

ASSESSMENT, PROGRESSION AND AWARDED: TAUGHT PROGRAMMES HANDBOOK

5. Marking

5.1 Principles for Marking Assessments

5.1.1 Faculties (or delegated Schools) **should** develop an approach to marking assessment(s) that is consistent with the following principles:

- a. All marking **must** be based on the quality of students' work and be free from bias or prejudice (see 5.3).
- b. No module's marking **should** rely solely on the judgement of one marker.
- c. All summative assessment **must** be subject to moderation.
- d. Where the anonymity of candidates cannot be assured independent double marking **must** be applied to a sample.
- e. All Faculties (or delegated Schools) **must** publish marking criteria for all assessment.
- f. The relevant marking criteria **must** be applied consistently.
- g. It **must** be explicit that the responsibility for proofreading students' work lies with the student.
- h. Staff **must** signpost students to appropriate proofreading support and tools, such as those provided by Study Zone.
- i. Staff **must** be willing to use the whole range of marks when marking assessment(s). Where a marking scheme is introduced which does not use the full scale of marks this **must** be clearly communicated to students.

5.2 Pass Mark for Individual Modules

5.2.1 The pass mark for individual modules is as specified below. Modules failed at any level will normally be required to be condoned or referred, as outlined in Chapter 11 - Consequences of failure in assessment.

- a. The pass mark for individual modules at Levels 3-6 is 40%. Marks below 40% constitute failure.
- b. The pass mark for individual modules at Level 7 is 50%. Marks below 50% constitute failure.

- 5.2.2 Where a student on an undergraduate programme is taking a module at Level 7 the module **must** be marked according to the normal postgraduate marking criteria for the module and the marking scheme for postgraduate modules.
- 5.2.3 Where a student on a postgraduate programme is taking a module at Level 6 or below, the module **must** be marked according to the normal undergraduate marking criteria for the module and the marking scheme for undergraduate modules. The mark obtained **must** be used in the calculation of the credit-weighted mean for the programme as a whole (i.e., there must be no 'scaling' of marks).
- 5.2.4 The mark obtained **must** be used in the calculation of the credit-weighted mean for the programme as a whole (i.e. there **must** be no 'scaling' of marks).

5.3 Anonymity

- 5.3.1 The most effective means of demonstrating that marking is free from bias or prejudice is to ensure that students' assessment is anonymous. All assessments **should** be anonymous. However, the University recognises that this is not always practically possible. Where assessment cannot be anonymous, Faculties (or delegated Schools) **must** ensure, and be able to demonstrate, that marking is fair, reliable, consistent and transparent. Students must be fully informed of the marking criteria and processes.

5.4 Viva Voce

- 5.4.1 The viva voce provides the marking team with a means of determining whether work submitted by a candidate is their work. This is achieved by assessing the thoroughness of the candidate's understanding of the submission, and the candidate's ability to explain and justify its contents.
- 5.4.2 Marking and moderation are conducted anonymously in line with the University's guidelines and therefore a student would only be identified once it had been determined that a viva voce is required.
- 5.4.3 This process will allow a member of the marking team together with a second member of University staff to interview a student to discuss the submitted work to establish the authenticity of the material.
- 5.4.4 The implementation of a viva process will allow concerns to be appropriately measured and evidenced before a decision is made as to whether or not these

concerns should be pursued through the University's academic conduct procedures. The Viva Voce process is outlined in Appendix L.

5.5 Moderation and Sampling

5.5.1 Moderation is the process used to assure that assessment outcomes are fair and reliable, and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. Any moderation method **must** be proportionate to ensure fairness, reliability and consistent application of the criteria.

