

College Policy on Marking and Moderation

Introduction

1. This policy defines the College policy on the marking and moderation of all work that is formally assessed as part of a College award. It incorporates College policy on feedback on assessment, moderation, second marking and anonymous marking.
2. The policy has been developed in line with the [QAA Quality Code Chapter B6 Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning](#); specifically indicator 13: *“Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process”*
3. This policy concentrates explicitly on procedures that should be followed when marking pieces of assessment; it does not take into account issues such as mitigating circumstances, assessment offences and late submission which are covered by other policies. A principle of the College’s marking procedures is that each piece of assessment should initially be marked solely according to defined academic criteria; allowances for other circumstances should be made in accordance with these other policies.
4. Other College policies and procedures relating to assessment are defined elsewhere, notably the following:
 - [College Policy on the Operation of Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners](#)
 - [College Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#)
 - [College Policy on Late Submission of Coursework](#)
 - [College Policy on Assessment Offences](#)
 - [College Policy and Guidance on the Role of External Examiners](#)
5. It is recognised that there are many different forms of assessment, including non-written assessment (including assessment of presentations, oral assessment or assessment of contribution in seminars). This policy applies to all forms of assessment; exceptions are made for different types of assessment where appropriate. This particularly applies to policies on anonymous marking and double marking; in some forms of assessment (for example assessment of practical work or of presentation) anonymous marking and/or double marking will clearly be impractical or unnecessary.

Marking

6. All marks that are presented to a board/sub-board of examiners must be on a scale of 0-100, using whole numbers only. Normal practice is, where the final mark is not a whole number, for the mark to be rounded to the nearest whole number, with .5 of a mark rounded up.
7. Criteria for the award of these marks will be defined during the programme / module development processes. Assessment criteria may be defined either at programme, module or element level and must be made available to students. Where appropriate this may be by a simple statement indicating how many marks are awarded for correct / incorrect answers. Sample criteria are attached as appendix one (undergraduate) and appendix two (postgraduate); programme teams are free to adopt alternative criteria, or to use or amend these sample criteria, subject to approval of the criteria during the programme / module development process.

Anonymous Marking

8. Anonymous marking is encouraged for all forms of assessment where it is practical to do so.
9. It is recognised that whilst the principle of anonymity ought to be retained, the blanket application of anonymity for students is not always appropriate and that there are some circumstances in which it is not advantageous or administratively viable for full anonymity to be applied. Examples of forms of assessment for which anonymous marking may not be practical include assessment of presentations, seminar contributions, closely supervised work such as dissertations, practical work or group work. Where marking of assessment cannot be anonymous, sub-boards must ensure that marking is fair, reliable, consistent and transparent.
10. In order to preserve the anonymity of candidates where anonymous marking is in place students should be encouraged to use either their candidate number or student ID number rather than their name on all work submitted for assessment.
11. All students are provided with a candidate number for examinations by Registry. Marks and Awards supplied to College boards and sub-boards of examiners should be by candidate number rather than student name.
12. The principle of an anonymous marking policy is that work should, where practical, be anonymous while it is being assessed. Once a mark is assigned, names may be re-assigned to the work for the purposes of providing feedback.

