

College Policy on Marking and Moderation

Introduction

1. This policy defines the Birkbeck, University of London 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 Quality Code expectations for standards and associated core and common practices, with reference to the associated [Advice and Guide theme on Assessment](#).
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 Academic Integrity and Misconduct](#)
 - [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 presentations) 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 subject, programme, module or element level and must be made available to students. In all cases assessment criteria will be approved at an appropriate level i.e. sub-board (subject level), Programme Director (programme level), or Module Convenor (module or element level). Where appropriate this may be by a simple statement indicating how many marks are awarded for correct / incorrect answers. Approved marking criteria will be communicated to students at an appropriate level.

Anonymous Marking

8. Anonymous marking is mandatory 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, or group work, and practical work, which in its nature may identify a student. This may, for example, include creative writing tasks in which the student's identity could form a direct part of the assessment.
10. Where marking of assessment cannot be anonymous, and/or not practically possible, approval to not mark anonymously must be granted by the relevant sub-board to ensure that marking is fair, reliable, consistent and transparent.
11. 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.
12. 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.

13. 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

14. The processes of second marking and moderation are to ensure consistency in marking practice.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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. All dissertations will be second marked.
18. Where work is second marked, the two markers should attempt to agree a proposed mark to go forward to the relevant sub-board. Where there are differences that cannot be agreed through initial discussion between first and second markers, and the discrepancy of marks is above 5% and/or there is disagreement across classification boundaries, the use of a third marker will be employed. In cases where marks between first and second markers differ within 5% an average of the two marks will be taken.
19. 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).
20. Moderation should ensure an appropriate range of assessments are considered, by use of a representative sample. This moderation sample will include:
- assessments across the range of marks with at least one assessment from each classification band and roughly equal numbers from each band;
 - all fails; and
 - at least 20% of the module cohort or at least 5 students, whichever is greater.
21. 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.
22. Examination scripts are not returned to candidates. A compilation of comments made on scripts may be released on receipt of a Data Protection Subject Access Request. 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 Head of School) 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

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