

MARKING AND MODERATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This policy should be read in conjunction with Regulation D1 Assessment and the [Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice](#). 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 and Keele University International College (KUIC). 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 the student records system (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 and should be conducted prior to marking and moderation.
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.
High Stakes Assessment	Where a single item of assessment is equivalent to 30-credits or more or a student's degree. Examples of high stakes assessments include dissertations and research projects (or equivalent).
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 or module in order to ensure that they more accurately reflect the achievements of the students concerned against the generic or School assessment criteria. Scaling can only be considered if the proposed marks fail to reflect student performance

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.

	adequately due to either (1) an issue that arose in the conduct of assessment that was outside of the immediate control of the module team and/or, (2) if there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of assessment/markings process which cannot be compensated for in other ways. Scaling can result in marks being raised or lowered.
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, be approved by School Education Committee, 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'. Second marking should be reserved for high-stakes assessment and must apply to all submissions within a specific cohort (i.e., it is not based on a sample of submissions).

2. POLICY

2.1 The Four Key Principles to be applied to Marking

1. Marking at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level must be based on the University's [Generic Assessment Criteria](#), and use the stepped marking bands or pass/fail marks as approved in the relevant module specification.
2. In circumstances where the University's Generic Assessment Criteria are adopted and/or tailored to suit the needs of the discipline or the particular type of assessment, the School's Education Committee must approve the revised assessment criteria prior to publication to students. Any deviation from the Generic Assessment Criteria must still make use of the stepped marking approach. 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.
4. All marks are considered provisional until agreed at the relevant module examination board. This should be made clear to students when marks and feedback are released in line with the University's [Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice](#).

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. With its Generic Criteria, the University has adopted a step-marking approach. This approach should be applied at 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. For some types of assessment, application of the step marking scale is not appropriate because the mark awarded is based on a series of correct or incorrect answers, with marks awarded accordingly. Examples of assessment types where the 24-step mark scale should not be used include: class tests, KLE quizzes, tests with a series of short answer questions, numerical/mathematical tests.
- 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: where possible, the work should be submitted anonymously to enable the second marker to mark the work anonymously
- 2.2.4 Where marking is not carried out anonymously, for example in the case of presentations or practical skills assessments, there must be appropriate independence in the consideration of students' academic performance (see also 2.2.7).
- 2.2.5 Where a conflict of interest exists, the person must not act as an examiner or moderator for the work. A conflict of interest will include, but is not limited to, a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship. 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 Director at the earliest opportunity and in advance of any assessment being undertaken.
- 2.2.6 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.

- 2.2.7 Dissertations and Research Projects (or equivalent assessment): It is normally expected that such assessments are first marked by supervisors/advisors and second marked or double-blind marked by an independent marker who has not been directly involved in the student's project. It is at the School's discretion whether dissertations/research projects are second marked or double-blind marked.
- 2.2.8 Where an assessment is marked by a team of markers, a cross-marking exercise should be conducted prior to marking and moderation (see 1.3). Cross marking is not required where different questions within a single assessment are marked by different markers but in these circumstances, the same moderator should review a sample from all markers.

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) 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 unless an error is detected in the calculation of marks (e.g., an arithmetic error, or a mismarked question in a short answer test). (see also 2.4.8).
- (c) 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.
- (d) Any type of second- or double-blind marking should be reserved for high stakes work where the assessed component is worth the equivalent of 30-credits or more (i.e., in circumstances where a 30-credit module is assessed by a single assessment component). Schools can decide whether they wish to utilise second- or double-blind marking for such high stakes work.

2.4 Moderation Processes

- 2.4.1 It is the responsibility of the relevant Assessment Officer to ensure that each module has appropriate moderation arrangements in place.
- 2.4.2 Moderation is carried out at the assessment component level.
- 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 size for moderation should normally be 20% of the whole cohort but no more than 30 scripts/pieces of coursework per assessment component. This should normally include at least two scripts from each descriptor category as aligned with the University's Generic Marking Criteria (i.e., at least two scripts from each of the Pass,

Reasonable, Good/ Very Good, Excellent, Outstanding, Exceptional categories, as appropriate). In addition to the above, all fail marks falling within the University's condonement range (35% – 39% for modules at Levels 4-6 and 45% - 49% for modules at Level 7), plus at least two other scripts falling within the Fail descriptor category, but below condonement range should also be moderated. There is no requirement to moderate all marks in the Fail category below the condonement thresholds.

- 2.4.5 Where an assessment is marked by a team of markers, moderation should ensure it captures the breadth of the marking team (i.e., marks and feedback from all markers should be included in the moderation sample).
- 2.4.6 In addition to reviewing the marks awarded, the moderator should also look at the written feedback to ensure that the comments justify the mark awarded by the first marker, align with the wording of the University's Generic Marking Criteria, and are of a length/volume appropriate to the nature of the assessment.
- 2.4.7 Where the mark for a single assessment component is based on the average mark of multiple smaller pieces of work, the moderator should reassure themselves that the final marks have been calculated correctly.
- 2.4.8 There should be no adjustment of individual marks in the sample as a result of moderation, unless an arithmetic error is detected in the calculation of marks (e.g., where a mark for an assessment component is based on the average mark of multiple smaller pieces of work and an error is detected in calculation of these marks), or a mismarked question in a short answer test. In circumstances where an arithmetic error or mismarked question is detected, all marks should be checked for accuracy by the moderator. 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 and complete a moderator's record (see Annex 1 for example template);
 - (b) Discuss a concern regarding some or all of the marking and/or feedback in the sample with the first marker with a view to remarking a broader sample/the whole cohort and/or revising written feedback comments. 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) Where there is a consistent pattern of disagreement between the marker and moderator, all scripts should be referred to an adjudicator for review. The marks given by the adjudicator are final.
- 2.4.9 The adjudicator should always be an appropriate member of staff, such as the School's Assessment Officer, Programme Director or Director of Education. The external examiner may also be consulted regarding the best approach to adopt to reconcile differences between markers.
- 2.4.10 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.
- 2.4.11 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 shared documents to maintain their moderation record (see Annex 1). The Assessment Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to record the moderation process in consultation with the relevant School Operations Team.

