

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

MARKING AND MODERATION PROCEDURES

1. PROCEDURES

- 1.1 These procedures set out the University's *minimum* requirements for marking and moderation. It is an expectation of all Schools that the requirements detailed within these procedures are adhered to, and appropriate records are maintained, including details of how all decisions taken have been reached. These procedures are only part of the processes used to ensure integrity of the assessment process. The scrutiny afforded by the Examiners' meeting and the involvement of External Examiners provides further assurance.
- 1.2 Schools may choose to operate more extensive procedures where appropriate (i.e. where Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements may be more stringent or where it is the first time an assessment has been used). In such cases Schools may choose to moderate more assessments, a larger sample of individual assessments or even double mark as deemed appropriate. Such procedures should be clearly outlined to all staff involved in marking and to the External Examiner.
- 1.3 These procedures are designed to be read in conjunction with the University's Codes of Practice on Assessment ([Undergraduate](#) and [Postgraduate Taught](#)). Further information on Assessment at the University is available in the [Academic Quality Handbook \(AQH\)](#).
- 1.4 Agreement will be reached with the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), regarding the extent of double marking and moderation required for assessments, if any, where marking has been undertaken by individuals external to the University (e.g., Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships, clinical or work-based placements). This will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis and will take account of the maturity of the partnership and the experience of the staff involved. In such cases, moderation and double marking normally must be undertaken by a member of University staff.
- 1.5 Support will be provided by experienced colleagues within Schools for anyone new to the marking and moderation process.
- 1.6 The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) can be consulted (*via* [Academic Services](#)) should a School wish to discuss marking and moderation arrangements in more detail, or modifications in approach to these procedures.

2. MARKING AND DOUBLE MARKING

2.1 MARKING

- 2.1.1 All assessments should be marked by a qualified marker, as stipulated in the Codes

of Practice on Assessment (*section 1.3 refers*).

- 2.1.2 All assessments should, where possible, be marked anonymously (i.e. a student should only be identified by candidate number). Where it is not possible for marking to be undertaken anonymously (e.g. presentations), this should be agreed with the School Director of Education (or nominee) and a record of assessments where anonymous marking is not undertaken and why, should be kept by the relevant Education Committee. This can be done on a course-by-course basis or an agreed list of assessment types where anonymity is not possible (e.g. presentations). The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) can be consulted for support around anonymous marking through the virtual learning environment.
- 2.1.3 Where several different markers are involved in marking the same question on an assessment, there should be discussion in advance of marking commencing, to outline the marking criteria to be used and to agree a marking scheme.

2.2 DOUBLE MARKING

- 2.2.1 Double marking is a process whereby a second marker assigns a mark to a piece of assessment. Although double marking can be undertaken by a second marker having access to the annotations and mark awarded by the first marker, where possible, double marking should be undertaken *blind* with the two markers each assigning a mark independently without conferring during the marking process.
- 2.2.2 The University requires, **as a minimum**, all Undergraduate Honours and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) dissertations, theses, and projects be double marked¹.
- 2.2.3 Following completion of double marking, if there is agreement between markers, then the mark should be confirmed. Section 2.3 provides further information where there is disparity in marking.

2.3 DISPARITY IN MARKING

- 2.3.1 Where disparity arises, this should be discussed with consideration given to whether the disparity appears to be isolated or occurs more widely. Once determined, if possible, an approach should be agreed with consideration given to whether any adjustments required should be applied to individual assessments, or the entire cohort.
- 2.3.2 In instances where agreement cannot be reached by the markers, a discussion should take place with the markers and the appropriate Head of School (or nominee) to agree a way forward and ensure marks can be confirmed. It may be appropriate for

¹ Assessments which require to be double marked at honours or PGT level can *normally* be identified as 'theses, dissertations and projects'. For clarity in regard to which projects should be double marked, these would normally be 'a single substantive piece of assessment which contributes 75% or more to an overall course grade, where the overall course comprises 25 or more credits'. There is no requirement for projects, for example, which do not meet these requirements, to be double marked.

the assessments to be marked, normally blind, by a third marker. Exceptionally, the External Examiner may be asked to review the assessments if there is no third internal marker with the appropriate expertise available. Where this relates to TNE provision, the third marker must be a member of University staff.

3. MODERATION

3.1 MODERATION PROCESS

- 3.1.1 Moderation is a process separate from the marking of individual assessments, where a marked sample is reviewed, to ensure that the marking of assessments is fair, valid and reliable, and that assessment criteria have been appropriately applied. The moderation process should not require the remarking of assessments. The moderation process must ensure consistency of marking, correct use of the grade descriptors in the CGS, and should assess grade distribution. Moderation will take different forms, depending on the type of assessment, the level of the assessment and its credit value. Guidance on moderation is available in *Appendix A*.
- 3.1.2 The [UK Quality Code](#) stipulates that “Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.”² Moderation involves reviewing assessments and grades across a course to ensure consistency of marking and correct use of the grade descriptors in the [Common Grading Scale \(CGS\)](#).
- 3.1.3 The University normally requires **a sample of all assessments, which have not been double marked, to be moderated, where they contribute at least 30% towards the overall course grade. Moreover, a minimum of 50% of the course assessments should be moderated.** For example, in a course with a 40% essay, and three 20% practical assessments, there would be a requirement to moderate the essay and at least one of the three practical assessments.
- 3.1.4 Normally, a sample should contain at least 10% of the cohort or 10 assessments, whichever is the greater. The sample should consist of examples from the full range of CGS marks awarded, including examples from each individual marker (where applicable). In addition to the identified sample, all borderline fails (i.e. those assessments marked at CGS E1) should be moderated. Where multiple markers are involved, the sample moderated can be adapted to contain assessments graded by all markers to allow comparability to be reviewed.
- 3.1.5 Where assessments have a clearly defined correct answer and are purely quantitative, moderation as outlined above is not appropriate. In such instances, the Course Coordinator is responsible for the review of grade distribution to ensure accuracy and consistency of the grades awarded.

