



GCU Assessment and Moderation Policy

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V2.0	01.09.2020	Academic Quality	<p>Title Updated.</p> <p>Revisions to section 4 with regards to moderation sample sizes.</p> <p>Update to section 5 to stipulate that external moderation is mandatory at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11 only.</p> <p>Updated references to Quality Code for Higher Education throughout policy.</p>

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The following moderation principles have been designed to comply with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Assessment.¹ The outcome of any stage of the marks moderation process will be an agreed set of marks to proceed to the next stage of moderation or to the relevant Assessment Board. 'Agreed' in this context refers to agreement that marking has been carried out to the appropriate standards, which have been applied consistently and equitably across the range of marks in relation to the criteria set for the assessment task.

1 Definitions

Marking may be defined as the process of reviewing student work with the aim of the first marker (the person designated to apply a mark to a piece of assessment) giving it a mark/grade. Where second/double or double blind marking takes place, the aim is to give an agreed mark. Additional marking may be required where there is significant difference between the marks awarded to a piece of assessment following second/double or double blind marking that cannot be resolved without the opinion of another marker.

- 1.1 Second / Double Marking: Marking of an assessment by a second marker WITH knowledge or sight of the first markers comments.
- 1.2 Double Blind Marking: Marking of an assessment by a second marker with NO knowledge or sight of the first markers comments e.g. dissertations/ projects.
- 1.3 Third/ Additional Marking: Marking of an assessment by a third (or subsequent) marker following second/double or double blind marking, where there is significant difference between the marks awarded that cannot be resolved without the opinion of another marker.
- 1.4 Anonymous Marking: Concealing the identity of the student who submitted the assessment from the staff member marking their work, until a mark is agreed by the marker. Only once a mark has been agreed will the student's identity be revealed and feedback confirmed.
- 1.5 Moderation: Moderation is a key element of the summative assessment process and is

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment>

undertaken to ensure that the assessment process undertaken by academic staff in terms of the outcome is fair, transparent, equitable and reliable, providing assurance that marking is of an appropriate standard and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently.

1.6 Moderation:

- is concerned particularly with reliability meaning that ‘as far as possible markers acting independently of each other but using the same assessment criteria would reach the same judgement on a piece of work’ (QAA, 2012).
- ensures that the assessment process has been carried out with rigour, probity and fairness.
- is complemented by processes which assure validity including the design, setting and approval of the assessment tasks (to measure achievement of module and programme learning outcomes).
- provides an opportunity to engage with the quality of student feedback which will monitor and inform enhancement of assessment and feedback practices.

1.7 Pre-moderation is defined as the review, prior to module delivery, of all instruments of assessment, internally and externally. Post-moderation is defined as the internal moderation of assessed work on all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and external moderation of assessed work at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11.

2 The processes outlined in brief

2.1 Once initial marking has been undertaken a sample of all assessed work (undergraduate and postgraduate taught), with the exception of dissertation/projects, will be subject to Second/Double Marking.

2.2 All dissertation/projects will be Double Blind marked on a comment/mark concealed basis.

2.3 A sample of all assessed work will be made available for External Examiner scrutiny at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11.

2.4 A transparent moderation policy will be evidenced using the University Moderation Template which will contribute to programme, School and institutional monitoring, in addition to the External Examiner’s report. This will demonstrate the fairness, rigour and equity of the assessment process to stakeholders.

2.5 The process of moderation must be included within Programme/ Module handbooks.

2.6 Challenges to this moderation process are acknowledged; for instance large cohorts and teams of markers, assessment types such as practice placement assessment which may require alternative approaches to moderation. These situations are addressed in the principles below.