5.5.2 It is not always necessary for all work to be moderated. In many circumstances, it is sufficient for a sample of assessments to be moderated. Where multiple markers are used to mark a batch of assessments, sampling **should** be undertaken with regard to each marker rather than with regard to the whole batch of assessments. A number of approaches to moderation can be applied, all of which **may** be undertaken on a sample only. Where anonymity of candidates cannot be assured 5.5.2a **must** be applied (see also 5.1.1.d):

- a. Independent double marking: where a piece of work is marked by two markers independently, who agree a final mark for the assessment. Neither marker is aware of the other's mark when formulating their own mark.
- b. Double open marking: where a piece of work is marked by two markers, who agree a final mark for the assessment.
- c. Calibration of marking within teams of multiple markers, in advance of team members marking their own batch of assessments. Calibration involves the scrutiny of a sample of submissions being graded by all markers collectively. The sample **should** be sufficient in number to ensure the grading approach being taken by all markers is consistent. Following calibration processes, the subsequent moderation processes may be limited to scrutinising (i) submissions that are borderline (e.g. within 1% of a class boundary), and (ii) other submissions considered to be in need of moderation by the module lead.
- d. Check marking: where an assessment is read by a second marker to determine whether the mark awarded by the first marker is appropriate.

5.5.3 Where double marking or check marking is applied as the method of moderation the marking team **should** agree a final set of marks for the whole cohort and if they

cannot agree a final mark, a third marker **should** be used to adjudicate an agreed mark.

5.5.4 These processes **should** also identify the marking patterns of individual markers to facilitate comparisons and identify inconsistencies.

5.5.5 Where model answers are agreed by staff marking assessments, it is allowable for these assessments not to be moderated. However, the model answer **must** be reviewed and agreed by at least two markers in advance.

5.5.6 Sampling: it is appropriate for sampling to be applied to all the methods of moderation set out above. Where sampling is employed, the following **must** be adhered to:

- a. The sample **must** be representative and cover the full range of marks;
- b. The sample **must** be sufficient to assure the APAC and External Examiner(s) that the requisite academic standards have been maintained, and that all marking is fair, reliable and valid (i.e. free from bias or prejudice, based on the quality of students' work, and consistent with the relevant marking criteria);
- c. APACs and External Examiners **must** be informed of the methodology (or methodologies) by which assessments are selected for internal moderation, so they can advise on its sufficiency and appropriateness.
- d. The following **should** be adhered to:
 - i. The sample **should** not be the same sample as used in external moderation;
 - ii. The selected sample **should** be proportionate to the risk to standards posed by each module/assessment, bearing in mind the credit-weighting of the assessment, the experience of the primary marker, and historic trends, such as whether the module or assessment are new or have recently changed in structure/format, or if marks have previously had to be adjusted as a result of moderation/scaling;
 - iii. Where responsibility for assessing full submissions (as opposed to selected sections/questions) is distributed amongst a team of multiple markers, marking calibration processes **should** occur in advance of each marker marking their batch of assessments, in the following circumstances: a new team (or team member) is undertaking the marking, the form of assessment is new, and/or the module is new (or significantly revised);
 - iv. Where possible, the sample **should** include at least one item marked according to the marking guidelines for specific learning difficulties.

- v. Where a cohort includes a submission(s) made via an alternative form of assessment (as per Chapter 26 of the Learning and Teaching Support Handbook, 'Inclusive Practice within Academic Study policy'), the sample **should** include at least one alternative assessment item.
- e. Below is one suggested approach to sampling that **may** be adopted:
- i. For modules, where there is only one primary marker, at least XX% or a minimum of XX (whichever is greater) of the submitted assessments, but to a maximum of XX submissions in total. (E.g. (a) at least 10% or a minimum of 10 (whichever is greater) of the submitted assessments **should** be moderated, but to a maximum of 25 submissions in total; or (b) at least 5% or a minimum of 5 (whichever is greater) of the submitted assessments, but to a maximum of 15 submissions in total.)
 - ii. For modules, where multiple markers are used to mark a batch of assessments, sampling **should** be undertaken as above with regard to each marker rather than with regard to the whole batch of assessments. (This does not apply (i) where each member of the marking team takes responsibility for marking specific sections/questions: in that situation standard sampling **should** be undertaken as above, or (ii) where marking calibration processes are undertaken in advance of team members marking their own batch of assessments.)

5.6 Generic Mark Scheme

- 5.6.1 The University has a generic mark scheme (that draws on QAA¹ and SEEC² guidelines) that characterises the level of complexity, demand and relative autonomy expected of students at each Level of the curriculum (as detailed in the Credit and Qualifications Framework). The generic mark scheme can be found here.
- 5.6.2 All marking criteria **must** be consistent with the University's published percentage boundaries (see Chapter 9) for degree classification.

