University guidelines for the moderation of summative assessments

1 Introduction

1.1 The University’s Assessment Policy sets out the principles that promote good practice, consistency and rigour in summative assessment design and practice including those of marking, grading and internal moderation (GEAR J3.3).

These guidelines augment the Policy and include minimum requirements which aim to ensure that there are consistent, fair and transparent procedures for the moderation of students’ summative assessment across the University. The guidelines seek to ensure that students are assessed accurately and fairly and that the marking of students’ work is subject to an element of independent internal scrutiny. Additionally there are requirements that:

- students are provided with clear information about how their summative assessed work is moderated;
- external examiners are provided with appropriate evidence that internal moderation of marking has taken place in accordance with these procedures.

1.2 The guidelines apply to both undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision and cover the following stages of the assessment process:

- i. review of summative assessments section 3
- ii. marking and standardisation of marking section 4
- iii. moderation of marks sections 5 and 6

1.3 Particular care should be taken to ensure that summative assessments that are subject to a higher level of risk e.g. group work, performance and e-assessment, are managed and assessed appropriately and that equitable procedures for marking and moderation are in place. How work is to be assessed with these forms of assessment should be made clear to students.

2 Use of the guidelines

2.1 The guidelines recognise that a range of assessment and moderation practices are in use across the university reflecting differences between disciplines, and also in the nature of the assessment, what is being assessed and the level of study e.g. the use of marking panels for practice based courses. Academic judgement of staff and professional expertise to determine appropriate learning on a module and the means of assessing it remains paramount. Within this context, the guidelines set out minimum requirements and good practice which all Schools (and Colleges, refer 2.5) should reflect in their own documented procedures.

2.2 These University guidelines do not necessarily exclude other practices as long as these exceed the minimum requirements. In particular there may be additional

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1 Takes account of the UK Quality Code for HE chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning and chapter B7: External examining
2 Including the taught element of Professional Doctorate award
requirements of PSRBs for marking\(^1\) and moderation of students' assessed work which Schools/Colleges need to meet.

2.3 Schools/Colleges should also have in place appropriate moderation practices for summative assessment at levels other than those covered by these guidelines i.e. summative assessment that does not affect the classification of the award (e.g. level 4 for BA/BSc award) and level 0.

2.4 As marking of students' work and feedback become increasingly provided to students through electronic media, as well as the evidence provided to external examiners, these guidelines will be periodically reviewed to ensure that the requirements for internal and external moderation remain current and can continue to be demonstrated.

2.5 **Partner institutions**

2.5.1 The information in these guidelines applies to provision delivered at partner institutions that is under the oversight of Academic Partnership Committee (APC). Moderation procedures for provision delivered by or with other partners, or specifically excluded from APC’s responsibilities, are the responsibility of the relevant School.\(^2\)

2.5.2 Academic Partnership Committee and its sub-committees are responsible for ensuring that course teams are aware of the University’s Assessment Policy, including these marking and moderation guidelines.

2.5.3 Internal moderation procedures for consortium courses (which are offered or delivered by more than one Partner College) should be developed by the course team, comprising the University's Consortium Programme Leader and the Course Leaders from each delivering College, to ensure consistency of marking, moderation and academic standards across the consortium. The APC Consortium Programmes Sub-committee will have oversight of this activity for all consortium delivery within APC’s remit.

2.5.4 For franchised courses delivered by one college only, APC College HE Board is responsible for ensuring that appropriate moderation procedures are in place.

3 **Review of summative assessments**

3.1 **Introduction**

3.1.1 The Course Leader\(^3\) has overall responsibility for the assessment strategy and coherence of assessment on the course which is approved at the validation of the course and included in the programme specification. The assessment in modules is reviewed annually as part of the Academic Health process in the light of student performance, student feedback and external examiner comments on the assessment process. Examination boards may also review of the operation of assessment procedures for modules and recommend changes where appropriate.

3.1.2 The principal responsibility for designing/setting assessments\(^4\) rests with Module Leaders/co-ordinators working, where appropriate, with the module/teaching teams.

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\(^1\) Including examination by externals  
\(^2\) Provision under APC's remit includes all programmes offered at the University's partner FE colleges with the following exceptions: PGDip Human Resource Management (Central Sussex College); BSc (Hons) Business Management (East Surrey College); FdA Early Years Care and Education (East Surrey College, Northbrook College); PCGE/CertEd Post-compulsory Education (City College Brighton and Hove, Northbrook College, Sussex Coast College Hastings, Sussex Downs College)  
\(^3\) Or Programme Leader throughout these guidelines  
\(^4\) Refer Assessment Policy section 3.2 Assessment design
Summative assessments (including coursework and examination) should be subject to review in order to confirm the appropriateness of the proposed assessment mechanism.

