



## **ARDEN UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 21 – ARDEN UNIVERSITY'S POLICY ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MODERATION**

### **MODERATION AND SECOND MARKING POLICY**

This policy applies to all assessed work undertaken as part of a programme leading to the award of credit at Arden University.

#### **PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSE**

1. This policy seeks to:
  - 1.1 Provide a check that assessments have been marked in-line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the assignment/examination, and in terms of marking criteria.
  - 1.2 Provide assurance for students of fairness of marking and hence the equality of treatment of each student.
  - 1.3 Assure internal consistency of assessment within a module.
  - 1.4 Provide an approach to the comparability of standards across modules within a subject area.
2. Students are not permitted to appeal against academic judgement and so it is important to ensure fairness and consistency through the internal moderation process. In addition, the External Examiners will review the marking process and marks awarded. Both the overall results of assessment as well as each individual student's result will be further scrutinised at the meeting of the internal examiners and at the final, decision-making Subject Assessment Board.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

3. **First marking** provides a grade and sufficient feedback to enable students to understand how their grades have been determined and how they might raise the standard of their work in future.
4. **Moderation** provides assurance that the assessment criteria has been applied appropriately, and that marking is of an appropriate standard, fair, consistent, and equitable across all submissions for an assessment. It also ensures that there is sufficient feedback to students which is consistent with the grade awarded.
5. **Second marking** is a process through which a second marker fully marks a piece of work previously marked by the first marker, with or without adding further feedback. For this, the second marker can see the mark awarded and the comments/feedback from the first marker. The final mark is then agreed jointly by the two markers.
6. **Third marking** is a process whereby a third internal marker determines the final mark in cases where two markers cannot agree.

7. **Blind Second Marking** is where a marker marks the piece of work independently, formulating their own judgement, and neither has sight of the other's assessment decision or comments when determining their own mark. The final mark is then agreed jointly by the markers.
8. **Remarking** is when a further round of marking is undertaken of previously marked work by different markers. Normally, the new markers will carry out this task 'blind', meaning they will not have sight of any previously proposed marks or feedback. Remarking will normally only be offered if there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the initial marking process.

### INTERNAL MODERATION

9. The Module Leader will undertake pre-marking standardisation activities with marking teams in advance of each marking cycle.
10. Student work will be first marked in accordance with the marking criteria and assessment feedback provided in accordance with *QA26 Written Feedback Policy*.
11. All assessed work on taught undergraduate and postgraduate modules will be internally moderated as detailed below.
12. A sample of at least 20% of the total submissions in an assessment will be selected for internal moderation.
13. A minimum of 12 scripts will be moderated and all scripts will be moderated where there are fewer than 12 scripts in total.
14. The sample should cover full range of grades awarded including:
  - At least two scripts from each classification band, including fail grades
  - The highest grade awarded, and the lowest grade awarded (excludes 0 grades)
15. A maximum of 50 scripts will be moderated where there are more than 250 scripts in total.
16. The sample size and basis may be exceeded to address any professional body requirements.
17. The internal moderator may request additional scripts if they deem this to be necessary to be assured of the effectiveness of the marking.
18. Scripts will be selected on a random basis from across the range of grades awarded, with an equal number selected from each of the classification bands where possible.
19. The classification bands for undergraduate programmes are 0-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 and above.

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### MARK VARIANCES BETWEEN FIRST MARKERS AND MODERATORS

21. A mean mark and standard deviation should be calculated for each 'first marker' group should be made available to the moderator.
22. Where variances or issues arise during moderation, these should be discussed and resolved by a discussion between the markers and moderator.
23. Individual marks should not be changed through moderation (except in cases of arithmetical error) to ensure that no students are advantaged or disadvantaged because of the inclusion of their work in the moderation sample. Instead, depending on the level of difference between the individual markers, the Chair of the Subject Assessment board should discuss with all markers whether:
- Based on the sample moderated (or an increased sample), a judgment be applied to the assessment cohort, OR
  - The entire set of assessments be fully double marked
  - The entire set of assessments is remarked
24. Where differences cannot be resolved through discussion between the marker and moderator, a third senior academic member of staff (normally the Programme Team Leader or Head of School) will review the assessed work and arbitrate between markers and moderators.

