

Moderation Guidelines Summary Document

This is a process of ensuring consistency of standards and fairness across a range of assessments within a programme. It allows for assessors to discuss and reach agreement in a transparent, valid and consistent manner.

Moderation is concerned with providing fair assessments (quality assurance) and with adjusting outcomes of an assessment where necessary to ensure fairness in marking (quality control).

Moderation of marking is undertaken by reviewing a sample of students work. It is not regarded as double (second) marking; the moderator acts as reviewer of the standard and consistency of marking against explicit assessment criteria. The module leader should provide moderators with the assessment criteria used by the markers. *20% of the total number of hours required to mark assessments is the time allocated to moderation.*

The following points are key aspects of the moderation process

1. Review the Question asked (for undergraduate programmes, the examination papers are moderated, not individual questions).
2. Review the answer plan provided.
3. Ensure the person who awarded the grade is fair and consistent in their grading by reviewing scripts from all bands.
4. Ensure student's levels within bands are consistent and fair.
5. Consult with the person who awarded the grade if you feel a student needs to move out of

Sampling should concentrate on the boundaries of classification and should normally be between 10% and 25% of assessed work. The following range is recommended:

Group Size	Sample of Scripts
<50 students	25%
50-99 students	20%
100-200 students	15%
>200 students	10% +/-

Internal individual moderation

A sample of scripts from each marking band is selected and given to an identified moderator within the School. The following sampling is suggested:

- All provisional failed assignments/scripts
- A 10% random sample of all scripts within each marking band
- Any script for which the initial marker has concerns

Internal group moderation

All scripts are available within one room, on a specified date and time with a predetermined moderation team (should comprise all initial markers) available to review scripts in one sitting. Scripts are grouped according to bands awarded. The moderation group randomly selects a sample from each band for review. Specific cases can all be reviewed

Moderation

Moderation:

A process of ensuring consistency of standards and fairness across a range of assessments within a programme. It is a process that allows for assessors to discuss and reach agreement about assessment. In so doing, the process becomes transparent and the verification of assessment process, decisions and outcomes ensures that the assessments are valid and consistent.

Context:

The school is committed to a philosophy of education and learning which aims to facilitate students to become articulate, inquisitive practitioners capable of problem solving, analysis, reflection and self direction at a level appropriate to their development. It is our aim to sustain high standards and demonstrate consistency in the standard of our awards. We aim to achieve both rigour and fairness in the assessment of students against those standards. We aim to ensure that standards are met through the assessments set and that they remain appropriate. This is achieved through operating systems for continuing monitoring and moderation of assessment process and outcomes.

Rationale:

The process of moderation is to ensure fairness and consistency of marking across the programmes. Moderation is concerned with adjusting outcomes of an assessment to improve fairness (quality control) and is also concerned with arriving at a fair assessments (quality assurance).

A clearly articulated and consistently applied policy for moderation is necessary, in order to demonstrate that:

- Assessments are related to the specific aims and learning outcomes of programmes and modules;
- Assessed work is consistently marked within programmes and modules;
- Outcomes of assessments are clear, reliable and valid and are agreed by the course management team before the student undertakes the assessment
- Fairness and consistency is achieved for all students in their assessments
- Assessors have a mechanism which demonstrates consistency across the grading of their work
- Modular teams can provide evidence that they have accurately and fairly assessed relevant components of learning outcomes within a module

Moderation process

The school recognises that there are three distinct and interrelated phases within moderation. These are identified as the:

- a. Planning phase
- b. Grading Phase
- c. Systems phase

It is envisaged that the process of moderation at Planning phase and Systems phase will remain consistent across all programmes within the School. The moderation model used at the Grading phase within programmes may differ according to the assessment strategy and the needs of the module. The moderation used at Grading phase will be agreed at the course management group.

Operational Definitions:

There are currently a number of systems used within the school in an effort to ensure consistency and inter-marker reliability.

Double marking

A process where by two markers independently grade an assessment. Both markers record their marks and feedback separately. They then compare marks and resolve differences to produce and agree a mark. A process often referred to as 'Blind marking'.

Second Marking

A process where by a graded assignment is second marked by an independent assessor. The initial grading and feedback is made available to the second marker and the role of the marker is to offer a review of the initial mark. The second marker may agree or disagree with the initial grade. Both assessors will meet to discuss the process of assessment and to agree a mark.

Peer/team marking

A process where by an inexperienced marker may be linked with a more experienced marker in grading assignments. They may choose to use a blind (double marking) or a second marking approach. The emphasis is on developing, supporting and exploring the process of assessment. An agreed mark will be entered onto the student's record. This process will be open to full moderation as per the requirement of the programme.