3.2 Minimum requirements for review of summative assessments

3.2.1 The Module Leader/co-ordinator should ensure that there is appropriate internal review of summative assessment tasks before they are issued to students. This includes coursework and examinations at levels 5, 6 and 7. The review could be at a meeting of the module/ subject/course or programme team as determined by the School/College.

3.2.2 The internal review should involve more than one member of staff, be documented and should confirm that:

i. the draft assessment task and any additional guidance/instructions to students are sufficiently clear;
ii. the assessment task and/or questions set provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate achievement of the module learning outcomes and encompass the criteria for the assessment;
iii. both the assessment task and assessment criteria (or marking scheme, model or outline answers) to be used to determine the mark/grade are set at an appropriate academic standard for the level concerned (internal standards setting);
iv. the requirements in relation to information to students on summative assessment are met - the assessment task is aligned with the learning outcomes of module, assessment submission and planned feedback dates are provided (GEAR 2.1).

Any additional requirements for the internal review and for resolving issues arising from the review should be included in School/College procedures.

3.2.3 The Module Leader/co-ordinator should ensure that examination questions/papers are also subject to an external review (moderation) by the external examiner (refer 3.2.4).

3.2.4 External examiners should be consulted on final draft examination questions/papers where these are taken as summative assessment at levels 5, 6, 7 prior to students taking the examination. This should take place after internal review of the assessment (refer 3.2.2). Model answers (marking schemes/outline solutions or assessment criteria) should be provided to the external examiner as appropriate.

The external examiner should be asked to comment on the clarity, fairness and consistency of the proposed assessment, including whether it is at an appropriate level of study.

Schools/Colleges should provide a response to the external examiner on any suggested amendments to the examination paper/questions and ensure that there is evidence of the external review (moderation), for example through an assessment review (moderation) proforma.

3.2.5 It is now considered good practice for the external examiner to be consulted generally on all proposed summative assessments, including examination papers for modules for which he/she is responsible, before they are given to students. This allows the external examiner’s expertise ‘to inform institutions’ practice as it occurs, rather than providing an exclusively retrospective comment on past practice’ (UK Quality Code for HE chapter B7).
4 Marking and standardisation of marking

4.1 The Module Leader/co-ordinator is responsible for coordinating the marking of summative assessment tasks in the module.

4.2 Standardisation may take place prior to marking to assure that the marker, or team of markers, align with the level and assessment criteria for the assessment task. This is considered good practice and may, for example, involve all markers marking a few assessment tasks and then getting together to ensure that the team is adopting equivalent academic standards. Standardisation helps to promote consistency of marking (useful where there are very large numbers of students), and when carried out at the beginning of the marking cycle enables markers to calibrate their judgements as well as enabling marking teams to share good practice such as how to deal with language proficiency, word limits and academic misconduct when marking students’ work.

4.3 All marking (and moderation of marking) must take into account the relevant assessment criteria (or marking scheme). These should be aligned to the University-level marking/grading descriptors which supports the comparability of standards across the University.

There should be evidence of how marks have been awarded and feedback to students should be in line with University’s requirements for information to students on summative assessment and academic feedback (GEAR B2.1).

4.4 Schools/Colleges may also consider maintaining an appropriate archive of assessment material for educational and quality assurance purposes and to assist comparability over time. This could cover a selection of modules/assessment tasks over several assessment cycles.

5 Unseen double marking and moderation of marks

5.1 Double marking is a process to confirm the quality of marking for all students in the cohort and the emphasis is on the consistent application of the marking criteria across the cohort.

Dissertations and major projects at the award level for undergraduate and postgraduate awards should be unseen double marked. This is due to the individualised nature of the work. No further sample (internal) moderation is required (Schools may determine whether there should be a statistical review of marks), but students’ work should be subject to externally moderation (refer 6.2).

5.2 Moderation is an overarching term to describe the processes that take place after initial marking to provide an element of independent scrutiny of the judgement of the first marker and ensure the fairness, reliability and consistency of marking against the marking criteria (i.e. the validity of marks awarded). Internal moderation is carried out by the School/College and is followed by external moderation by the external examiner (refer section 6).

For most assessments, coursework and written examination, internal moderation need not be carried out unseen and moderation of students’ work is through second marking of a sample.

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7 Derived from the module learning outcomes
5.3 Minimum requirements for double marking and internal moderation

5.3.1 Requirements for different modes of summative assessments, including sample size are provided in table 1.

5.3.2 Given the diverse range of summative assessments, table 1 is not an exhaustive list and where the form of assessment is not specifically listed, Schools/Colleges should develop appropriate procedures that ensure that the objectives of internal moderation as set out in these guidelines are met.

