

## ASSESSMENT MODERATION POLICY

### Scope

1. This policy applies to all programmes of study at the University of Suffolk that are summatively assessed.

### Principles and purpose

2. This policy underpins the institution's assessment practice and seeks to ensure that
  - a. all assessments are fit for purpose, conform to validated course documentation, and provide accurate and accessible instructions and guidance to students.
  - b. all marking decisions are robust, consistent, and fair.

This policy aligns with the relevant Expectations for Standards and Quality within the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the associated core and common practices, as set out in the Advice and Guidance document for Assessment ([https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=ca29c181\\_4](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=ca29c181_4)). We also take into account the Guiding Principles set out in that document.

3. All summative assessment utilises clear marking criteria against which student performance and achievement is measured. This process is operated by academic staff in accordance with this policy in order to ensure that each student is treated in a fair and equitable manner, that the grades are awarded consistently, and that the process is transparent and clearly documented.

### Definitions

4. For the purposes of this policy:
  - a. **Verification** is defined as the initial (pre-issue) checking of all proposed summative assessments to ensure alignment with validated documentation, course schedules and University of Suffolk expectations.
  - b. **Sample Moderation** is defined as the examination of a sample of student work (derived from a module/course as appropriate) by a second internal assessor, while **Full Moderation** is defined as the examination of all student work by a second internal assessor. In both cases, the role of the second assessor is to check that all elements of the assessment have been duly marked and graded and that the standards of assessment are appropriate. The comments and grades of the first assessor will be available to the second assessor. The second assessor will be expected to make separate notes as evidence of the moderation process and on the quality of the feedback provided to students.

*Note: It is recognised that dependent on the size of the module/course being assessed the assessor roles may be undertaken by more than two people. In such cases it is important to ensure that the policy's principles are applied as consistently as possible.*

## **Process**

### **Verification of assignments and examination questions**

5. All summative assessments and assessment criteria (i.e. assignment briefs and examination papers), at all levels of assessment, will be subject to verification by an independent team member, normally appointed by the Course Leader, prior to submission to external examiners or release to students. In the case of examinations, both the examination paper and the retake examination paper should be verified at the same time.
  
6. Assignment verification should ensure that the proposed assignment matches that set out in the validated module specification, that the scale and complexity of the assignment is appropriate to the level of study, that the module/course learning outcomes are addressed by the assignment task and that the requirements are clear and achievable.
  
7. Examination question verification should ensure the proposed examination matches with that set out in the validated module specification, the scale of the examination (number of questions and tasks involved) is appropriate to the level and the proposed duration of the examination and all questions are unambiguous and appropriate. Normally for examinations some indication of what is expected in each answer should be prepared at the same time as the questions and be available for verification. This could be in the form of model answers, answer plans or a brief review of the possible scope of an answer. The intention is to inform the verifier what is expected. However, it is accepted that for some questions, the breadth of possible answers is wide and this should be acknowledged. (The aim is *not* to penalise creativity.)
  
8. Copies of summative assignments and assessment criteria (i.e. assignment briefs and examination papers) will be sent to external examiners for approval for all Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 taught work, unless defined otherwise in the requirements of Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). In the first year of delivery of a new module/course/route or where required by the Chair of the Assessment Board or by a relevant PSRB, Level 4 assignments and examinations will also be sent to the external examiner for approval.
  
9. Evidence of the verification process (verifier, meetings, date sent to the external examiner, outcomes) should be lodged in the module file by the Module Leader.

### **Post-issue moderation**

10. Marking of student work and assessment feedback to students will comply with the published assessment regulations for the course and relevant institutional policies, including the Assessment and Feedback Framework.

11. All presentations, performances and other instances of student work that are not written or otherwise reproducible should be witnessed and graded by both first and second assessors at the point of production unless they can be recorded in which case they will be treated as other summatively assessed work in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 13 below.

12. Full moderation should be used:

- a. Where a first assessor has not marked at a particular level of study previously (all assessments at that level in that semester should be subject to full moderation).
- b. For all Level 6 and Level 7 dissertations or research projects.

All other summative assessment should be subject to sample moderation

13. Moderation of work will occur as follows:

For each summative assessment (e.g. assignment, examination) moderated, the second assessor will check that all elements of the assessment have been duly marked, with mark totals calculated correctly where applicable. For sample moderation, in consultation with the first assessor, the second assessor will select and moderate a sample of each summative assessment which will not normally be less than 10% of the submitted assessments and include at least ten assessments, unless there are insufficient assessments to achieve this sample. The sample will include **all** work that is marked by the first assessor as not meeting the required pass standard (40% at undergraduate levels, 50% for postgraduate work), and a representative selection of work from each other mark band.

14. Where identical modules are delivered at more than one site, moderation should be employed to ensure equity of assessment marking. The arrangements for moderation should be put in place in advance of the marking and moderation processes.

15. The Chair of the Assessment Board is empowered to extend the requirement for, and extent of, full or sample moderation at any time.

### **Grade resolution**

16. In all cases, first and second assessors should meet to confirm all elements of the assessment have been duly marked and to discuss the marks awarded.

17. In cases of moderation, due care should be taken to ensure no students are either advantaged or disadvantaged through their work being included or not included in the moderation sample. In particular, where as a result of moderation the mark allocated to a piece of work is altered, all other student work should be checked to ensure, where appropriate, any adjustment(s) is/are applied in a consistent manner.

18. If the first and second assessors agree on mark allocation (initially or after discussion), a moderation record form should be completed making explicit which work was included in the moderation sample and recording any discussions undertaken in reaching agreement, and this form should be lodged with the Course Leader.

19. Where first and second assessor's marks differ and agreement cannot be reached after discussion, moderation of all other work in the disputed classification band should be undertaken and the first and second assessors should then meet again to compare and discuss the marks.

20. Where after discussion agreement cannot be reached by the first and second assessor, a third assessor will be appointed by the Assessment Board Chair to complete full-moderation of the disputed work. The first, second and third assessors should then meet to agree the grade, with the third assessor having the final say if agreement cannot be reached.

21. When the process outlined in 19 and/or 20 is complete, the procedures in 17 and 18 should be followed.

22. The only marking indicated on feedback to students should be the agreed mark for the work following the completion of the moderation processes set out above. Feedback to students would normally be restricted to that provided by the first assessor, although this may be supplemented by the first assessor following moderation to reflect elements of the discussions within the moderation process

23. In all cases the external examiner will be sent or shown the same sample of assessed work and shall have access to other assessments from the set. In the case of the Dissertation or research project or other instances where the full moderation has occurred, the sample will be selected by the Module Leader as appropriate, following the principles outlined in 13. The external examiner will also be sent the moderation record form and may make any comments regarding the marking process on it.

24. In all cases the moderation record form should be lodged in the module file by the Module/Course Leader as appropriate.

**Activities following the completion of moderation processes**

25. Where possible, work granted extensions as agreed through the Extenuating Circumstances Policy should be marked alongside the work submitted in accordance with the original deadline. However, this will often not be possible without detrimentally delaying the marking and reporting process. Where work is marked following the completion of a moderation process, work submitted according to an agreed extension should be subject to sample moderation. Where work is marked following the completion of a full moderation process, all work submitted according to an agreed extension should also subject to full moderation.

26. When, in accordance with the Academic Appeals process, student work is remarked, where possible this shall be done by the same second assessor as was involved in the original moderation process. If, as a result of the remarking process, the mark proposed for the work involved was increased, effort should be taken to ensure that a similar adjustment is proposed for other students' work where the same grounds are applicable. However, if as a result the mark is revised downwards, proposals to revise other students' work should not be put forward.