2.7 Alternative assessment arrangements required as a result of provisions under the Equality Act 2010 are followed.

SECTION ONE: PRE-MODERATION

3 Principles informing confirmation of work set for assessment purposes

- 3.1 Prior to module delivery, all instruments of assessment must be internally reviewed. External Examiners must be fully consulted on assignments, examination papers and marking schemes for SCQF Levels 9 and above. This includes demonstrable consultation on all summative assessment tasks (including resit activities) before issue to students.
- 3.2 The confirmation of assessment tasks should be informed by the following principles:
 - 3.2.1 Assessment tasks are aligned with the learning outcomes of the module.
 - 3.2.2 Assessment workload is appropriate to the credit value of the module being assessed, particularly if there are multiple assessment components within the module.
 - 3.2.3 Assignment briefs/examination papers are checked to ensure unambiguous questions and to correct typographical /grammatical errors. Note that all multiple choice questions (MCQ) and online examinations should have been tested and approved.
 - 3.2.4 Assessment task instructions are expressed clearly with particular attention being given to correct student guidance on examination papers.
 - 3.2.5 Word limits and penalties for course work are communicated clearly to students.
 - 3.2.6 Students are provided with module descriptors and marking schemes/criteria in assessment briefs, at the commencement of the module and also detailed within module handbooks.
 - 3.2.7 Assessment design has minimised opportunities for plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
 - 3.2.8 Feedback process and timeframe for return of work is clearly stated within Programme/ Module handbooks and aligns with the University's Student Performance Feedback policy.
 - 3.2.9 Alternative assessment arrangements required as a result of provisions under the Equality Act 2010 are followed.
- 3.3 Assessment tasks should be internally reviewed against the above principles prior to being sent to External Examiners. External Examiners should have a minimum of 10 working days to consider assessment tasks and provide comments.

SECTION TWO: POST-MODERATION

4 Internal Moderation

All assessed work on taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (excluding dissertation/projects) will be internally moderated as detailed below:

- 4.1 A sample of all assessed work will be Second / Double Marked, where the internal moderator is informed of the first assessor's marks and determines whether the marks awarded appropriately reflect the standard of work and that the marking criteria have been consistently applied. The Module Leader must arrange for a sample of assessments to be selected for internal moderation. Normally 10% of work will be moderated (a minimum sample size of 6 and a maximum sample size of 25)). Sampling should be conducted for cohorts of 11 or more students. In the cases of smaller cohorts it may be appropriate to moderate all pieces of work, rather than a sample.
- 4.2 The basis of selection of the sample will be transparent to the moderators. A full study cohort list will be provided with the sample. Normally the sample will be agreed between the marker and the moderator.
- 4.3 The sample will normally include marked scripts from each of the classification bands, including borderlines (5% above pass mark) and fails.¹
- 4.4 Where a team of markers undertakes assessment, marked assessments from all first markers must be included in the standard sample. Consideration will need to be given to large cohorts with multiple markers, as to the number of scripts from each marker that will contribute to the sample.
- 4.5 For large cohorts, where there is more than one marker, it is recommended that a sample of work will be internally moderated before all marking is completed. This will assure the standard and consistency of marking and pre-empt time delays in the assessment process which might occur if extensive remarking was to be required.
- 4.6 Where a module is delivered by more than one teaching team, in more than one location, or in more than one mode of delivery, a separate sample should be moderated for each delivery and these cross-moderated.
- 4.7 In cases where the marker and the moderator are unable to produce an agreed mark, it shall be the responsibility of the Module Leader to organise further assessment of the script by a third appropriately experienced marker in order that a mark can be determined. In such cases the third marker will determine the final mark to be awarded.
- 4.8 All individuals involved with marking or moderating scripts and determining a mark will initial the assessment script.²
- 4.9 The internal moderation process will NOT result in a change to the mark of an individual student unless it occurs in the context of the outcomes detailed above. Any changes must be considered in the context of the whole cohort.

5 External moderation

All assessed work on taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11 (excluding dissertations/projects) will be externally moderated as detailed below:

- 5.1 The Module Leader must arrange for the same internally moderated sample of work to be externally moderated by an External Examiner. An External Examiner may ask to see additional work, or even the full module set, if he/she deems it necessary for effective moderation.
- 5.2 The outcomes of the external moderation process will be:
- a. The External Examiner confirms the module marks
 - b. The External Examiner recommends that a set of marks be scaled, either upward or downwards or;
the External Examiner recommends the correction of marks that have been calculated incorrectly, where both internal and external markers are in agreement.
 - c. The External Examiner confirms consistent and acceptable standards in written feedback provided to students.
 - d. The External Examiner confirms the process of internal moderation was clearly evidenced.
- 5.3 It will not be appropriate for an External Examiner to recommend adjustments to individual marks awarded in a sample of work.