Schools/Colleges should indicate how students’ work on placement, professional and teaching practice is internally moderated.

It is also recognised that some modules/assessments may be composed of multiple small weighted assessments. Schools/Colleges should indicate where small weighted assessment tasks are exempt from the requirement to moderate on the grounds of materiality or where moderation is carried out on a sample basis of tasks.

5.3.3 The Module Leader/co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that there is appropriate moderation of summative assessment tasks in the module.

The moderation process should be separate from the first marking process, be transparent and clearly recorded. Moderation can also ensure that feedback to students is appropriate and consistently provided (including consistent with the final mark) and is provided in line with University’s policy on academic feedback.

Students should normally be provided with just the final agreed mark after internal moderation and informed that results are provisional until ratified by an examination board.

5.3.4 Where assessments are marked by a single marker another member of staff should be identified to moderate the work. Where the marking process is carried out by more than one marker, this must be followed by a separate independent process of moderation (normally sample moderation but refer double marking of dissertations). Where all assessments are marked by a team e.g. creative projects, moderation may take place between markers within the team. Large cohorts may need a panel to moderate the sample.

5.3.5 For MCQs and summative assessment with numerical (detailed) mark schemes, an appropriate verification system should be in operation for numerical checking.

5.3.6 Schools/Colleges should have appropriate documented procedures for internal moderation of summative assessment, available for staff, students and external examiners that indicate how:

i. different modes and levels of summative assessment are internally moderated, and what is exempt;
ii. samples are chosen for internal moderation;
iii. moderation for collaborative provision (and cross-site) is carried out, where appropriate;
iv. differences between markers/moderators are resolved (refer 5.3.7);
v. the internal moderation process is recorded (refer 6.2.3).

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*Evidence of moderation is an important feature of internal processes*
5.3.7  Schools/Colleges should have robust, transparent procedures for dealing with discrepancies identified between markers or marker/moderator. This should include written guidance on the size of differences/tolerance that would result in further action and a robust system to resolve differences, including where mathematical aggregation can be used.

5.3.8  There should be accurate and clear evidence of both first marking and internal moderation of students’ summative assessments. This should record the method and result of internal moderation, including the reconciliation of the marks of each marker/moderator. The use of a standard internal moderation proforma is considered good practice. This information should be available to the external examiner.

5.3.9  Schools/Colleges should determine where the minimum requirements should be increased (e.g. additional marking of borderline cases) depending on:

i.  the experience and number of marker(s) – where the first marker is a new member of staff. Schools/Colleges may consider increasing the sample size;
ii.  the weighting of the assessment task to the overall module mark and whether the assessment is new;
iii.  any PSRB requirements.

Schools/Colleges should also determine where additional forms of internal moderation should be used, including:

i.  a statistical review of module/assessment marks (range, mean and standard deviation), to identify anomalies and trends. This is often carried out at area examination boards which have an overview of standards across modules and subjects;
ii.  a moderation meeting - to review the results of a cohort of students and performance across modules, subjects/programmes and markers.

5.3.10 School Boards or the relevant APC sub-committee should keep marking and internal moderation procedures under review.

5.3.11 Course and module handbooks for students should clearly indicate how summative assessment tasks are internally moderated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of summative assessment (and level)</th>
<th>Double marking and moderation - minimum requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation(^9) Major project Exhibition/show at the award level(^10)</td>
<td>Unseen double marking of all assessed work</td>
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\(^9\) Includes final element in Masters awards refer GEAR A8.11  
\(^10\) For example Bachelor’s is level 6 and Master’s is level 7  
\(^11\) May also be a number of designated markers  
\(^12\) Or all designated markers e.g. where a team approach is required  
\(^13\) Differences are usually resolved through further consideration of how the assessment criteria have been applied to the work.  
\(^14\) Student should be informed that results are provisional until ratified by an examination board  
\(^15\) Or nominee with subject expertise and/or experience  
\(^16\) Normally with both markers – individually or together and may be in person or by e-mail
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| Written examination at levels 5,6,7   | In sample moderation a moderator (or reviewer/scrutineer)\(^{17}\) reviews a representative sample of student’s work to ensure that the assessment criteria (or marking scheme) have been applied appropriately and consistently, and that the mark/grade (and feedback comment, where provided) is appropriate e.g. falls within the same grade/classification band.  

The internal moderator should be provided with the assessment criteria (or marking scheme) and their role is to use their academic judgement to check the validity of the marks given by the first marker. The moderator should record their comments separately. Moderators are not necessarily required to provide comments on individual pieces of work.  