² Quality Assurance Agency, UK Quality Code: Section 2 (Assessment); [Assessment \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk)

- 3.1.6 Where a moderator is content following the review of the sample, marks should be confirmed. Where concerns are identified, they should be addressed according to section 3.2 below.

3.2 RESOLVING CONCERN IDENTIFIED IN MODERATION

- 3.2.1 If concerns are identified by the moderator, these should be discussed with the marker with consideration given to whether it appears to be an isolated concern or one which applies more widely. It may be appropriate for the moderator to sample more widely, to ascertain the extent of the concern. Once determined, if possible, an approach should be agreed with consideration given to whether any adjustments required should be applied to individual assessments (i.e. in assessments marked by a particular marker), or the entire cohort.
- 3.2.2 In instances where agreement cannot be reached, a discussion should take place with the marker, moderator, and the appropriate Head of School (or nominee) to agree a way forward and ensure marks can be confirmed. It may be appropriate for affected assessments to be remarked (by an additional marker) to inform this process. Where this relates to Transnational Education (TNE) provision, the additional marker must be a member of University staff. Exceptionally, the External Examiner may be asked to review the assessments if there is no additional internal marker with the appropriate expertise available.

4. RECORDING OF DECISIONS TAKEN

- 4.1 Decisions taken in regard to sections 2.3 and 3.2 above must be recorded showing the rationale and the agreed outcome. The record should include details of the markers grades, the final agreed grade and the rationale for that decision. Emails between markers can be used as the record where agreement has been reached in this way.

5. ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 5.1 External Examiners should have the opportunity to view samples of all assessed work. If the assessment cannot be easily viewed by the External Examiner the process and criteria by which the assessment has been graded should be made available to the External Examiner.
- 5.2 External Examiners should be asked to comment on the general standard of marking and assessment and may recommend an increase or decrease in *all* grades for a particular assessment. Any actual change to grades, however, needs the approval of the final Examiners' Meeting. External Examiners may not make isolated changes to any student's grades.
- 5.3 External Examiners are not normally expected to mark or re-mark assessments. Where double marking is required (*section 2.2 refers*) and the two markers cannot

agree on a final mark, the assessment should first be sent to a third, internal, marker rather than the External Examiner. The External Examiner should, however, have such disagreements brought to their attention.

A brief guide to moderating assessments

What is moderation?

Moderation of assessments is an independent process from marking and aims to review the overall performance of the assessment. It **does not** involve re-marking of individual assessments. Instead, it 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. It also serves to consider grade distribution across assessments, and to check addition of marks where appropriate.

Moderation takes different forms determined primarily by the type of assessment, and is most likely to be carried out by course coordinators. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) can be consulted (via Academic Services) for any advice or guidance on specific assessments and their marking or moderation.

What needs to be moderated?

From section 3 of the Marking and Moderation Procedures:

The University normally requires a sample of all assessments, which have not been double marked, to be moderated, where they contribute at least 30% towards the overall course grade. Moreover, a minimum of 50% of the course assessments should be moderated. For example, in a course with a 40% essay, and three 20% practical assessments, there would be a requirement to moderate the essay and at least one of the three practical assessments.

The Marking and Moderation Procedures outline the minimum requirements that Schools are expected to adhere to, however there may be instances where more stringent measures are implemented e.g. where a course or assessment has run for the first time. In such instances, Schools may choose to moderate more assessments, a larger sample or even double mark as appropriate. It is important these measures are clearly articulated to those involved in the process and the External Examiner.

A sample is defined as:

Normally, a sample should contain at least 10% of the cohort or 10 assessments, whichever is the greater. The sample should consist of examples from the full range of CGS marks awarded, including examples from each individual marker (where applicable). In addition to the identified sample, all borderline fails (i.e. those assessments marked at CGS E1) should be moderated. Where multiple markers are involved, the sample moderated can be adapted to contain assessments graded by all markers to allow comparability to be reviewed.

The moderation procedure

The approach for moderation depends on the type of assessment, and does not involve the re-marking of assessments. It might include moderators considering the questions listed below (if appropriate) within the context of the specific assessment being moderated. These are suggestions of the aspects that moderators may consider while reviewing the sample of assessments. This is not an exhaustive list, and specific assessments may require alternative questions.

- Is the distribution of marks across the overall assessment appropriate and consistent with what you would expect / have experienced?
- Where rubrics are used, have these been applied appropriately and consistently?
- Where marks are added up to a total, has this been done accurately?
- Was marking fair, consistent, and in accordance with Common Grading Scale?
- Where multiple markers have been involved in grading assessments, are the marks awarded consistent and fair between different markers?
- Did the marker(s) provide appropriate feedback?
- Did the feedback provide justification of the grades awarded?
- Did the feedback make meaningful suggestions for improvement of future work?

Recording of the moderation procedure

Schools are required to record a summary of the moderation process for their records. This is also valuable for the External Examiner to have access to. The precise method used to record the moderation process is likely to vary by School, and many Schools use a proforma to consistently record the process (examples of these are available through Academic Services if required). MyAberdeen is also used for recording moderation in some Schools. Information or support on using the VLE in this way can be accessed by contact the Centre for Academic Development (cad@abdn.ac.uk).