

## ASSESSMENT MODERATION POLICY

### Scope

1. This policy applies to all courses at the University of Suffolk and its partner institutions 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 reliable, robust, consistent (within cohorts and over time) and fair; and that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately.
  - c. differences in academic judgement between markers can be acknowledged and appropriately addressed.
3. 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](#). We also take into account the Guiding Principles set out in that document.
4. 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

5. 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 an internal moderator
  - c. **Full Moderation** is defined as the examination of all student work by an internal moderator.
6. In instances of both sample and full moderation, the role of the internal moderator is only 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 internal moderator. The internal moderator will be expected to make separate notes as evidence of the moderation process and on the quality of the feedback provided to students. However, it is not the role of the internal moderator to mark the work again unless they do not agree that the standard of assessment is appropriate (see paragraph 25).

7. Where practical, it is good practice to ensure the internal moderator has not been involved in the teaching or assessment of the module in question.

8. It is recognised that dependent on the size of the module/course being assessed the assessor and moderator 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. Where practical, the work reviewed by each moderator should include work assessed by all assessors.

## **Process**

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

9. 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 resit examination paper should be verified at the same time.

10. For courses delivered by the University's partner institutions the [Academic Link Tutor](#) should also verify the summative assessments and assessment criteria before submission to the External Examiner(s) or release to students.

11. 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.

12. 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.)

13. Copies of summative assignments and assessment criteria (i.e. assignment briefs and examination papers) will be sent to External Examiners for information 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 3 and 4 assignments and examinations will also be sent to the External Examiner.

14. Evidence of the verification process (verifier, meetings, date sent to the External Examiner, outcomes) should be held by the Module Leader.

### **Post-issue moderation**

15. 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 [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework](#).

16. All presentations, performances and other instances of student work that are not written or otherwise reproducible should be witnessed and graded by both the assessor(s) and moderator(s) 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 17 and 18 below. All recordings should be stored in line with established University policies regarding the retention of assessed student work.

17. 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 teaching period e.g. 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.

18. Moderation of work will occur as follows:

For each summative assessment (e.g. assignment, examination) moderated, the internal moderator 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 internal moderator 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. It is good practice to also include borderline grades in the sample.

19. 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.

20. Where the marking of work has been undertaken by a partner institution, further moderation of marking standards or similar periodic audits may be undertaken by the Academic Link Tutor.

21. Where the marking of work has been undertaken by a computer programme (for example the marking of multiple choice questions) the Module Leader should complete manual checks to ensure the accuracy of outcomes. The degree of checking should be proportionate to the number of assessments and usually mirror the moderation arrangements outlined in paragraph 18.

22. 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**

23. In all cases, the first assessor and internal moderator should meet to confirm all elements of the assessment have been duly marked and to discuss the marks awarded.

24. If the internal moderator agrees (initially or after discussion) that the standard of assessment is appropriate, a record of moderation should be completed making explicit which work was included in the moderation sample and recording any discussions undertaken in reaching agreement. This record should be held by the Course Leader and made available to the External Examiner.

25. Where the internal moderator does not agree that the standard of assessment is appropriate, and agreement cannot be reached after discussion, the internal moderator will

second mark **all** work submitted for that component of assessment. The first assessor and internal moderator should then meet again to compare and discuss the marks.

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

27. When the process outlined in 25 and/or 26 is complete, the procedures in 24 should be followed.

28. 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. All feedback given on their performance in the assessment must be consistent with the final mark awarded. The moderation processes should be completed prior to the release of unratified marked to students.

29. In all cases the External Examiner shall have access to all assessments from the set. The External Examiner will also be sent the record of moderation and may make any comments regarding the marking process.

30. In all cases the record of moderation should be held by the Module/Course Leader as appropriate.

### **Activities following the completion of moderation processes**

31. Where possible, work granted extensions as agreed through the [Additional Time due to 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.

32. When, in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#), student work is remarked, where possible this shall be done by the same internal moderator 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.

**Moderation of previously referred work**

33. Previously referred work should be moderated in line with the arrangements outlined above including meeting the sampling criteria as set out in paragraph 18.