Second Marking and Moderation

13. The processes of second marking and moderation are to ensure consistency in marking practice.
14. Second marking is defined as the marking of all pieces of submitted work for a particular assessment by an examiner other than the person originally designated to mark the work presented for assessment.
15. Moderation is defined as a process of sample marking of submitted work for a particular assessment by an internal examiner other than the person originally designated to mark the work presented for assessment.
16. All summative assessment will be second marked or moderated. It is recognised that it is sometimes neither practical nor necessary to second mark all assessment. Normally, all dissertations will be second marked.
17. Where work is second marked, the two markers should attempt to agree a proposed mark to go forward to the relevant board / sub-board. Where agreement is not possible the board will need to establish methods to ensure that one mark goes forward; this could be by appointment of a third marker, taking an average of the two marks, or some other method, which should be formally reported to the relevant board / sub board.
18. Second marking or moderation may take three forms:
 - “blind” marking (where the second marker does not see the marks or comments of the first marker);
 - “seen” marking (where the second marker sees both marks and comments awarded by the first marker)
 - “check” marking (for subjects where answers may be right or wrong, and where answers can be checked against an answer sheet and ensure no administrative error has been made).
19. Moderation should ensure an appropriate range of assessments are considered, by use of a representative sample. This would normally reflect;
 - the full range of marks, including firsts/distinctions, borderline cases and fail grades;
 - be of an appropriate size with respect to the size of the cohort
 - include all elements of the assessment for the module.
20. In each case the correct form of moderation or second marking should be agreed by the relevant chair of the sub-board in consultation with an external examiner.

21. It is advised that no mark except the marks agreed following the second marking or moderation process should be put on material which will be returned to the candidate.
22. The College's Data Protection Code of Practice stipulates that examination scripts are not returned to the candidate, although Schools will be required to provide a compilation of comments made on these scripts on receipt of a Data Protection Subject Access Request. It should also be made clear that all marks are subject to confirmation by the relevant board and may be subject to amendment.

Responsibilities

23. The Module Co-ordinator (or other appropriate member of staff appointed by the Assistant Dean) is responsible for ensuring that all the assessments for the relevant module are marked and the agreed marks are ready in time for the preparation of the report for the Board /Sub-Board of Examiners meeting by the Secretary to the Board.
24. Sub-boards of Examiners are responsible to the Academic Board for ensuring that marking and moderation is adequately conducted within their subject area.
25. It is the responsibility of College Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners to ensure that this Policy on Marking and Moderation is enforced and that trends in results are analysed to ensure that standards are comparable between programmes and cohorts (see also the College Policy on the Operation of Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners).
26. It is the responsibility of the Module Co-ordinator to ensure that assessment criteria have been drawn up for the assessment being marked. These should be provided to all examiners involved in the marking/moderation process including any external examiner(s).

Definitions:

Assessment criteria: Based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed, the knowledge, understanding and skills markers expect a student to display in the assessment task and which are taken into account in marking the work.

External Moderation: a moderation process carried out by someone other than a member of staff of the College (See Moderation)

Grade descriptors: encapsulate a level of achievement in relation to bands of marks. For individual assignments they indicate how well the assessment criteria have been met; for award classifications they indicate the level of achievement across a programme of study as a whole.

Internal Moderation: a moderation process carried out by staff of the College (See Moderation)

Marker: the person designated to apply a mark to a piece of assessment

Moderation: A process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. Forms of moderation include: sampling, either by an internal or external examiner additional marking, for example of borderlines, firsts and fails, or where there is significant difference between the marks of different markers that cannot be resolved without the opinion of another marker review of marks: where there is a significant difference between several assessment marks, within or between parts of a programme, which indicate the marks may need to be reconsidered

Academic Board

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Appendix One

EXAMPLE CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF MARKS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Bases of criteria

Work to be assessed towards an award should be assessed using the following criteria (not in order of importance):

1. Relevance of answer to question set.
2. Coverage of answer: appropriate range of facts, ideas and sources.
3. Accuracy of information.
4. Structure and organisation of argument.
5. Quality of analysis, argumentation and critical evaluation.
6. Quality of expression and presentation.

While there is no set order of priority among these criteria, the main emphasis is on evidence of understanding and the ability to think, to argue a case or to solve problems. These criteria are used to categorise submissions into the following classes (note that the narratives below are guidelines).

Criteria for marking

0–19% Fail – Totally inadequate answer in all areas, displaying scant evidence of understanding or knowledge.

20–29% Fail – Inadequate answer in all areas, displaying very little knowledge or understanding.

30–39% Potential Compensated Fail – The answer is judged to be only slightly below the pass standard and the examiners believe that the wider consequences of a fail need to be further examined.