The **sample** should:  
• normally be selected by the moderator/reviewer  
• comprise at least 10% or square root ( whichever is greater)\(^{18}\) of the examination scripts (a minimum of 6)  
• include examination scripts across the full range of marks, including; first/distinction, marginal fails and borderline cases  
• be drawn from each point of delivery where the module is delivered in several locations\(^{19}\)  
• include examination scripts marked by each marker where there are several first markers  

Following second marking of the sample, the first marker and moderator/reviewer should:  
• liaise regarding their judgements on the mark/grade awarded and confirm the final mark/grade which should be provided to the student following moderation  
• both indicate on the examination script or complete assessment/assignment feedback sheet/form to evidence which pieces of assessment have been sample second marked - or other record of this should be kept  

Feedback (other than mark/grade) on examinations should be in line with School policy  

The **moderator/reviewer should not alter individual marks of work in the sample**\(^{20}\)  

Where moderation reveals inconsistency in the application of the marking criteria and agreement between first marker and moderator cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the Course Leader/subject group leader. It may then be considered necessary for:  

i. the marks for the whole set of assessments to be adjusted (e.g. where marks as a whole appear to be either too low or too high) or;  

ii. the entire set of assessments to be remarked. |

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\(^{17}\) Could also be a panel/team  
\(^{18}\) Unless PSRB requires different  
\(^{19}\) There should be an adequate sample from each site  
\(^{20}\) Where an arithmetical error is noted it may be appropriate to recheck the whole set of submitted work
<table>
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</table>
| Coursework                             | In sample moderation a moderator (or reviewer/scrutineer)\(^2^1\) reviews a representative sample of student’s work to ensure that the assessment criteria (or marking scheme) have been applied appropriately and consistently, and that the mark/grade (and feedback comment) is appropriate e.g. falls within the same grade/classification band. The internal moderator should be provided with the assessment criteria (or marking scheme) and their role is to use their academic judgement to check the validity of the marks given by the first marker. The moderator should record their comments separately. Moderators are not necessarily required to provide comments on individual pieces of work. Where the module is comprised of more than one assessment task, at least one assessment task from a module should be subject to sample moderation. The sample should:  
  • normally be selected by the moderator/reviewer  
  • comprise at least 10% or square root (whichever is greater)\(^2^2\) of the assessments (a minimum of 6)  
  • include coursework across the full range of marks, including; firsts/distinction, marginal fails, and borderline cases  
  • be drawn from each point of delivery where the module is delivered in several locations\(^2^3\)  
  • include coursework marked by each marker where there are several first markers  

Following second marking of the sample, the first marker and moderator/reviewer should:  
  • liaise regarding their judgements on the mark/grade awarded and nature of the feedback  
  • confirm the final mark/grade and feedback comment - a single mark/grade and a single piece of feedback should be provided to the student following moderation  
  • both indicate on the coursework or complete assessment/assignment feedback sheet/form to evidence which pieces of assessment have been sample second marked - or other record of this should be kept  

The moderator/reviewer should not alter individual marks of work in the sample\(^2^4\)  

Where moderation reveals inconsistency in the application of the marking criteria and agreement between first marker and moderator cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the Course Leader/subject group leader. It may then be considered necessary for:  
  i. the marks for the whole set of assessments to be adjusted (e.g. where marks as a whole appear to be either too low or too high) or;  
  ii. the entire set of assessments to be remarked. |

\(^2^1\) Could also be a panel/team  
\(^2^2\) Unless PSRB requires different  
\(^2^3\) There should be an adequate sample from each site  
\(^2^4\) Where an arithmetical error is noted it may be appropriate to recheck the whole set of submitted work
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practical</strong></td>
<td>Schools/Colleges should determine particular procedures for internal (and external) moderation of summative assessments in this category (mainly non-written tasks), taking into account the weighting of the assessment tasks within the module e.g. where the task is a major item of assessment or where there are a number of pieces of work, each with a low weighting in the assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes:</td>
<td>Internal moderation could involve:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral communication-based task/assessment, presentation (individual and group)</td>
<td>• unseen double marking at the time of the assessment/event by two teaching staff, a panel or team of markers or peer markers;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical skills assessment:</td>
<td>• recording (audio/visual) the assessment activity followed by seen second marking of a sample later (refer requirements for sample moderation in table).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• performance-based tasks</td>
<td>This category of assessment includes those assessments where the process of internal and external moderation may be different and arrangements should ensure that evidence is obtained/recorded where practicable. Where students’ work cannot be made available for later external moderation all work should be double marked where possible. Schools/Colleges should ensure that students are informed about how the assessment will be conducted and the criteria for marking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professional, clinical, practice-based tasks, OSCE’s</td>
<td>Assessment of professional competence of students in the workplace is normally carried out by suitably qualified practice-based supervisors/assessors and is normally against national standards. Moderation procedures for these types of assessment should be published in handbooks or programme specifications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• laboratory-based practical work/ task/ activity</td>
<td>Method of resolving differences is dependent on internal moderation process – refer table.</td>
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at levels 5, 6, 7
6 External moderation of marks

