

Procedures for the Verification, Marking and Moderation of Assessments



The verification, marking and moderation procedures are defined below.

They have been produced following consideration of the Quality Assurance Agency's [UK Quality Code: Chapter B6 Assessment of Students](#) and accreditation of prior learning.

These procedures have been formulated with reference to the relevant Indicators which states that:

- *As bodies responsible for the academic standards of awards made in their name, institutions have effective procedures for:*
 - i designing, approving, monitoring and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards;*
 - ii implementing rigorous assessment policies and practices that ensure the standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is properly judged against this*
(Indicator 1)
- *Institutions publicise and implement principles and procedures for, and processes of, assessment that are explicit, valid and reliable.*
(Indicator 3)
- *Institutions have transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and for moderating marks.**(Indicator 7)*

The procedures outlined in this document will meet the expectation of the UK Quality Code and is intended for use in taught programmes at undergraduate level (FHEQ levels 3-6 inclusive) and postgraduate level (FHEQ level 7).. External moderation also plays a key role in this process and the role of the external examiner is outlined in [the MMU Institutional Code of Practice for External Examiners](#).

Institutional Requirements

All summative assignment tasks must be verified, marked and moderated according to the procedures outlined in this document. Programme teams should record their procedures for verification, marking and moderation at the beginning of the academic session.

Verification of assignment briefs

Assignment briefs should be verified before being given to students. The verification of briefs should consider the consistency of the assignment task in relation to other units at the same level in the same discipline, check that the learning outcomes will be fully addressed by the task and that the marking criteria conform to those in the programme specification, and that the feedback strategy fits with programme and MMU policy (see Procedures for Feedback on Assessed Work).

Who should do it? Internal verification should be carried out by a member of staff who does not directly contribute to that particular assessment. For small programmes, the programme leader might carry out this role, and for larger programmes a small team might be more appropriate; in the latter case, a verification meeting is strongly recommended to ensure consistency. A record of the verification must be kept.

External verification should be carried out by the subject external examiner. The examiner should look at a sample of assignment briefs which is sufficient to confirm the currency, appropriateness and standards shown by the brief. External examiners should agree the nature and size of the sample in discussion with the programme leader.

Marking

First Marking

First Marking involves judging submitted assignments against the criteria in the assignment brief (see procedures for [Assessment Grading, Criteria and Marking](#)). It should include the provision of feedback according to the feedback procedures for the programme (see procedures for Feedback on Assessed Work).

The marking of examination scripts is routinely anonymised. Wherever possible, teams should mark coursework anonymously. See [the guidance on this issue](#) on the CELT website.

Second Marking

Second marking is **required** for assignment tasks which exceed 30 credits in value, and **recommended** for others – see the list of specific examples provided as Appendix 1.

Second marking can take three forms:

- 1) **Independent marking:** when the second marker marks the assignment exactly as it was submitted, with no comments appended by the first marker and no access to the marking and feedback comments provided by the first marker. This form of second marking is always used for assignments at Level 6 and Level 7 of more than 30 credits in value but is recommended also on a sampling basis:
 - a. when a type of assignment task which is new to the programme team is introduced
 - b. as part of the induction and support of new team members.
- 2) **Team marking:** when two or more markers work together in making judgements about and providing feedback on submitted work. This is particularly suitable for ephemeral assessments e.g. presentations, but markers should come to independent judgements before discussion wherever possible. (see Appendix 1)
- 3) **Seen marking:** when the second marker marks the assignment with access to the marks and feedback provided by the first marker. This form of second marking is rarely appropriate and may sometimes be confused with moderation

Whenever a team is marking the same assignment, second marking of a small sample at an early stage in marking is strongly recommended to ensure consistency.

Second marking of a selection of submissions which are on the borderline between two grades might also be considered for open-ended assignment tasks which have the potential to have an impact on final grades.

The programme team should determine its procedure for second marking for each assignment task at the beginning of the academic session, and record this in the programme log.

Third Marking

Third marking may be necessary when second marking has resulted in a significant difference between marks awarded by the two markers and the markers are unable to agree a final mark. It is usually best for this to be done independently (ie without access to the marks and feedback provided by the first and second markers). It may be necessary to consult with external examiners at this point but external examiners should not be expected to act as second or third markers: their role is to moderate the processes.

Who should do it? First, second and third marking should be carried out by designated members of the unit team and qualified colleagues, as determined by the programme leader.

Moderation

Internal Moderation of marking

Internal moderation involves the review of a sample of marks and comments on assignment tasks to ensure that **marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied** during first marking.

Internal moderation should be carried out by colleagues from the discipline, but not from the unit team. It should not be necessary for them to be experts in the topic being assessed, although they should be familiar with the content. Moderation can begin before all of the work for a cohort has been assessed, provided that a reasonable sample is available which represents a range of marks and, if appropriate, markers.

The moderator **must** review marks of a sample of work across all grade bands. The size and choice of the sample will be determined at the beginning of the academic session and will depend on the type of assignment task and the nature of the material being assessed. Closely structured or factual material may require only a small sample, while essays and open-ended analytical work should be sampled more frequently.

In situations when there is a large marking team, the moderator should review a sample from each marker to support team development and to check consistency. It is strongly recommended that a wider sample is also taken when there is a novice marker, and feedback on their assessment forms part of their induction and professional development programme.

The moderator may make a recommendation regarding second marking in relation to the whole cohort if they feel that assessment criteria have not been fairly, accurately and consistently applied. **It is not appropriate for the moderator to recommend changes to individual marks** as they may not have the relevant subject expertise and they have not seen work by the whole cohort. If the moderator does identify a concern this should be raised with the unit leader, who is in a position to review marks across the cohort. If agreement cannot be reached through normal academic discussion, then the matter may need to be resolved at the Board of Examiners' meeting.

The moderator must record their observations.

The programme team should determine their moderation procedures at the beginning of the academic session and record this in the programme log.

External Moderation

External moderation requires the review of a sample of marked submitted work by the appointed external examiner for the programme or subject. This is normally a complete set of work for each of an agreed selection of students from a given cohort. Usually, the selection of students should provide the external examiner with a sample from across the marks range. External examiners should agree the nature and size of the sample in discussion with the programme leader.

External examiners should not be involved in the determination of marks for individual students. The purpose of this external moderation is to provide the programme team with an external, independent overview of their marking processes and the fairness and effectiveness of these processes.

What does a unit leader need to do?

- Ensure that each of their assignment tasks is verified before communication to students
- Ensure that those responsible for marking and moderation for the assignment tasks know the timings and sizes of the work which they need to review
- Ensure that marking and moderation is completed for each assignment task according to the programme procedure

What does a programme leader need to do?

- Produce and record verification, marking and moderation procedures at the beginning of the academic session.
- Check that moderation can be completed within the four week turn-round for the return of assessed work to students and resolve any discrepancies with the programme team and the head of department.
- Check that verification and moderation have been carried out during the year. according to the procedure for the programme.
- Review verification, marking and moderation procedures at the end of the academic session, following boards of assessment meetings.

Appendix 1– specific examples of practice.

Any assignment task with a value which exceeds 30 credits

Work such as projects or dissertations with a value which exceeds 30 credits should be independently second marked.

Computer-based marking

An independent test should be carried out to check that computer-based marking is correctly set up. A record of the test should be made on an internal moderation form and sent to the Programmes Office. Computer-based marking of summative work should only be used on an institutionally supported system (currently Moodle).

Ephemeral assignment tasks

Ephemeral assignment tasks are those for which no permanent record of student performance is likely to be practicably kept, such as presentations, performances, practical examinations, laboratory work, debates, moots, practice observations, or oral examinations. The best recommended practice is that all ephemeral tasks are simultaneously marked by two assessors operating as independent second markers, who then confer to agree a mark immediately following the assignment. If it is possible and ethical to capture a selection of the tasks using video, then this is recommended in order to allow external examiners to review the process. In other circumstances, external examiners may be invited to attend a sample of ephemeral tasks assessments in order to observe the marking process.

Examination scripts

Examination scripts are not routinely shared with students, and the marker does not need to write detailed feedback on the scripts except insofar as it may help with showing how marking decisions were made. It is good practice to initial each page to indicate that it has been marked, and to initial the final mark box to indicate that it has been checked.