40–49% Third – an answer that meets the minimum criteria to pass. Shows a grasp of basic relevant information, presents an adequate argument and is satisfactorily organised, but does

not meet the higher criteria defined below.

50–59% Lower Second – a good answer. Answer is good in all areas or strong in some and adequate in others. Shows an awareness of the major issues, shows knowledge of the sources and of alternative approaches to the subject but may not show a clear understanding of alternative arguments or makes uncritical use of sources.

60–69% Upper Second – a very good answer. Very competent in all or most areas, or showing moderate competence in some and excellence in others. Generally well planned and well argued, showing a solid ability to develop logical and persuasive arguments. Treats the issues in a critical and balanced way and shows an awareness of context, sources and different explanations.

70%–79% First class – an excellent answer in all or nearly all areas; in areas where excellence is not achieved, a high degree of competence must be shown. Displays exceptional knowledge of the subject, clear well-organised argument and substantial evidence of independent thought.

80+ First Class – Outstanding answer in all or virtually all areas, of a calibre far beyond what is expected at undergraduate level. Will contain substantial evidence of original and independent thought.

Appendix Two

EXAMPLE CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF MARKS FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Each piece of coursework and the dissertation will be judged along the following dimensions:

- (1) completion of requirements of assignment
- (2) understanding of the subject and relevant literature;
- (3) sound grasp of critical issues;
- (4) evidence of independent and original thought;
- (5) standard of argument; and
- (6) clarity of presentation.

The following table gives an indication of what is expected for each range of marks.

80-100% High Distinction	Marks in this range indicate an exceptionally high level of scholarship and outstanding performance in terms of all of the dimensions outlined. While work at this level exhibits scrupulous completion of the requirements of the assignment, it will also exhibit a high degree of research initiative, high quality of analysis, academic sophistication, comprehension and critical assessment, making a novel contribution to the relevant research area empirically and/or theoretically.
70%–79% Distinction	Marks in this range indicate high levels of scholarship, and high performance in terms of all of the dimensions outlined. Comprehensively argued research of interest and originality which is also well organized and presented exhibiting a sound, critical and analytical grasp of the relevant literature(s) and drawing on an extensive range of relevant academic sources. The work will display an excellent understanding of underlying theory as well as employing appropriate research methods and analytical techniques, resulting in findings of interest and significance.
60%–69% Merit	Work that demonstrates a good command of the subject and relevant literature(s) as well as a sound grasp of critical issues, with evidence of independent thought and a high standard of argument as well as good presentation. Work towards the bottom of this range may have occasional weaknesses and flaws but will nevertheless show a generally high level of competence. Work towards the top of this range will be highly competent on all dimensions.
50%–59% Pass	Marks in this range indicate general capability, but with moderate levels of weaknesses on one or more dimensions indicated above.

	Work in this range may contain inaccuracies, the arguments may lack clarity or rigour, or there may be a lack of critical understanding. It will however be coherently structured and presented, showing a sound command of the subject, some awareness of critical debate, and the ability to construct a generally coherent argument.
40%–49% Fail	Marks in this range do not quite meet the minimum standards for a pass, with considerable levels of weaknesses on one or more dimensions. Work in this range may suffer from flawed arguments, weak structure and presentation, an inadequate command of course materials, or a serious failure to reflect on those materials. It will however demonstrate a basic understanding of the course being examined and show evidence of reasonable attention to the course materials.
30%–39% Low Fail	Marks in this range display major levels of weaknesses on two or more dimensions. The work may be reliant on a minimal range of reading and reflection with poor attention to detail. Work in this range may be characterised by assertions lacking supporting evidence or argument, or by seriously flawed understanding of key concepts.
0%–29% Very Low Fail	Marks in this range indicate general incompetence, with highly serious levels of weaknesses on two or more dimensions. Work in this range will either fail to present any real argument or opinion, or fail to engage at all with the topic in question. Work may quote heavily from a small number of sources, but fail to integrate them and provide little or no narrative to explain their relevance.