POLICY ON MODERATION AND DOUBLE MARKING

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.0	Policy on Moderation and Double Marking – applicable to both undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses	Assessment and Feedback Working Group	Senate	From academic year 2019-20

Version 1.0

1. RATIONALE

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education notes the expectations for higher education providers to provide clear processes for staff 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, and that the standards are applied consistently across a cohort and in line with published assessment criteria. The marking of all summative assessments should be in alignment with published assessment criteria and appropriate standards, and should be subject to moderation in a way that fits the discipline, the nature of the assessment, and the credit-weighting of the assessment. 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. This policy aims to provide guidance to staff on implementing these internal processes in undergraduate and postgraduate taught assessments. 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 professional and statutory bodies for all classes in order to ensure comparability of standards. Guidance on the role of External Examiners can be found here.

2. WHAT IS MODERATION?

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. Moderation will take different forms, depending on the nature of the assessment, level of study, and credit-weighting, and while co-ordinated by course leaders, it is likely that all members of a course team will contribute to moderation.

3. WHEN IS MODERATION REQUIRED?

Appropriate moderation processes are required for all summative assessments. The process of moderation takes place after all marking has been carried out. 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 time frame. (Note that the University expects feedback on coursework to be returned to students within 15 working days of an assessment submission). While moderation is not required for non-weighted assessments (sometimes called formative assessments), arrangements should also be in place here to ensure consistency of marking and feedback.

4. METHODS OF MODERATION

As previously mentioned, the appropriate method of moderation will depend on the discipline, the nature of the assessment and the assessment's credit weighting.

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.

In addition to this process of internal moderation, 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. Seen double-marking is the process 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. The following provides guidance as to the appropriate method of moderation.

The expectation will normally be that the internal moderation process is followed for classes of 20 credits or less, where a sample of assessments are moderated, rather than double-marked. Double-marking will only be used following the conditions below, or where professional bodies require it.

4.1 **Double-marking**

The method of double-marking will normally be used for all summative assessments where an assessment has a credit weighting of 40 credits or higher. It is recommended that unseen double marking is carried out for highly weighted summative assessments, and for dissertations or final year projects, where the student is known to the first marker. Some areas may use seen double-marking for summative assessments with a high credit weighting.

4.2 **Internal moderation**

Internal moderation should be carried out only by suitably qualified University staff (determined by the Department/School). The process of internal moderation should be used for all summative assessments where:

4.2.1   An assessment has been marked by one marker: A sample of the marked assessments should be reviewed by a moderator. 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. Where the total number of assessments is 10 or less, the whole batch should be moderated. The moderator should be provided with the complete list of grades awarded, and where possible, summary statistics for the assessment (e.g. mean mark, standard deviation, minimum and maximum marks). See Appendix 1 for guidance on generating these statistics in Myplace.

4.2.2   An assessment is marked by more than one marker: In this case, moderators should be provided with a sample of marking from each individual marker, as well as the complete list of grades awarded, and where possible, summary statistics for each marker (e.g. mean mark, standard deviation, minimum and maximum marks). The sample should normally include around 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.

4.2.3   A module is delivered by more than one teaching team (e.g. in more than one geographical location, or mode of delivery), a separate sample should be moderated for each cohort.

4.2.4 Assessments are marked using highly structured and objective marking schemes: Moderation may simply involve procedural checking in order to ensure the marking scheme is appropriate and is applied consistently across a sample of marking.

4.2.5 Assessments are computer marked: For assessments such as multiple choice examinations and assessments that are conducted online and marked by a computer, moderation will simply involve checking that the software is accurately assessing answers to each question, and calculating overall marks correctly.

4.2.6 Assessments do not result in physical artefacts: Where an assessment does not result in the creation of a physical object (e.g. a piece of written work), such as presentations, assessment on placements, live performances, or practical demonstrations, arrangements could be made for the moderator to observe a sample of the assessments, via either their presence at the time of the assessment or via a video recording. Where these options are not feasible (e.g. tutorial performance or placement assessments), the following arrangements could be put in place:

   a. 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.

   b. Clearly specify written assessment criteria and take steps to ensure all markers have a shared understanding of how they should apply the criteria. At honours and postgraduate levels, the criteria should be discussed with an external examiner before the assessment is undertaken for the first time.

   c. Following the marking of all assessments, the class leader should review the grades awarded by each marker. Where marks for a marker(s) appear significantly inconsistent with marks awarded by other markers of the assessment, the class leader should discuss this with the marker concerned. Marks may then be adjusted, if it is agreed that the marking criteria was not applied fully and consistently across students.

4.2.7 Assessments that are marked by tutors and postgraduate students: Where assessments are marked by external tutors, visiting lecturers/new staff, or postgraduate students, it is expected that 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.

5. RESOLVING DIFFERENCES IN MARKS BETWEEN MODERATORS AND MARKERS

Moderators may disagree with marks and/or provided feedback. This disagreement may be minor (i.e. reflect 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 (e.g. grading is too generous or too harsh in line with the assessment criteria), or it may be due to greater variability in the extent to which grades align with the assessment criteria. Individual grades of sampled assessments should not be recommended for adjustment, unless: a) the marker has specifically requested that individual's grade be checked; or b) the appropriate range pertaining to that individual grade, or grade band, is then checked for all students in the class or all marking carried out by an individual marker. Moderators may also request changes in the content, tone, or detail of feedback, in order to improve the alignment between grades and feedback, the usefulness of the feedback (i.e. comments that support the development of future work), and between feedback and the assessment criteria.

