

MARKING AND MODERATION POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	Marking and Moderation Policy
Owner	SAS
Version Number	October 2019
Equality Analysis Decision and Date	No major change required. Submitted August 2019
Approval Date	October 2019
Approved By	Approved by Senate
Date of Commencement	Academic year 2019/20
Date of Last Review	N/A
Date for Next Review	Academic year 2024/25
Related University Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regulation D1 Assessment here ➤ University Assessment Principles here ➤ Generic Assessment Criteria here ➤ Generic Assessment Criteria Staff Guidance here
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	Moderation, Marking, Assessment, Scaling

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This policy should be read in conjunction with Regulation D1 Assessment. It sets out the University's approach to marking and moderation practices, as developed and overseen by the University's Education Committee. It is intended to inform staff and students as well as individuals from outside the University, such as external examiners and external reviewers.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and includes Foundation Year. Any exemptions from this policy have to be approved by the University Education Committee. Areas where local discretion is allowed or expected are identified clearly in the wording of this policy. In all other areas, marking and moderation should be carried out according to the principles and procedures set out below.

1.3 Glossary

Adjudication	A process whereby a third internal marker determines the final mark in cases when two markers cannot agree. The third marker takes into account all available evidence, including the marks awarded and comments made by the two markers.
Adjudicator	An internal colleague asked to make a final decision in a marking dispute.
(Assessment) Component	An assessment (which may consist of several parts) which is listed in the module descriptor separately as a single assessment item and recorded on SCIMS with a single mark, for example an exam consisting of several questions or a portfolio with several elements may count as one component
Cross-Marking	An exercise where a group of markers at programme or School level mark a sample piece of work to compare marking approaches and test the consistency in the application of assessment criteria. Cross marking can be an effective tool for ensuring that groups of markers develop a shared marking culture and apply assessment criteria consistently. Cross-marking exercises do not replace scheduled moderation of assessed work.
Double Blind Marking	Each marker marks the piece of work independently, formulating their own judgement, and neither has sight of the other's assessment decision or comments when determining their own mark. The final mark is then agreed jointly by the markers.
Generic Assessment Criteria	The set of marking criteria approved by the Senate for undergraduate and for postgraduate work that measure students' learning in terms of the

	knowledge acquired, understanding developed and skills gained in relation to the module or component's stated learning outcomes and locate them on a scheme of marks. The University's schemes both use a banded 'step marking' approach.
Moderation ¹	The independent scrutiny by a moderator of a sample of marks and feedback given for an assessment component by the first marker to verify that the marks and feedback are appropriate for the level of study, awarded fairly and consistently, and in line with the relevant assessment criteria. Sometimes also referred to as Internal Moderation.
Remarking	A further round of marking of previously marked work by different markers. Normally, the new markers will carry out this task 'blind', meaning they will not have sight of any previously proposed marks or feedback. Remarking will normally only be offered if there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the initial marking process.
Scaling	The systematic adjustment of a set of marks for an assessment task in order to ensure that they more accurately reflect the achievements of the students concerned against the generic or School assessment criteria.
School Based Assessment Criteria	Bespoke assessment criteria developed at School or Programme level for particular disciplines or types of assessment. Such criteria will always be developed with reference to the University's Generic Assessment Criteria and be made available to students at the start of the programme/module.
Second Marking	A second marker fully marks a piece of work previously marked by the first marker, with or without adding further feedback. For this, the second marker can see the mark awarded and the comments/feedback from the first marker. The final mark is then agreed jointly by the two markers. Second marking is sometimes also referred to as 'Double Marking'.

2. POLICY

2.1 The Three Key Principles to be applied to Marking

1. Marking at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level must be based on the University's [Assessment Principles](#) and the [Generic Assessment](#)

¹ In the context of collaborative provision, the term moderation may also be used to describe Keele's approach to verifying the academic standards of the delivery partner.

[Criteria](#), and use the stepped marking bands or pass/fail marks as approved in the relevant module specification.