### Scaling of Marks

25. Where mean mark variances between first marker groups are +/-5%, the moderator should firstly consider whether differences have arisen due to different characteristics of the two or more groups (e.g. students at a study centre and DL students etc). If the variance cannot be accounted for by the characteristics of the group, that is the moderator is satisfied that comparable work is not receiving a similar mark, then scaling may be considered. Within this decision mix, the standard deviation between tutor groups should also be scrutinised to compare the relative spread of marks.
26. If considering scaling, attention needs to be paid to any boundary changes. Assessments reclassified due to a boundary change must be moderated, if this has not already taken place within the original moderation process. When considering scaling and where a consensus can be reached between the moderator and the first marker(s), this should be recorded, along with the details within the moderation report. These changes apply to all marks for a given marker group and not just the sample. Where agreement cannot be reached, the Head of School should be informed.

27. The results of such action should be discussed with the External Examiner.

### DISSERATIONS/MAJOR PROJECTS

28. ALL postgraduate and undergraduate dissertations and major projects will be double marked (this should be blind double marking where practicable).

29. In cases where the two markers are unable to provide an agreed mark, an appropriately experienced third marker should be appointed to determine the final mark to be awarded. The basis of the agreement reached will be recorded and made available to the External Examiner.

### FURTHER MODERATION PRINCIPLES

30. The moderator will normally be the Module Leader.

31. A clear record of which individual pieces of assessment have been moderated will be kept and made available to the Subject Assessment Board.

32. The moderator will provide detailed comments in the moderation report to provide evidence of moderation.

33. The Module Leader will be required to comment upon any concerns relating to disparity or congruence of different markers on their module as part of the moderation and Module Leader reporting processes.

34. An audit of all markers will be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure all have been subject to moderation within the previous year.

35. Oversight of the moderation process will be achieved through School monitoring of Module Leader and External Examiner reports at Programme Committees and through Annual Monitoring.

### MODERATION OF ASSESMENT AT PARTNER CENTRES

36. Enhanced levels of second marking and moderation will be put in place for programmes delivered through partnership arrangements. The following will normally apply:

- For the first year: Double-marked (blind double marking where practicable) and 100% moderation.
- For the second year: Double-marked (blind double marking where practicable) and 50% moderation.
- From the third year onwards: Double-marked (blind double marking where practicable and standard moderation policy).

37. Specific arrangements for moderation and second marking will be agreed at partnership approval events and reviewed on an annual basis, with details set out in the Partner Operations Manual.

### EXTERNAL MODERATION

38. External Examiners will be provided with samples of assessed work for all modules that they are responsible for as detailed below.
39. A sample of 10% of scripts will be sent to External Examiners for external moderation.
40. Where the total number of assessments is 12 or less, all scripts will be sent for external moderation.
41. A maximum of 20 scripts will be externally moderated. External Examiners may request additional scripts if they deem this necessary for effective moderation.
42. Where possible all scripts sent for external moderation will have been internally moderated to allow External Examiners to comment on the effectiveness of marking and moderation processes.
43. Samples selected for the External Examiner should cover full range of grades awarded with scripts from each classification band, the highest and lowest grades awarded (excluding 0 grades).
44. The external sample size and basis may be exceeded to address any professional body requirements.
45. Summary statistical information will be provided for each sample to be reviewed e.g. mean mark, standard deviation, lowest/highest mark.
46. External Examiners will be asked to confirm the module marks prior to the Subject Assessment Board and provide a report to confirm that marking is fair, consistent and feedback meets the required standard.
47. Where an External Examiner recommends further action to be taken in relation to a set of marks e.g. scaling or correction of arithmetical error, this should be discussed and agreed in consultation with the Module Leader and Head of School and reported to the Subject Assessment Board.
48. It is not appropriate for External Examiners to request changes to individual grades within a sample of work.

Policy Name:	AU Policy on Internal and External Moderation
Policy Reference:	QA21
Approval Authority:	Quality & Standards Committee
Last Approved:	June 2023
Responsible SMT Lead:	Academic Registrar
Responsible Department:	Registry
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Review Frequency:	3 years