6. RESOLVING DIFFERENCES IN MARKS BETWEEN DOUBLE MARKERS

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. Where agreement is not reached between a first and second marker, and there is a difference of 6 marks or more, a third marker may be appointed to arrive at a final mark. Where the difference is less than 6 marks, and agreement is not reached, the average of the two marks, rounded up, should be awarded. The third marker may wish to view the grades and comments of each marker, prior to determining the final mark to be awarded. A record of how marks have been agreed should be maintained.

7. SCALING OF MARKS

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 the majority of 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 Course Director and module coordinators should investigate reasons as to why this may the case. Appendix 3 provides more information on the procedure that should be followed in the event that a set of marks require scaling.

8. MAINTAINING RECORDS OF THE MODERATION PROCESS

The process of moderation and associated outcomes should be recorded, as part of the record of an assessment and to support transparency and consistency in the steps taken to ensure the quality assurance in the assessment of students' work. This record can be reflected on within the module review process. Appendix 4 shows an example form that can be used for this purpose. Records of moderation should be kept for the same time period of associated assessments.

9. COMMUNICATION OF MODERATION PROCESSES

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 moderation, as making transparent the range of measures taken is likely to promote trust. An example communication to students is available in Appendix 5 for staff to edit to reflect the approach within their own programmes.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 **Boards of Examiners** are responsible for: responding to the comments of External Examiners following external moderation for which they are responsible.

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

10.3 **Programme leaders/Directors of Teaching** are responsible for ensuring: this policy is implemented within their areas of responsibility; the records of moderation processes are provided to External Examiners, where appropriate; that scaling of marks is done only in exceptional cases and in consultation with the Head of Department/School. Programme leaders/Directors of Teaching are also responsible for identifying any areas of development for staff and teaching teams relating to assessment and feedback and course planning.

10.4 **Module Coordinators/staff** setting the assessment are responsible for: Communicating the moderation process to all markers, including the timing for returning any amendments to marking; and Communicating the moderation process to students.

10.5 **Markers of assessments** are responsible for: responding to the comments made by a Moderator in the time frame requested.

11. 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

1.1 Generate descriptive statistics for Myplace assignments

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.

1.2 Use Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics

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 a number of 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. Some examples of effective practice

Where an assessment is marked by multiple markers.

In the contexts of large class sizes, moderators may find it beneficial to do one of the following either prior to the commencement of marking, or early in the marking process:

1.1 Request that all markers (particularly where postgraduate markers are used) send their first marked assessment for review to the class leader, or staff member who set the assessment. This provides an opportunity for markers to receive comments on the grade and feedback they have provided, for consideration in the remainder of their marking.

1.2 Set up a meeting for all markers in order to develop a shared understanding of the standards and assessment criteria.

1.3 To support moderation, calculate the mean grade, and the minimum and maximum grades, awarded by each marker, and for the class as a whole. (See Appendix 1 for guidance).

Appendix 3. Procedure for the Scaling of marks

As stated in Section 7, the scaling of marks should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the Director of Teaching and Head of Department/School. In their investigation, the module coordinators and examiners should consider the following:

1. 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*)
2. Has the original marking scheme been fairly constructed, implemented and appropriately applied?
3. Is there evidence for a technical or operational failure in teaching delivery or in the assessment process?
    a. Operational failures in teaching delivery could include:
        i. Poor pre-assessment guidance to students that conflicts with the knowledge and skills tested in the assessment.
        ii. Assessed material weighting does not reflect the balance of the course curriculum.
        iii. Teaching delivery or study time was compromised.
    b. Failure of assessment could reflect the following:
        i. Ambiguous questions
        ii. Non-anticipated solutions to questions
        iii. Errors in questions
        iv. Poor description of examination structure and assessment weighting
        v. Unforeseeable circumstances.

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

Scaling must be overseen by the Director of Teaching and Head of Department/School. 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 over-compensate student performance. The method of scaling may include:

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

$$scaled\ mark = A \times (100 - raw\ mark) + raw\ mark$$

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

$$scaled\ mark = A \times raw\ mark$$

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.

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

Scaling should normally follow a two stage process

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 coordinator should seek the approval of the Course Director and the Head of Department prior to the scaled marks being uploaded.

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 4. Example Moderation Form

Report on moderation of marking

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 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:
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 5. Example communication to students regarding the moderation process.

5.1 Email template communicating the moderation process to students

Dear Students,

The marking of your assessment will take place in the immediate days following the submission deadline. Consistent with our quality assurance process, a proportion of all assessments will be scrutinised to ensure accuracy and consistency in the marking and feedback process, before the marks and feedback are returned to you. This process is part of a wider set of 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 H.E.'s 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 extremely 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 in a position to release your grades and feedback. **<u>The date for this will be:</u>**