Internal Individual moderation

A sample of scripts from each percentage band is selected from each marker within an assessment and given to an identified moderator from within the School. The following sampling is suggested:

- All provisional failed assignments/scripts

- A 10% random sample of all scripts within bands

- Any script for which the initial marker has concerns

Internal Group moderation

All scripts are available within one room, on a specified date and time, with a moderation team available to review scripts in one sitting.

Scripts are grouped according to bands awarded.

Moderation group randomly selects a sample from each group and reviews scripts. As the moderation group consists of all initial markers there is opportunity to discuss specific cases.

Distribution of grades across bands will be looked at.

Role of External examiner in moderation

External examiners role in moderation is to monitor the standards achieved and the effectiveness of the assessment process. A sample of scripts from each band will be sent to the external examiner for comment.

Moderation process:

Moderation of assessment spans three distinct stages and requires specific and clear guidance for each phase of the process. Moderation of assessment starts at the initial stage of planning of assessment (currently within course management teams) and progresses through to awarding of final marks and result. The three stages identified within the moderation process are:

1. Planning Phase: Moderation of assessment - planning, design and methods
2. Grading Phase: Moderation of assessment - marking and results
3. Systems Phase: Moderation of assessment - processes and outcomes

Planning Phase:

Moderation of assessment, planning and methods

The moderation process begins at the planning stage of the module. The setting of the assessment should include clear concise written statements and should occur before the teaching of the module commences: Information is required on:

- How the assessment relates to the intended learning outcomes of the programme/module;
- Clear assessment criteria which provides a clear indication of what is required and how marks will be allocated
- A clearly identified marking scheme to be applied.

Working within the teaching and assessment strategy, the course-coordinators in collaboration with the Directors of programmes will ensure that there is overall coherence within the different level of the programme and across programmes as a whole. This will be achieved through course management groups, as all assessments will be presented for comment before being presented to the student. Opportunity will also be provided for external examiners to comment throughout the process and provide advice to course-coordinators and course management teams on assessment issues that have arisen through the marking and moderating process.

All proposed assessment tasks will be reviewed by the module team and the course management group. The following mechanism will be checked;

- Alignment of assessment with learning outcomes
- Clarity of task description
- Criteria by which assessment will be made
- Available guidance/marketing plan
- Clear indication of level required (reference to marking criteria and HETAC)
- Time frame for assessment which identifies the following :
 - Clear submission date of students assessment
 - Turn-around date for initial markers
 - Clearly identified list of markers
 - Clear mechanism for moderation
 - Date for internal moderation of assessment

- Group moderation – academic staff identified, date set & room booked
- Individual moderation – system clearly identified, academic staff identified and dates agreed
- Date for submission to external examiner
- Date for publishing of results

Grading Phase:

Moderation of assessment marking and results

Whilst the school has an accepted working definition of moderation, it is the course management team who agree the specific moderation process to be employed within their programme- ie; group moderation or individual moderation. The moderation process employed must meet the requirements of the assessment used. Course management teams are responsible for planning appropriate moderation and for ensuring clarity on:

- Marking arrangements
- Forms of moderation
- Sample of scripts to be moderated- size, range and threshold cases
- Nature of sample to be sent to the external examiner.

Moderation of marking is undertaken by reviewing a sample of the student's work. It is generally not seen as double (second) marking. The moderator acts as reviewer of the standard and consistency of marking against explicit assessment criteria.

A sampling process is clearly identified for each programme which is based upon the number of students within the cohort. Sampling should concentrate on the boundaries of classification and should normally be between 10% and 25% of assessed work. A range such as;

Group Size	Sample of Scripts
< 50 students	25%%
50 – 99 students	20%
100 - 200	15%
> 200 students	10% +/-

Double or second marking should only be used in very specific cases. When there is a need for the students work to be marked independently and/or graded by more than one marker, this should be clearly identified and agreed by the course management team prior to the assessment been set.

Currently within our Postgraduate programmes, all dissertations are double marked (blind) and it is proposed that all Research Proposals at Masters level will also follow this process.

In cases where differences remain unresolved in the moderation, the following procedure will occur;

Individual moderation model:

1. Initial marker and moderator should review the assessment criteria and their interpretation of them. If a difference of understanding or interpretation is identified and resolved, then remarking can occur. Moderation should then be based upon newly agreed interpretations. Course-coordinator will be informed of the outcome.
2. In the exceptional case where no agreement can be reached the matter should be referred to the course-coordinator, who, with the course Director will examine the situation and determine a course of action, such as
 - a. Arrangement of a second moderator to review the scripts
 - b. Arrange to have scripts second marked
 - c. Moderate the assessment themselves and make recommendation to the board of examiners

Group moderation:

1. Initial marker and moderation group should review the assessment criteria and their interpretation of them. If a difference of understanding or interpretation is identified and resolved, moderation should occur, based upon agreed interpretations.
2. In the exceptional case where no agreement can be reached, the moderation group can make a decision as to the award of grade. Should the initial marker disagree with this decision they may refer the matter to the course-coordinator, who, with the course Director will examine the situation and determine a course of action, such as
 - a. Agree with the moderation group
 - b. Agree with the initial marker and arrange to have scripts second marked
 - c. Mark the assessment themselves and make recommendation to the board of examiners

If during moderation it becomes apparent that a particular marker was too lenient or too harsh in the allocation of marks, the moderation group may suggest that all of the identified markers scripts be reviewed and amended up or down as appropriate. This will be clearly recorded and the course-coordinator, and markers involved informed of decision taken.