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 External moderation is a process where experienced academic and/or professional peers review samples of students’ summative assessment to ensure that the level of achievement demonstrated by the students reflects the required academic standards for the award and is comparable to awards at other UK HEIs.

6.1.2 Full details of the role and responsibilities of external examiners are provided in the External Examiners’ Handbook. In particular responsibility for marking/grading of students’ summative assessed work and for agreeing standards rests with the internal examiners. External examiners should not be used as additional ‘third’ markers or to arbitrate disagreements between internal markers and moderators, which should be resolved by the School (GEAR I2.2).

6.1.3 External examiners are required to review a representative sample of students’ summative assessed work at all levels which contribute to the award unless this is a PSRB requirement. External examiners for Foundation degrees and Diplomas sample work at level 5 but may also receive samples from modules at level 4 where provided by the School/College or requested by Module Leader where the external examiner is responsible for modules only.

6.2 Minimum requirements for external moderation

6.2.1 The Course Leader is responsible for engaging with the external examiner(s) throughout the academic year. This includes ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements for external moderation of students’ summative assessment.

6.2.2 The selection and composition of the sample of students’ work and when this is provided to the external examiner should be explicitly agreed through consultation between the Course Leader (or course team) and the external examiner.

Arrangements for the sample will reflect the volume and nature of assessment(s) in each module and Schools/Colleges should have a policy on sampling. The sample may, or may not necessarily be, the same as that selected for internal moderation and a reasonable sample of material to assist the external examiner would normally represent either 10% or the square root (whichever is the larger) of the number of students studying the component (minimum of 6) and include work across the full range of marks/grades, e.g. first/distinction, fails and borderlines.

Where the module has been studied by a small number of students it may be appropriate that each item is reviewed. At postgraduate level the external examiner may wish to review all final element work for a cohort. All examination scripts should be made available to the external examiner on request.

6.2.3 The sample of work should normally be supported by:

i. the assessment brief(s)/instructions given to the student or the examination paper (including name of the module and module leader);
ii. marking criteria, mark scheme/outline solutions as appropriate for the assessment;
iii. a full list of marks for the assessment task with student identifier;
iv. information about the internal moderation process (e.g. a moderation report from the Module Leader) and internal moderation record sheets (where appropriate) for

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25 Unless this is a PSRB requirement. External examiners for Foundation degrees and Diplomas sample work at level 5 but may also receive samples from modules at level 4 where provided by the School/College or requested by Module Leader where the external examiner is responsible for modules only.
26 Students’ assessed work from all modules should be considered by the external examiner every year (ASC Nov 2014 minute 2034)
27 Refer External Examiners’ Handbook
the sample. This should provide evidence that internal moderation has been conducted. External examiners are asked to comment on internal moderation procedures in their annual report.

6.2.4 Where the standard form of internal moderation (double marking/seen second marking of a sample) for summative assessment is not used, the external examiner should be advised about the alternative form of moderation and provided with appropriate evidence and sample on which to base their judgment regarding the maintenance of academic standards.

6.2.5 Students' work is normally provided to the external examiner in advance of the examination board or arrangements made so that the external examiner can view work/artefacts produced by students, attend student performances and exhibitions prior to the examination board meeting.

The Chair of the Examination Board is required to confirm, through an item on the agenda, that students' summative assessment has been moderated by the external examiner(s), even if the external examiner(s) is not present at the examination board, and that there are no outstanding issues with the internally agreed marks, before marks are agreed by an examination board.

6.2.6 Schools/Colleges should have appropriate documented procedures for external moderation of summative assessment that indicate how:

i. the sample for the external examiner is chosen;
ii. the external examiner indicates that the internally agreed marks for the sample are appropriate or that marking is not set at the appropriate level. Where external examiners indicate concern about the internal marking, procedures should indicate what action will be taken.

Task and finish/post ASC – 1/6/2013
Approved Academic Board 19 June 2013
The guidelines would be implemented during 2013/14 and ASC would receive a report back from each School for its May 2014 meeting confirming their adoption (minute 4258)
Updated July 2014
Updated January 2015