



Internal Moderation Guidance

Purpose of Guidance

This guidance is designed to support Schools in implementing the requirements regarding moderation of assessment, which are defined within the [Taught Assessment Regulations](#) (31) and the [Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes](#). The guidance provides information regarding when moderation is expected to be undertaken, who has responsibility for overseeing it and carrying it out, and the methods of moderation which are used within the University.

Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

The guidance includes reference to mandatory expectations set within other regulations and policies. These are expressed using “must”, or “required”, with reference to the relevant regulation or policy.

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Document control

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1. What is moderation?

1.1 Moderation refers to a range of processes for reviewing assessments, marking and feedback to ensure they are fair, reliable and aligned with academic standards.

1.2 Moderation is separate from the setting and marking of assessments and occurs before any review by External Examiners of a sample of assessed work.

2. When is moderation required?

2.1 Moderation is required for all components of summative assessment, irrespective of the SCQF level of the work or the credit weighting of the assessments (TAR 31).

2.2 Moderation is not required for assessment that is purely formative (i.e. the result does not contribute to the overall mark for the course), although it is good practice to operate processes to ensure consistency of marking and feedback of formative assessment.

Phase 1: Following Marking

2.3 For each component of summative assessment, the marks and feedback must be moderated, using an appropriate form of moderation (see Methods of Moderation), as agreed by the Board of Examiners (TAR 31).

2.4 The purpose of moderation at this stage is to ensure:

- Marking outcomes are fair, valid and reliable;
- Assessment criteria have been applied consistently;
- Marking rubrics have been applied consistently;
- Inconsistencies between individual markers can be acknowledged and addressed;
- Feedback given is appropriate and helpful to students.

2.5 All outcomes from this phase of the moderation process should be documented.

Phase 2: Board of Examiners

2.6 Boards of Examiners are responsible for ensuring the appropriate operation of moderation processes and must confirm that moderation has taken place as expected (TAR 31.4).

2.7 If a mark or grade adjustment is required following moderation due to a systemic issue having arisen, the Board of Examiners will approve an appropriate method of mark adjustment (see section 7 B.).

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2.8 Boards of Examiners must keep clear records of the operation of the occurrence and the outcome of moderation processes (TAR 31.3), and publish explanatory information to students about any mark adjustment or scaling that has been applied on a cohort basis (TAR 31.2).

2.9 Boards of Examiners must also review the outcomes of students' assessments across related courses (for example, Honours level courses in a subject area) in order to ensure that assessment criteria have been applied consistently (TAR 31.5). For example, a Board of Examiners could review mark profiles for courses with similar components of assessment and similar student cohorts.

3. Methods of moderation

3.1 The University recognises three main methods of moderation: double marking; sampled moderation; standardised assessment checking. Schools may choose to employ additional moderation methods over and above these standard approaches where this is considered appropriate, or required by a professional or accrediting body, and agreed by the relevant Board of Examiners. The anonymity of individual students is expected to be maintained throughout the moderation process (TAR 32).

A. Double Marking

3.2 The University requires any single item of assessment equivalent to 40 credits or more to be double marked (TAR 31.1). Double marking may also be appropriate for some forms of oral assessment, such as presentations, practical assessments, etc. (see section 3.9).

3.3 Some dissertations and capstone projects are equivalent to fewer than 40 credits. Where a substantial assessment of this kind at Honours and PGT level (i.e. contributing towards degree classification) has been marked by the staff member responsible for supervising the student, it is expected that double marking should be carried out.

3.4 Double marking involves two markers independently marking the same piece of work. Each marker records their own mark and comments separately, then compares their marks and resolves any differences to produce an agreed mark and feedback. If markers cannot agree, a third marker will be appointed to enable a final decision to be taken.

3.5 For all other items of assessment contributing more than 10% towards the overall course result, unless otherwise stipulated by professional bodies, sampled moderation is required, except where standardised assessments are used.

B. Sampled Moderation

3.6 For the majority of assessments (contributing more than 10% towards the overall course mark), sampled moderation will be appropriate. This requires a moderator reviewing a specified proportion of marked assignments. Where multiple markers are involved in marking an assessment, the moderator should ensure the sample includes

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work from different markers, and should also review the distribution of marks for all assessments by each marker.

3.7 In general, the moderated sample should comprise 10% of the total number of assignments, or 10% of the assignments marked by each marker – whichever is larger. The final sample size will be determined by the spread of marks and number of markers involved. For courses with small cohorts (e.g. 50 or fewer students), a minimum of five assignments may be appropriate, including examples from the higher and lower ends of the mark range. The sample should include (where available) examples of assignments from each of the grade bands, including examples of fails. If a team of markers is involved, the moderation sample should also include examples from each marker to check that they are all taking a consistent approach.