2. Schools can determine how the University's Generic Assessment Criteria are to be adopted and/or tailored to suit the needs of the discipline or the particular type of assessment. For each assessment, it must be made clear to students and external examiners which assessment criteria are used in the marking process.
3. All work submitted for summative assessment must be anonymously marked unless it falls into one of the exempt categories (see below) or has been exempted from anonymous marking by the Faculty Education Committee.

2.2 Marking Processes

2.2.1 Step Marking: The University has a set of [Generic Assessment Criteria](#) for undergraduate and postgraduate levels which should inform all judgement of student performance in particular assessment. Schools will determine how the University's generic criteria are to be adopted and/or tailored to suit the needs of the discipline or the particular type of assessment. With its Generic Criteria, the University has adopted a step-marking approach. This approach applies to the component level. Where a module mark is based on more than one assessment component, the module mark will be made up of the weighted average of the component marks and does therefore not need to adhere to the step marking scale.

2.2.2 Rounding of Marks: SCIMS will round all marks automatically to the nearest integer, with marks of 0.5 or above rounded up.

2.2.3 Anonymous Marking: In accordance with [Regulation D1](#), all work submitted for summative assessment has to be anonymously marked unless it has been exempted from anonymous marking by the Faculty Education Committee or falls into one of the exempt categories set out in the regulation:

- Observed assessments such as presentations (individual and group), OSCEs-style assessments or role plays;
- Reports/projects associated with observed assessments, for example where the examiner is assessing the presentation as well as the report/project;
- Laboratory work;
- Practicals;
- Fieldwork;
- Oral (e.g. language) assessments and vivas;
- Placements and placement reports;
- Portfolios of personal work submitted as evidence of attainment which would be difficult to anonymise without a great deal of effort;
- When the summative assessment builds on earlier formative assessment, and where the examiner assesses the effectiveness of the student's response to feedback received on the formative assessment.
- Dissertations and theses.

2.2.4 Where marking is not carried out anonymously, for example in the case of dissertations or practical skills assessments, there must be appropriate

independence in the consideration of students' academic performance. A conflict of interest will include, but is not limited to, a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship. Where a conflict of interest exists, the person must not act as an examiner or moderator for the work. Any member of teaching staff who considers that there might be a conflict of interest with one or more of the students being assessed must raise this matter with the programme lead at the earliest opportunity and in advance of any assessment being undertaken.

- 2.2.5 When marking an assessed performance such as a presentation, consideration should be given to having a second marker present or to allow moderation of the proposed mark to take place via a recording or another medium. Where moderation takes place via a recording or another medium, normal sampling guidelines apply.

2.3 The Key Principles to be applied to Moderation

Moderation is an important means to assure students, examination boards and other interested parties that the standards expected of and achieved by our students are appropriate, reliable and consistent. Moderation will also help to share good practice among colleagues and can be used as a basis for staff training and development.

- (a) Moderation of marks must take place at every taught level of study, from Levels 3-7.
- (b) The sample size for moderation should normally be 20% of the cohort but no more than 30 scripts/pieces of coursework per assessment component (see also para.2.4.4). This should normally include at least two scripts from each category and all fail marks.
- (c) To ensure fairness, there must be no adjustment of individual marks within the sample as a result of moderation by internal markers or the external examiner (see also para.2.4.6).
- (d) Moderation should be shared across the members of the teaching team. It is recognised that moderation is a powerful learning opportunity and therefore less experienced colleagues should be involved in moderation as part of a larger moderating team.
- (e) Any type of second or double blind marking should be reserved for high stakes work where the assessed component is worth the equivalent of 15 credits or more. Schools can decide whether they wish to utilise second or double blind marking for such high stakes work. Second or double blind marking of smaller assessment components is not normally necessary.