6 Moderation of dissertations/projects

For dissertation/project modules the principles outlined below will be followed:

- 6.1 All written elements associated with dissertations/projects will be Double Blind marked on a mark/comment concealed basis.³
- 6.2 In cases where the two markers are unable to produce an agreed mark, it shall be the responsibility of the Dissertation/Project Coordinator to organise further assessment of the written work by a third appropriately experienced marker in order that a mark can be determined. In such cases, the third marker will determine the final mark to be awarded.
- 6.3 Markers will be carefully chosen by the Module Leader to limit the number of dissertations which any one pair of staff can co-mark.
- 6.4 To ensure the transparency of the process the first and second markers will formally record their independent assessments in advance of their meeting to negotiate an agreement. The basis of the agreement reached will be formally noted and made available to the External Examiner.
- 6.5 External Examiners are not asked to examine more than a standard sample of dissertations/projects, but they will be asked to confirm in the External Examiner's report that the process of internal moderation was clearly evidenced.

³ 2020/21 GCU Assessment Regulations currently state that all final level Projects and Dissertations will be Double Blind marked, not written elements.

7 Further General Moderation Principles

- 7.1 It should be noted that as with internal moderation, the purpose of external moderation is not to recommend adjustments to individual marks awarded in a sample of work, but to assure standards and consistency overall.
- 7.2 There will be a transparent evidence/audit trail of the processes of internal and external moderation which will be recorded using the standardised University Moderation Templates. This will include a clear articulation justifying mark adjustments.
- 7.3 In addition to confirming the standard and consistency of marking, it is expected that internal and external moderators will comment on the quality of feedback provided by the first marker.⁴
- 7.4 Students should be provided with a single mark and a set of feedback comments on their assessed work, as agreed by the markers. The feedback given on their performance in the assignment must be consistent with the final assigned mark.
- 7.5 Particular arrangements should be considered for moderation of work that is first marked by those who may be less familiar with the assessment process. These arrangements might include Double Blind rather than Second/ Double Marking or moderation of a larger sample.
- 7.6 It is expected that a schedule, mapping the moderation milestones, will be agreed. This will include the process by which students' work will be made available to the External Examiner, taking into account whether scripts will be delivered by post/electronically, made available through the University's VLE or during attendance at the University prior to the Assessment Board.
- 7.7 Moderated work should normally be available for External Examiner scrutiny a minimum of 10 working days before the Assessment Board.
- 7.8 Oversight of the moderation process will be achieved through:
- The annual monitoring of completed External Examiners' reports.
 - Departmental/ School monitoring of completed University Moderation Templates as part of Annual Programme Monitoring.
- 7.9 Whilst multiple choice papers and online examinations cannot be moderated in the same way as other forms of assessment, certain quality assurance processes will be employed including:
- All multiple choice questions/ online examinations will have been tested before students sit the assessment.

⁴ Through embedding this principle within the policy, peer support for student feedback is being encouraged.

- All multiple choice papers/ online examinations will have been checked for accuracy and instructions before students sit the assessment.
- The process for awarding marks/calculating the final mark will have been checked before students sit the assessment.

7.10 Consideration should be given to internal and external moderation of practical, oral or practice placement assessments. Moderation processes may need to be adapted to accommodate these alternative approaches to assessment e.g. through video recording, provision of students' slides/ handouts, presence of External Examiner.

7.11 Where variations from standard University practice are required these should be subject to formal approval by the School's Associate Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality), following consultation with the External Examiner.

Attention is drawn to:

- [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (publication date: 3rd May 2018)
- [UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#) (publication date: 29th November 2018)