3.8 The moderator should review the marks and feedback comments for each assignment in the sample, and check that marking and feedback for the sample is consistent with the relevant common marking scheme, grade descriptors, marking criteria and the marking rubric. Moderators are not required to produce a second mark for the sample of assignments.

3.9 In cases where assessment does not involve production of written work or other physical/digital artefacts (e.g. assessment of presentations, performances, laboratory or other practical performance), moderation should be incorporated either by:

- i. Each student's live performance being assessed by (a minimum of) two markers (this is required for oral assessments constituting 50% or more of the components on a course – see TAR 23); or
- ii. The moderator having access to an audio or video recording of the event, applying the same sampling approach as specified above.

3.10 The review of a sample of work in tandem with evidence of the distribution of marks – overall, and for each marker – may result in a concern that the common marking scheme has not been applied consistently. The moderator may require that further assignments are added to the sample, where this would assist them in determining whether the marking is appropriate.

3.11 If a moderator is not satisfied that the marks and/or feedback are appropriate, they should discuss this initially with the Course Organiser in the first instance, who should liaise with the marker(s) concerned and recommend any necessary adjustments to the marks and associated feedback. Moderators should not recommend changes to individual marks (unless there is an error specific to an individual mark, e.g. in the addition of marks for sub-components). The approach to marking adjustments or remarking should consider the impact of any issues upon the whole cohort, and be applied to any students within the cohort whose marks have been affected, not just those in the moderation sample. This may mean applying adjustments for all the students who attempted the assessment, or a subset of students, for example all the students marked by a particular marker, or all marks within a specific grade boundary.

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C. Standardised/Objective Assessment

3.12 Standardised or objective assessments are administered, scored and graded in a consistent manner for all students, such that the results can be compared objectively, reducing the potential for bias or subjective evaluations. Examples of such assessments include (but are not limited to) Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), computer-based assessments, some types of quantitative assessments.

3.13 In the context of such assessments, moderation may take the form of procedural checking, ensuring marks have been applied correctly, rather than academic judgement. The degree of checking should be proportionate to the weighting of the assessment.

3.14 Where marking is undertaken by computers (for example, for MCQs), the Course Organiser should ensure manual checks are in place to confirm that the software is functioning correctly, and provide assurance of this to the moderator. Item analysis statistics should also be reviewed by moderators to check for any anomalies e.g. where correct answers have been marked as incorrect.

D. Small components of assessment

3.15 For small assessment components, contributing 10% or less to the overall course mark, moderation may consist of checking the distribution of marks for each marker, and confirming that a consistent approach has been taken between markers.

4. Who is responsible for organising and supervising moderation?

4.1 The Convener of the Board of Examiners has overall responsibility for ensuring the appropriate conduct of marking and moderation processes prior to the Board. The Board of Examiners must approve an appropriate form of moderation for each component of assessment, and any approach taken to marking adjustments in the event of systemic issues. Schools must ensure information is published for students regarding the approach to internal moderation for each of their courses (TAR 31.7).

4.2 Programme Directors/Subject Heads (or equivalent) are responsible for appointing moderators to undertake the moderation activities for each assessment.

4.3 Course Organisers are responsible for supervising moderation for the assessments for their courses.

5. Who can moderate?

5.1 Moderators should be members of University of Edinburgh academic staff with relevant subject expertise. Where Guaranteed Hours or casual staff take part in moderation (including double-marking), they should do so with appropriate training and under the supervision of the relevant Course Organiser, for example as part of moderation of a team-marked assessment.

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5.2 Moderators should be independent of the marking process. However, where multiple markers are involved in marking an assignment, it is appropriate for them to moderate each other's marking. Where an individual member of staff has marked more than 50% of submissions for an assessment, moderation should be carried out by another, independent member of staff.

6. Moderation and the three-week feedback turnaround

6.1 Summative assessments must be internally moderated before marks are released to students. To facilitate the timely return of feedback, whilst not compromising academic standards, moderation can commence prior to all assessments being submitted (e.g. where there are outstanding submissions due to agreed extensions and extra time adjustments).

6.2 For sampled moderation, where 50% or more of submissions are received by the deadline, a single sample proportionate to the total cohort may be sufficient. However, where the proportion of submissions is substantially lower than 50%, or where the initial sample does not adequately capture the range of marks or markers, moderation may need to be undertaken in stages, involving a further sample from later submissions. This approach ensures that marking is applied consistently across work submitted at different times.