A standardised feedback sheet will be used across programmes at Undergraduate level and at Postgraduate level. The student will only be allowed to see the final mark agreed after moderation. The grade awarded by the first marker, second marker and/or moderator are for internal records only and SHOULD NOT be distributed to the student. It is suggested that the moderator sign the feedback sheet when they have moderated that script. The current sheet containing a box labelled First Marker, Second Marker, Moderated mark and External mark, should be clearly identified on

the feedback sheet to be retained within the school. Dates of grade awarded and signature of first marker, second marker, moderator and external examiner should be identified.

The role of the external examiner for each programme should be clearly identified and agreed upon. The course management team will indicate in their moderation planning precisely how the external examiner is involved.

The nature of the involvement of the external examiner is a matter for negotiation between the Director, course-coordinator and the external examiner.

The external examiner may be asked for their feedback, if an agreed mark cannot be reached 'in-house'. However it is not the role of the external examiner to agree or impose a grade.

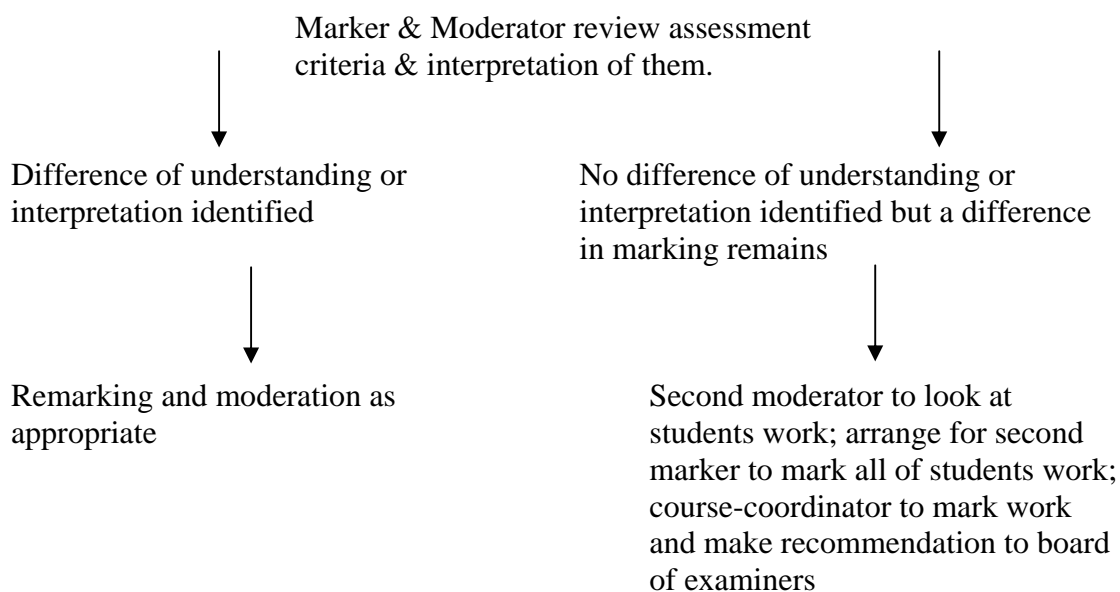
Systems Phase:

Moderation of assessment processes and outcomes

The school will ensure that there is a clear mechanism to ensure the validity of assessments and resolution of differences with moderation is in place. Due process will be followed as identified in the policy on moderation and assessment within the school. This policy will take cognizance of the student's right to appeal and will allow for this process to be followed in accordance with the schools policy and the college calendar.

Statistical analysis should be undertaken as part of the moderation process. The course-coordinator in conjunction with the module leaders and the executive officer will produce this data and submit it as an annual report to the course committee. Anomalies and trends will be identified and explored in light of evolving assessment strategies within the programme.

Appendix I



External examiner should NOT be used to reconcile differences between internal markers, but might be called on to advise internal markers on their resolution of differences.

The external examiners role in moderation is to monitor the standards achieved across a programme and across students. They also review and comment on the effectiveness of the assessment process. It is not necessarily the role or function of an external to re-mark work.