2.4 Moderation Processes

- 2.4.1 It is the responsibility of the relevant exams tutor or equivalent to ensure that each module has appropriate moderation arrangements in place.
- 2.4.2 Moderation is carried out at the assessment component level and is applied to examinations and coursework.
- 2.4.3 All assessment components contributing at least 25% to the final module mark should be moderated. This ensures that overall more than half of the assessment components making up the module mark have been subject to moderation. Where an assessment component contributes more than 25% to the module mark but consists of a portfolio of smaller assessments, then a minimum of two

separate items within that portfolio of assessments should be individually moderated.

- 2.4.4 The sample provided to the moderator should be typically 20% of the cohort size, up to a maximum of 30 pieces. The sample should include examples of marks in the top, middle and bottom range of the marking scale. Normally, all fail marks should also be moderated to confirm that the assessments which received marks in the F category have been marked appropriately and fairly.
- 2.4.5 In addition to reviewing the marks awarded, the moderator may also look at the written feedback and its fit with the mark proposed by the first marker.
- 2.4.6 There should be no adjustment of individual marks in the sample as a result of moderation. After the moderator has concluded their review of the sample, they will either:
 - (a) Confirm the appropriateness of the marks (and feedback) provided by the first marker;
 - (b) Discuss a concern regarding some or all of the marking in the sample with the first marker with a view to remarking a broader sample/the whole cohort. It may be possible to identify a particular range of marks to be looked at again but care should be taken not to distort the overall mark profile by doing so. It is usually more appropriate to consider the whole cohort;
 - (c) Agree with the first marker to refer the sample to an adjudicator for review. The marks given by the adjudicator are final.
- 2.4.7 Where the moderation process shows significant differences between the marker and the moderator in terms of the marking overall or of some scripts or where there is a consistent pattern of disagreement, then consideration should be given to remarking the whole cohort.
- 2.4.8 Disagreements between marker and moderator can be escalated to an adjudicator. The adjudicator should always be an appropriate member of staff, such as the School's exams officer, programme lead or Director of Education. The external examiner may also be consulted regarding the best approach to adopt to reconcile differences between markers, for example to confirm whether a proposed scaling exercise is appropriate.
- 2.4.9 Instances where moderation has led to remarking all or part of a cohort or required adjudication should be treated as a learning opportunity by the School and should be reported to and reflected upon at the next meeting of the examination board.
- 2.4.10 There must be a record kept showing how the moderation process operated and the rationale of decisions in relation to marks and grades. For example, some Schools use moderation forms or Googledocs spreadsheets to maintain their moderation record (see Appendix 1). The School is responsible for ensuring the appropriate arrangements are in place to record the moderation process.

2.5 Scaling of Marks

- 2.5.1 Scaling can be considered if the proposed marks fail to reflect student performance adequately and/or if there has been a procedural irregularity in the assessment/markings process which cannot be compensated for in other ways.
- 2.5.2 Scaling is normally proposed by the Programme Lead and requires the permission of the School Director of Education who will have assured themselves that there are valid reasons to consider the scaling of marks. Wherever possible,

the external examiner should be consulted to agree the approach to scaling and the allowance which is proposed. The Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct may also be consulted for regulatory advice.

