. As stated in paragraph 30, the scaling of marks should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the Head of Department. In their investigation, the Module Leader and Examiners should consider the following:

- a. Is there statistical evidence of a deviation in overall module performance based on historical records? (*Note that statistical evaluation of modules with small class sizes can be problematic*)
- b. Has the original marking scheme been fairly constructed, implemented and appropriately applied?
- c. Is there evidence for a technical or operational failure in teaching delivery or in the assessment process?
- d. Operational failures in teaching delivery could include:
 - Poor pre-assessment guidance to students that conflicts with the knowledge and skills tested in the assessment.
 - Assessed material weighting does not reflect the balance of the programme curriculum.
 - Teaching delivery or study time was compromised.
- e. Failure of assessment could reflect the following:
 - Ambiguous questions
 - Non-anticipated solutions to questions
 - Errors in questions
 - Poor description of examination structure and assessment weighting
 - Unforeseeable circumstances.

42. If there is evidence that the distribution of class marks for the majority of the registered students has been adversely affected by a technical or operational factor, then scaling may be considered. If teaching delivery and assessment methods are considered to be fair and reasonable, no scaling should be recommended by the module organiser. Individual student circumstances contributing to poor performance are dealt with separately under personal circumstances procedures. Scaling should not be applied to bring the average mark of a module into a specific range of marks without specific evidence of concerns in the delivery or assessment of that module.

Scaling Implementation

43. Scaling must be overseen by the Director of Teaching and Head of Department. Any scaling method must be uniformly applied to all students registered on a module that have made a bone fide attempt to complete the required assessment. Care should be taken not to overcompensate student performance. The method of scaling may include:

- a. The simple addition of a constant to the raw mark(s).
- b. The application of a multiplication factor.

$$\text{Scaled mark} = A \times (100 - \text{raw mark}) + \text{raw mark}$$

where A could equal 0.05 or 0.1, for example, which benefits lower scorers more and ensures all marks are below 100%, whilst

$$\text{scaled mark} = A \times \text{raw mark}$$

where A = 1.05 or 1.1, for example, benefits higher scorers more, and does not prevent the scaled mark exceeding 100%, and thus should be used with care.

- c. The exclusion of an assessed component or exam question from the calculation of the final mark.

Scaling should normally follow a two-stage process

44. Stage 1: If module scaling is deemed necessary, the scaling method should be chosen, applied and the impact on the distribution of module marks determined. The Module Leader should seek the approval of the Programme Director and the Head of Department prior to the scaled marks being uploaded.

45. Stage 2: The case for scaling should be made by the Department to the Board of Examiners prior to the presentation of the schedule of marks. If the Board of Examiners does not consent to the scaling, the un-scaled results for the module should stand. Therefore, the un-scaled marks must be available at the Board of Examiners should the Board of Examiners disagree to the scaling action.

Appendix 3. Example Moderation Form

Report on moderation of marking

46. Moderation guidelines: The sample should normally include around 10% of the marked assessments and should cover the full range of grades awarded by the marker. In addition to this sample, all assessments that have been graded a 'Fail' should be included in the sample for moderation. Individual marks should not be recommended for adjustment unless a) the marker has specifically requested that an individual mark be checked or b) the appropriate range pertaining to that individual mark is then checked for all students in the class, or for all assessments marked by a specific marker(s). Please maintain a record of the assessments sampled (e.g. for examinations, initial scripts, and for other assessments, record a note of the registration numbers/participant IDs of those that were sampled).

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Section A: To be completed by module lead and sent to Internal moderator | | | | | | | |
| Academic year and Semester: | | | | | | | |
| Module Code and Name: | | | | | | | |
| Assessment Type and Description (e.g. written exam, essay): | | | | | | | |
| Assessment title: | | | | | | | |

| Marker(s) | | Internal Moderator | | Class size | | Sample size for moderation | |
|-----------|--|--------------------|--|------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| | | | | | | | |

| Student ID | First Marker Mark | Comments (if appropriate) |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |

| Distribution of marks across grade classifications | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------|
| MEAN & SD | | | RANGE |
| Fails | | | 40s |
| 50s | | | 60s |
| 70s | | | 80s+ |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Section B: To be completed by Internal moderator | | | |
|---|--|--|--|

| | |
|--|---------------|
| I confirm that I have sampled a range of grades from all markers, and because of the sample considered, the marking of this assessment is: | |
| Consistent with the assessment criteria If NO is indicated, please provide details in the comments section below | Yes/No |
| Overall comments on the quality of work and any other form of feedback: | |
| Recommendations of adjustments to be made to marks and/or feedback: | |
| Adjustment agreed by first marker and moderator: Yes/No | |
| If No, why not? | |

Only complete if necessary:

| Section C: To be completed by External Examiner | |
|---|---------------|
| I confirm that I have sampled a range of grades from all markers, and on the basis of the sample considered, the marking of this assessment is: | |
| Consistent with the assessment criteria If NO is indicated, please provide details in the comments section below | Yes/No |
| Overall comments on the quality of work and any other form of feedback: | |
| External PRINT NAME: | |
| Signature: | |
| Date: | |

Appendix 4. Example communication to students regarding the moderation process.

47. The following text can be used to communicate the moderation process to students.

Dear Students,

The marking of your assessment will begin in the immediate days following the submission deadline. Consistent with our approach to quality assurance, a process of moderation will follow the marking, and this will involve a member of staff scrutinising a proportion of all marked assessments to ensure accuracy and consistency in the marking and feedback process. This process will be carried out before the marks and feedback are returned to you. This moderation process is part of a wider set of quality assurance processes that are used to ensure that all stakeholders (students, families, the university, the government, the public, and employers etc) maintain confidence in the UK's higher education assessment system.

The role of External Examiners (that is, experienced members of academic staff from departments in other UK universities) in the UK higher education system is an important one; their task is to ensure that our assessment and feedback procedures are robust, fair, and that we apply standards that are consistent with other universities in the UK. This process ensures that all stakeholders (students, families, the university, the government, the public, and employers etc.) maintain confidence in the UK H.E.'s assessment system.

Only once this process has been complete will we be able to release your grades and feedback.

The date for this will be: