

Guidance on Moderation, Fairness and Consistency in Marking

1. Introduction/Scope

- 1.1 There are various models of achieving fairness and consistency in marking and assessment in taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with some being more rigorous than others, and more suited to specific types of assessment than others. This document aims to outline the details of some of these models, specifically moderation, in order to provide guidance to staff members in their marking and moderation procedures.
- 1.2 This document sets out the *minimum level of moderation activity* in the assessment process that must be undertaken for taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level¹ at The University of Manchester. Any variations in practice should be approved by the relevant Faculty. The document has been produced following consideration of relevant University of Manchester policies and guidance and the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code: Chapter B6 Assessment of Students.
- 1.3 This document should be read with reference to the following University documents:
- [Policy on Marking](#)
 - [Guidance on External Examiner Procedures](#)
 - [Guidance on Examination Boards](#)
 - [Policy on Feedback to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students](#)
- 1.4 The University's [Guidance on Examination Boards](#) lists three types of Board and their remits:
- Progression Board
 - Moderation Board
 - Award Board

Where reference is made in this document to a 'Board' or an 'Examination Board' this reflects that the statement could apply to more than one of these types of Board. In such cases this guidance should be used in the contexts both of the activity and of local practice.

2. Principles: double marking

2.1 Double Blind Marking

Double marking (either blind or non-blind) may take place for some forms of assessment, most commonly for dissertations or other large projects. In double blind marking, the first marker should make no annotations of any kind on the work being marked so that the work is seen by the second marker with no indication of the first marker's comments or marks. Both markers should record their marks and comments separately and then compare marks and resolve any differences to produce an agreed mark. Agreed marks and comments may then be provided on the students' work.

1. including distance learning, collaborative provision, CPD activity which leads to an award, assessment set for students with a University Support Plan and placement learning.

2.2 Non-Blind Double Marking

In non-blind double marking, the first marker would normally make some annotations on the work, with the second marker receiving the work with this information known. This may involve varying degrees of information being made available to the second marker (e.g. annotations to draw attention to noteworthy points in the text, or calculations but with no actual marks disclosed; or marks written on answers or in agreed places on the work). Second markers may be required or advised not to take into account the first marks in determining their own marks or may be required to resolve difference in marks for all cases or within ranges as part of their second marking responsibilities. Where non-mark annotations are allowed or required, their purpose may be to make second marking easier by guiding the second marker or to indicate where a first mark has come from to allow the second marker to evaluate its suitability.

3. Principles: Moderation

Moderation is a quality assurance process required by the University that ensures consistent and appropriate standards of assessment design and informs the marks that are then confirmed by the Examination Board. It assures that the standard of, and therefore student attainment on, units within a programme, and programmes within a School, are consistent.

The University's [Policy on Marking](#) states that marking should be carried out in accordance with the model/expected answers, the marking scheme and expected School outcomes.

- 3.1 Moderation is an integral part of the marking process that takes place after initial marks have been awarded to individual assessment. It is additional to the checking of the marks recorded, and should be based upon School 'norms' in terms of the expected 'average performance' for students' attainment.
- 3.2 Moderation refers to a range of processes conducted by an academic member of staff to ensure that assessment tasks and marking are accurate, consistent and appropriate to the level of the assessment and comparable with equivalent assessments. The formal process of assessment is not complete until the relevant Board or Boards have discharged their responsibilities in relation to the relevant assessment tasks.
- 3.3 Moderation applies to all summative first sit assessment at all levels (i.e. 4, 5, 6 and 7), and to CPD activity that leads to an award, distance and blended learning, collaborative provision, and assessment set for students with a University Support Plan and placement learning.
- 3.4 The proposed model of internal moderation is the minimum standard expected. However, Schools or programmes may employ additional marking standards over and above the minimum where they consider this to be appropriate. Faculties must approve any instances where the model is not used or is deviated from.
- 3.5 All outcomes from the moderation process must be documented.

3.6 The Process of Moderation Phase 1: Design

- 3.6 i. Lecturer(s) design and set assessment task(s) on the course unit to assess student learning against Learning Outcomes.

[Assessment Framework](#): *Principles of Assessment 4*: The assessment scheme should allow students to demonstrate their achievement of all the learning outcomes by the end of the programme.

- 3.6 ii The Policy on Marking defines the following roles:
- The *Academic Unit Lead* is appointed by the School to oversee the assessment for a unit and ensure that model/expected answers are produced where appropriate.
 - The *Internal Examiner* is the first marker and is appointed by the Academic Lead or nominee. Their role is to mark in accordance with the model/expected answers, the marking scheme and expected School outcomes.
 - The *Internal Moderator* is appointed by the School to moderate the marking in accordance with the model answers and the marking scheme. The Internal Moderator is overseen by the Academic Lead.
 - The *External Examiner* moderates a sample of assessed work in accordance with University regulations, model/expected answers and the marking scheme (see the University's Guidance on External Examiner Procedures).
- The Academic Unit Lead and Internal Examiner can be the same person.

- 3.6 iii Internal Moderators should be identified early in the academic year to ensure that the moderation process begins with a review of the assessment tasks prior to the External Examiner's review and suggested changes made in consultation with the Academic Unit Lead. The Internal Moderator should be considering:

For examinations:

- Individual questions to ensure that they are clear, unambiguous, grammatically correct and sufficiently challenging.
- Papers as a whole, to ensure that relevant learning outcomes are assessed and that the correct format has been used (number and choice of questions and length of examination).

For other assessments such as coursework:

- Assessment tasks, to ensure that they are clear and sufficiently challenging and that relevant learning outcomes are assessed.

- 3.6 iv As stated in Paragraph 52 of the [Guidance on External Examiner Procedures](#) , all assessment tasks that lead to the degree class are then reviewed by the Subject External Examiner. This can normally be done by correspondence.

3.7. The Process of Moderation Phase 2: Assessment completed by Students and Internal and External Moderation

- 3.7 i Students complete the assessment tasks.
- 3.7 ii Once internal examining/first marking has taken place, the Internal Moderator will normally consider a sample of 20% of the work, through the full range of marks awarded, checking the consistency of the marking. In the case of very small/large numbers, a minimum of 10 scripts and a maximum of 50 scripts are suggested. On units with a large number of students where the marking is undertaken by multiple markers the Academic Unit Lead compares the mark distribution (against the School norm) of all the Internal Examiners to reveal any significant inconsistencies in marking or question setting. This may be undertaken at the preliminary Examination Board.
- 3.7 iii The Internal Moderator will look to ensure that the marks and the comments given by the Internal Examiner/First Marker correspond, that the full range of marks has been used, and that feedback given is appropriate and helpful to the student.

- 3.7 iv Following discussion with the Internal Examiner, the Internal Moderator either confirms the marks or makes appropriate recommendations (e.g. all scripts in the cohort be remarked or the marks scaled) to the Chair of the Examination Board. As part of this process, any disagreements between the Internal Examiner and the Internal Moderator are referred to the Chair of the Examination Board for resolution. The Chair of the Examination Board has the authority to recommend further interventions or a resolution, and oversees the method of any scaling that is considered necessary.
- 3.7 v For all relevant units in the subject area, the Subject External Examiner then oversees the same samples that were moderated internally to ensure that decisions reached are appropriate and that overall standards are, as a minimum, in line with those of the sector. As a result of the External Examiner's moderation and any subsequent recommendations, the Chair of the Examination Board has the authority to recommend further interventions or a resolution (e.g. all scripts in the cohort be remarked or the marks scaled for a unit or units that are outliers when compared to other cognate or associated units) and oversees the method of any scaling that is considered necessary.

The duties of a Subject External Examiner in relation to moderation are listed in Paragraphs 52 to 62 of the [Guidance on External Examiner Procedures](#) and include:

- Moderate the sample of marked examination scripts that has already been moderated internally in line with the Policy on Marking.
- Moderate the sample of assessed coursework, including any online assessed coursework, that has already been moderated internally in line with the Policy on Marking.
- Participate in Moderation Boards that consider unit results and endorse, by signature, the agreed outcomes of the meeting.
- Highlight and encourage good practice.
- Comment on the discipline's relationship to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and any relevant Subject Benchmarks.
- Advise the Examination Boards on dealing with difficult cases.

3.8.

The Process of Moderation Phase 3: The Role of the Examination Board

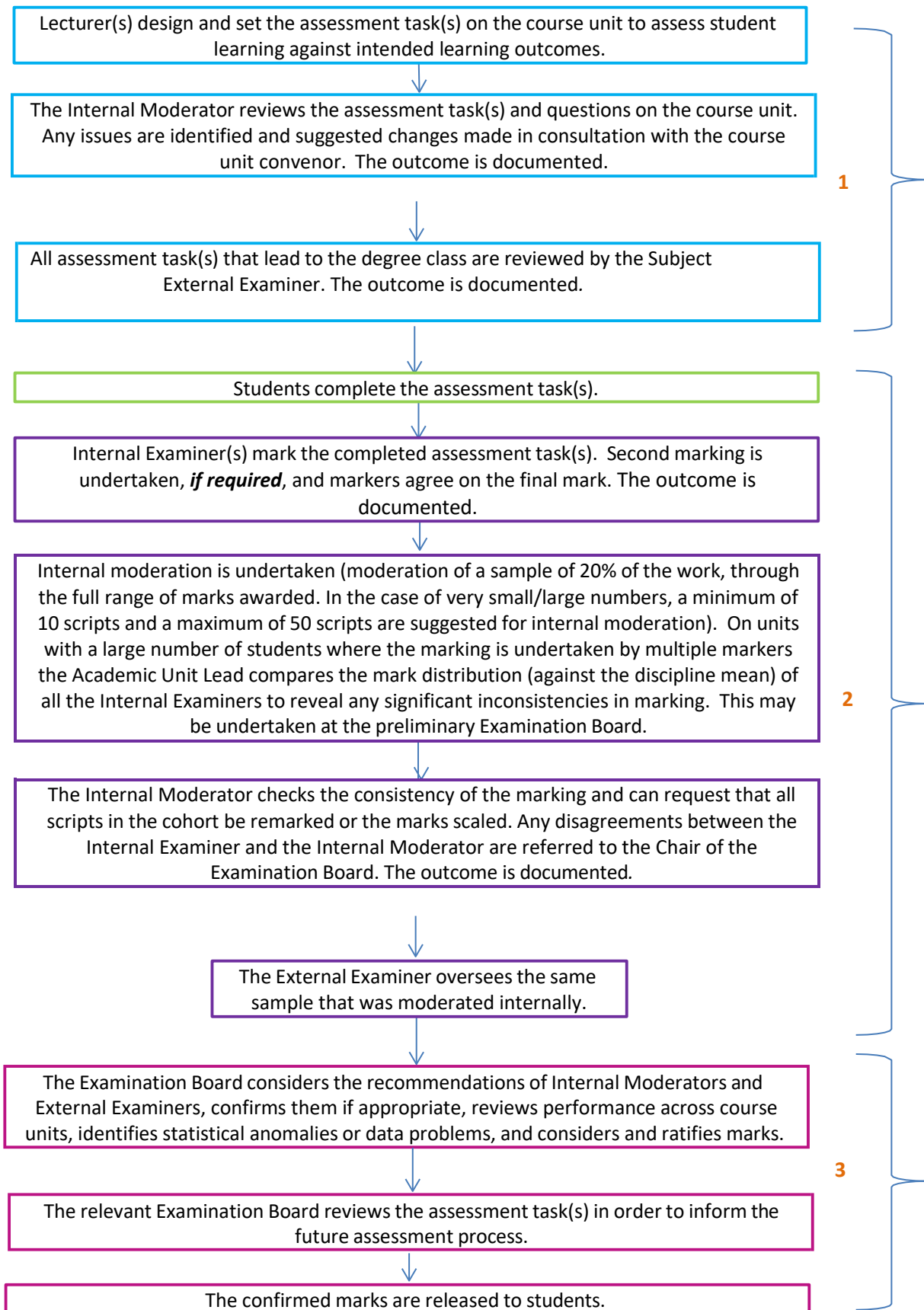
The University's [Guidance on Examination Boards](#) states that it is the responsibility of the Examination Board to:

- Ensure it understands why there have been any deviations from the expected School 'norms' and any action that has been taken as a result.
- Confirm any scaling decisions based on the Internal Moderator's and Internal Examiner's comments.
- Review performance across course units (historically and across that academic year).
- Identify statistical anomalies or data problems.
- Confirm moderation has been conducted in accordance with this procedure.
- When appropriate, ratify the marks as agreed by the Internal Examiner(s) and Internal Moderator.

- 3.8 i The Examination Board discharges its duties according to the [Guidance on Examination Boards](#) and reviews the assessment task(s) in order to inform the future assessment process.
- 3.8 ii The confirmed marks are released to students.

Appendix A - Moderation Flowchart

Phase



Document control box	
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Date approved:	July 2018 (Document control box contact details updated February 2023)
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Previous review dates:	N/A
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations
Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on Marking
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Framework
Policy owner:	Head of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact:	Teaching and Learning Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS <i>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</i>