- 2.5.3 Where scaling is used, it would be applied at the level of the assessment component and would cover the entire cohort or a specific subset of that cohort², never applied only to an individual student.
- 2.5.4 The need for scaling will typically arise where the examiners/markers have identified either:
- (a) an issue with the marking itself. This may be as a result of the moderation or adjudication process. An example would be harsh marking on the 2.1/1st borderline by the first marker, or significant differences in the marking of the same question by different markers; or
 - (b) an issue with the assessment process. An example would be where the School becomes aware, possibly before marking has even taken place, of circumstances which have impacted the way the cohort or part of the cohort was able to complete the assessment, such as a disruption at the examination venue or a misprint in the question paper.
- 2.5.5 There can be different approaches to how, arithmetically, marks are scaled³ but - wherever possible - scaling should take place before provisional marks are returned to students so that the provisional marks which students receive are already scaled.
- 2.5.6 Although it is desirable to discuss the need to scale marks with the External Examiner before the Board of Examiners meeting and to undertake scaling before provisional marks are released to students, it may in exceptional circumstances be necessary to scale marks after provisional marks were released or even after the examination board meeting. In these instances, students should be appropriately informed as soon as possible of the reasons for and the manner in which their marks were changed.
- 2.5.7 Boards of Examiners will make sure they identify and investigate any unusual patterns of distribution of marks (for example, a particularly low pass rate in a module) before any final decisions about module marks are taken. Where unusual patterns of distribution of marks are identified and the cause is identified as a procedural irregularity of some kind, mark scaling may be applied if appropriate. However scaling should not be used simply to raise the module average or to increase the pass rate.
- 2.5.8 All provisional scaling decisions will be reviewed at the examination board in the presence of the external examiner before marks can be confirmed. A report must be provided to the examination board on the circumstances which led to the decision to scale the marks.
- 2.5.9 If there is no agreement in the School regarding the proposed scaling of provisional marks, the decision rests with the Chair of the examination board.
- 2.5.10 All instances of scaling should be noted in the minutes of the relevant discipline/ programme examination board, including the justification for the scaling process. It is important to record in the examination board minutes how the final decision was reached and for what reason so that an audit trail exists of the decision for

² e.g. where only some students in the cohort attempted a particular exam question which turned out to contain a misprint

³ For technical advice on how to scale marks, see the [Technical Note on Scaling](#) (under development by KIITE)

future reference, audit purposes and in case of appeal. The minutes should also detail the original mark(s) and the method of scaling adopted.

3. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Regulation D1 Assessment [here](#)
- University Assessment Principles [here](#)
- Generic Assessment Criteria [here](#)
- Generic Assessment Criteria Staff Guidance [here](#)

4. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

This policy will be kept under regular review by the University Education Committee to ensure that the University has oversight over the academic standards of its awards and remains responsive to the development of sector good practice and student expectations. The policy will be reviewed in full on a quinquennial basis in line with the University Policy Framework.

Appendix 1: Exemplar Moderation Record



[Module Title and Code] - Moderation/Second Marking Record

*Notes: For modules with two or more assessment components please moderate. For modules with one component please second mark. The sample is to be 20% and to include a range of marks and samples from each marker. Either process should **not** exceed 30 pieces of work. Please then complete the text box section below. /*

First Marker: [insert name]

Moderator/Second Marker: [insert name]

Student Number	First Marker Proposed Mark	Moderated Agreed Mark (first marker and moderator)	Agreed Mark (first and second marker)	Adjudicator Mark (if required)	Comments	Date
1234567	42	42	n/a			

<p>Moderator comments on the sample Please make brief comments on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student performance • Parity of marking • Application of marking criteria - allocation of marks • Quality of feedback • Use of technology/equipment/resources • Adherence to examination procedures
<p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p>