7. Outcomes from moderation of marking

A. Routine marking adjustments

7.1 Where the moderation process identifies discrepancies in marking – either between different markers, or between marks awarded and relevant marking criteria/rubrics – this may result in routine marking adjustments.

7.2 As described in the Methods of Moderation section above, minor discrepancies between markers regarding similar levels of student performance should be resolved by discussion, and adjustments applied to the mark(s) affected as agreed. Where marks are adjusted, consideration must always be given to the impact upon the marks for the cohort as a whole (TAR 31.2).

7.3 If significant discrepancies are noted between markers, a further sample should be reviewed. The moderator should determine whether this further sample indicates a consistent pattern of variation, and agree on a course of action with the Course Organiser, which may include a full review of all marks awarded by the initial marker.

B. Systemic issues

7.4 Occasionally, systemic issues arise in assessment. For example:

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- An issue in the delivery of teaching or assessment affects students' abilities to achieve the best outcome in an assessment;
- An assessment (or part of an assessment) is believed to have been calibrated inappropriately, i.e. it was too difficult or too easy for students at the relevant level of study.

7.5 Where issues of this nature are identified, a moderator/Director of Teaching/Head of Subject Area, may recommend any necessary adjustments to the marks and associated feedback. These should be discussed with the Convener of the Board of Examiners, who may also liaise with the relevant External Examiner. Adjustments may include re-marking using the same or a different marking scheme, re-weighting components or sub-components (e.g. individual exam questions), or scaling the assessment component marks. This process should, where possible, take place before provisional marks are issued to students. Where changes are proposed to marking schemes, or to the weighting of components of assessment on a course, Schools must follow the steps outlined in TAR 13.3, which include appropriate consultation with students.

7.6 Where systemic issues have arisen, these should be reported to the relevant Board of Examiners, along with the details of any steps taken to mitigate them. The Board should also be informed of any steps taken to prevent recurrence of systemic issues in future years.

7.7 Where a review of outcomes across similar courses identifies substantially different mark profiles, the Board of Examiners should investigate whether there is an issue in the marking for a course. If an issue is identified, the Board of Examiners may recommend adjustments as outlined above. However, where a Board is confident that the marks for each assessment on each course fairly reflect students' performance against the learning outcomes, they should avoid making marking adjustments to assessments, irrespective of any substantial difference in mark profiles across courses.

C. Scaling

7.8 Scaling should only be undertaken where systemic issues have arisen affecting assessment, as above. The decision to apply scaling will be taken by the relevant Board of Examiners. Where a specific course is subject to scaling in consecutive years, the relevant Board of Examiners should take steps to investigate and address any issues affecting assessment on the course for future years.

7.9 Scaling is the process of applying an arithmetic adjustment to the marks obtained during the marking process, so that the marks which result after scaling is applied more accurately reflect student learning and achievement against the assessment component or module learning outcomes. As such, scaling is a criterion-referenced process, rather than a norm-referenced process. This means that scaling should not be undertaken merely to obtain a desired mean mark for an assessment component or for a course overall. However, evidence of performance by the same cohort of students in other courses at the same level may provide useful information for a Board of Examiners considering the extent

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of any scaling to be applied. Scaling must be undertaken with clear sight of the learning outcomes of the piece of assessment in mind.

7.10 Scaling should take place at the end of the moderation process but before marks are finalised. Scaling should only be applied to the marks for components (or sub-components) of assessment that have been affected by an issue, rather than to overall course marks.

7.11 When scaling is undertaken, the reasons and mechanism for each instance of scaling must be documented in the minutes of the Board of Examiners that confirms it, along with proposed actions to address the issues arising in the process of assessment that led to scaling being undertaken. Students affected by scaling must be informed of the scaling that has taken place, along with a general description of the reasons for scaling (TAR 31.2).

7.12 Registry Services provide guidance for Schools on applying scaling using the student record system.

[Guidance on applying scaling](#)

8. Documenting outcomes from the moderation process

8.1 Schools must maintain records that show how the moderation process has operated, including showing the rationale for decisions in relation to individual marks / grades, including any decisions that marks or grades should not be altered. This record should be made available to External Examiners, and be retained for any internal quality monitoring.

8.2 Template forms are available for recording moderation.

8.3 Where systemic issues are identified, the relevant Board of Examiners minutes should record the action taken.