2.5 Scaling of Marks

- 2.5.1 Scaling can only be considered if the proposed marks fail to reflect student performance adequately due to either (1) an issue that arose in the conduct of assessment that was outside of the immediate control of the module team and/or, (2) if there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of assessment/markings process which cannot be compensated for in other ways (i.e., by remarking, see 2.4.7).
- 2.5.2 Scaling is normally proposed by the Programme Director in discussion with the School Director of Education and Chair of the relevant module examination board and requires the permission of the Faculty Dean of Education, who will have assured themselves that there are valid reasons to consider the scaling of marks. Where possible, the Chair of the examination board should seek permission from the Faculty Dean of Education in advance of the examination board and the proposal to scale marks, including the agreed approach to scaling, should then be discussed and ratified at the board meeting. Wherever possible, the external examiner should be consulted to agree the approach to scaling and the allowance which is proposed prior to the relevant module examination board.
- 2.5.3 Where scaling is used, it can be applied at either the level of the individual assessment component or the overall module, but not both (i.e., if the marks for an individual assessment have already been scaled then the overall module marks cannot also be scaled) and should cover the entire cohort or a specific subset of that cohort², never applied only to an individual student. Scaling can result in marks being raised or lowered. Zero marks due to non-submission of work and capped marks due to late submissions should not normally be scaled.
- 2.5.4 There can be different approaches to how, arithmetically, marks are scaled but the approach to scaling should be agreed with the Faculty Dean of Education and, wherever possible, the External Examiner prior to the relevant module examination board.
- 2.5.5 All instances of scaling should be noted in the minutes of the relevant module 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 future reference, audit purposes and in case of appeal. The minutes should also detail the original mark(s) and the method of scaling adopted.
- 2.5.6 Students should be informed that their marks have been scaled after the University has released module marks to students. The communication to students should come from the School's Director of Education and Programme Director, copied to the Faculty Dean of Education, and should explain what adjustment has been made to marks as well as the rationale behind the decision to scale. Students should be provided with a School-based contact, normally the Programme Director, in case they have questions or queries.
- 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 or high 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 Any instances of scaling should be reviewed as part of the Annual Module Review and Annual Programme Review (APR) process. Where scaling was implemented due to issues

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

with one or more assessment components, clear actions should be put in place to ensure that the situation is resolved for future cohorts. This may include making changes to assessments as part of the module revision process.

3. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Regulation D1 Assessment [here](#)
- Keele Learning Principles [here](#)
- Generic Assessment Criteria and Staff Guidance [here](#)
- Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice [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.

5. ANNEXES

- Annex A – Moderation Record Template
- Annex B – Moderation Terminology
- Annex C – Exemplar Marking and Moderation Process

6. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	Marking and Moderation Policy
Owner	Academic Registrar
Version Number & Key Amendment	2
Equality Impact Assessment Form Submission Date	May 2025
Approval Date	25 June 2025
Approved By	Senate
Date of Commencement	01 September 2024
Date of Last Review	25 June 2025
Date for Next Review	25 June 2028
Related University Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regulation D1 Assessment here ➤ Keele Learning Principles here ➤ Generic Assessment Criteria and Staff Guidance here and here ➤ Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice here

Annex A: Moderation Record Template

Moderation Record

Notes: The sample size for moderation should normally be 20% of the whole cohort but no more than 30 scripts/pieces of coursework per assessment component. This should normally include at least two scripts from each descriptor category as aligned with the University's Generic Marking Criteria (i.e., at least two scripts from each of the Pass, Reasonable, Good/ Very Good, Excellent, Outstanding, Exceptional categories, as appropriate). In addition to the above, all fail marks falling within the University's condonement range (35% – 39% for modules at Levels 4-6 and 45% - 49% for modules at Level 7), plus at least two other scripts falling within the Fail descriptor category, but below condonement range should also be moderated. There is no requirement to moderate all marks in the Fail category below the condonement thresholds.

Module Name:

Module Code:

First Marker:

Moderator:

Date:

Student Number	First Marker Proposed Mark	Agreed Mark	Adjudicator Mark (if required)	Comments
1234567	85	85		

Moderator Comments on sample:

Please make brief comments on (e.g.,) overall student performance, application of University's Generic Marking criteria, quality of feedback and alignment of feedback comments with the University's Generic Marking Criteria.*

**Is the feedback provided specific and actionable? Does it provide clear guidance on how to improve? Does it focus on the work and not on the student? Does it focus on helping students to reflect on their own learning? Is the feedback considerate of students' emotional responses (i.e., appropriate tone and use of language)?*

Annex 2: Moderation Terminology

	First Marking	Internal Moderation	Second Marking	Double Blind Marking	Adjudication	Remarking
Script marked anonymously? ³	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 ⁴ ?	Proposes provisional mark	Confirms 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 30 credits)	Should be reserved for high stakes assessment components worth equiv. of 30 credits)	Rare	Rare

³Apart from the exemptions set out in Regulation D1

⁴ all marks proposed as part of the marking/moderation process remain provisional until confirmed by the examination board

Annex 3: Exemplar marking and moderation process