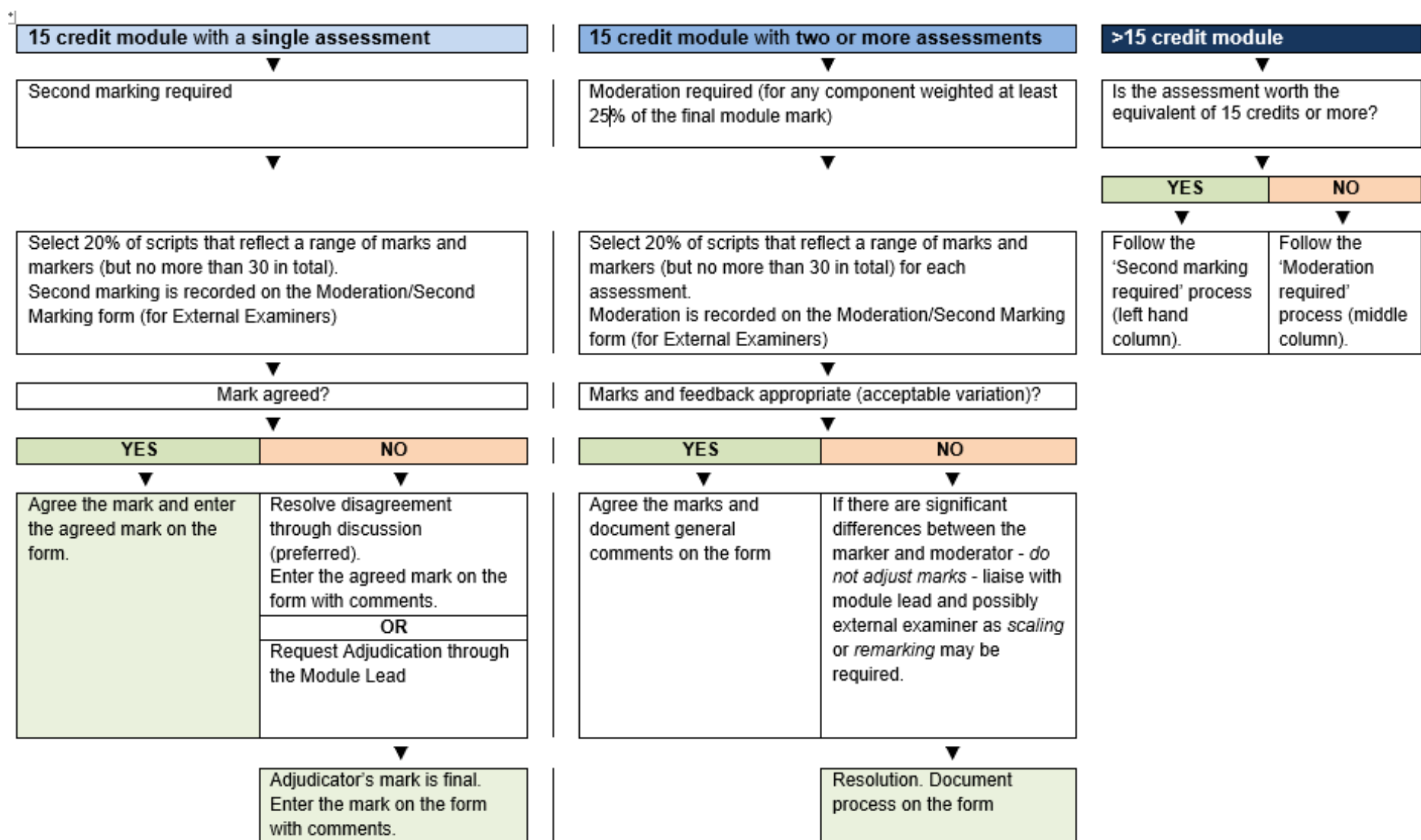
Appendix 2: Moderation Terminology

	First Marking	Internal Moderation	Second Marking (also called Double Marking)	Double Blind Marking	Adjudication	Remarking
Script marked anonymously? ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sees the mark awarded and the comments/feedback from the first marker?	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Detailed marking of the assessed piece of work with comments	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Generates feedback for the student	Yes	No	optional	Yes	No	Yes
Contribution to Provisional Mark ⁵ ?	Proposes provisional mark	Confirms/questions the provisional mark proposed by the first marker	Confirms/ questions the provisional mark proposed by the first marker	Proposes a provisional mark and then confers with first marker to agree a mark	Sets a provisional mark	Sets a provisional mark
Usage	Always	Always (unless second or double blind marking are required)	Should be reserved for high stakes assessment components worth equiv. of 15 credits)	Should be reserved for high stakes assessment components worth equiv. of 15 credits)	Rare	Rare

⁴Apart from the exemptions set out in Regulation D1

⁵ all marks proposed as part of the marking/moderation process remain provisional until confirmed by the examination board

Appendix 3: Exemplar marking and moderation process



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