5.7 Marking Criteria

- 5.7.1 To ensure consistency all summative marking processes **should** be numerical, unless an alternative scheme has been approved by the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean (PVC) and has been clearly communicated to students.
- 5.7.2 External Examiners **must** have an opportunity to comment on the assessment criteria and model answers for all summative assessments.

5.8 Scaling of Marks

5.8.1 The purpose of scaling is to rectify anomalies in module and/or component mark distributions that arise from unanticipated circumstances and **should** be used in exceptional circumstances only. Hence, the assessment criteria and practices for any module that has its marks scaled **should** be reviewed, in consultation with the module/ programme External Examiner, in order to reduce the chance that scaling will be necessary in subsequent years. Guidance for scaling is set out in APA Handbook Annex G: Post-hoc Mark Scaling Guidance for APACs. The guidance should be read in the context of this Handbook, and the provisions of this Handbook remain in force.

5.8.2 APACS will be provided with descriptive module statistics (mean, median, and standard deviation) based on a comprehensive reference dataset of the student cohort performance in the current academic year and comparable historic mean module marks from the three previous academic years, where they are available. Historic mean module marks from academic years that have been designated as Exceptional Years, will be excluded. APACs will undertake this comparison at module level, noting that scaling will normally be undertaken at module level rather than at individual component level.

5.8.3 APACS will then consider the application of appropriate adjustments to correct any statistically significant deviation. For example, should a module show a distribution of student attainment significantly below that of previous year groups, then the APAC will consider scaling the cohort results to make them comparable with the attainment in previous years. Where a module has been run for the first time in the current academic year, an appropriate composite historic mean based on appropriate cognate module(s) will be used for the comparison or reference made to programme level and/or year group metrics.

5.8.4 Where scaling is employed for adjusting agreed assessment marks within a module to correct abnormal group performance, the following rules **must** be adhered to:

- a. The raw marks, together with the rationale under which they were awarded, **must** always be made available to the Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee.
- b. Scaling **must not** unfairly benefit or disadvantage a subset of students (e.g. failures). This means that any scaling function applied to a set of marks **must** be monotonically

increasing, i.e. it **must not** reverse the rank-order of any pair of students. The definition of any scaling function used (its domain) **must** encompass the full range of raw marks from 0 to 100%. For example, 'Add 3 marks to all students' or 'Multiply all marks by a factor of 0.96' are both valid scaling functions. 'Add 4 marks to all failures and leave the rest unchanged.' is not acceptable because it would cause a student whose raw mark was 39 (a fail) to leapfrog a student who got 41 (a pass).

- c. External Examiners **must** always be consulted about the process.
- d. All decisions **must** be clearly recorded in the minutes of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (APAC), and **must** include details of the rationale for scaling, any noted objections (and any responses to these objections) and the impact on marks.
- e. The system used to identify modules as potential candidates for scaling **must** be transparent.

5.9 Marking the Work of Students with ILPs or Diagnosed with Specific Learning Difficulties (where competence of language is not being assessed)

- 5.9.1 For guidance on a range of accessibility issues, including marking guidelines, refer to the [Services' Advice for Staff](#) website.

5.10 Marking Criteria for Group Work Assignments

- 5.10.1 Marking criteria for group work assignments **must** include whether the marks will be allocated individually or to the group, and how they will be allocated.
- 5.10.2 If peer assessment is used, the criteria for this **should** also be included, as well as how this will contribute to the overall mark. Please also see further guidance in Chapter 10 of the Learning Teaching Support Handbook: Peer and Self Assessment in Student Work: Principles and Criteria.
- 5.10.3 Further information on group work assignments and strategies for Learning and Teaching which provide an inclusive experience for all students is provided in the Education Toolkit (see 'Guidance for Assessed Group Work' within the University's EduExe Toolkit).

¹[Quality Assurance Agency frameworks for higher education qualifications and credit](#)

²[Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer](#)