

Marking and Moderation Policy

Classification – *Public*

OCTOBER 2026



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out Arden University's approach to marking, internal moderation and external moderation of assessed work contributing to Arden University's awards.
- 1.2 Robust marking and moderation processes are essential to ensure that marking is fair, consistent, transparent and aligned to assessment criteria and learning outcomes.

2. About this policy

2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with, amongst others:

- Arden University Academic Regulations
- QA26 Written Feedback Policy
- External Examiner Handbook
- Partner Operations Manual

3. Who is covered by the policy?

3.1 This policy applies to:

- All assessed work contributing to an Arden University award.
- All students studying with Arden University, including those studying through collaborative or partnership arrangements.
- All academic staff involved in marking, moderation and assessment decision-making.

4. Definitions

4.1 **Standardisation** is a structured pre-marking process, led by the Module Leader, in which markers review assessment criteria, grade descriptors and sample work to ensure a shared understanding of academic standards and consistent application of marking thresholds before live marking begins.

4.2 **Standard Assessments** are any assessment that is not a dissertation/major project/capstone project.

4.3 **First Marking** provides a provisional grade and student feedback as outlined within the feedback policy (QA26).

4.4 **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.

4.5 **Dissertation/Capstone Project** all postgraduate and undergraduate dissertations/major projects/capstone projects.

4.6 **Multiple-Choice Questionnaire (MCQ)** assessment is an assessment comprised of a series of objective-response questions, where students select an answer from a predefined set of options.

4.7 **Partner Marking** the marking of any module delivered through partnership arrangements.

4.8 **Internal Moderation** provides assurance that i) the marking criteria has been applied appropriately ii) that marking is of an appropriate standard, fair, consistent, and equitable across all submissions and iii) that the feedback policy (QA26) has been applied.

4.9 **External Moderation** provides independent assurance that assessment standards, marking practices and academic outcomes are appropriate, consistent and aligned with sector expectations.

4.10 **Remarking** is a complete re-run of the marking process for all or part of a cohort. Remarked work must be subject to internal moderation.

4.11 **Scaling** is the process of applying a uniform mark adjustment across an entire cohort or subset thereof, without the need to review each piece of work individually.

5. Policy responsibilities

5.1 Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy complies with internal and external regulatory requirements. The Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee have delegated authority from the Academic Board for the approval and ongoing review of this policy.

5.2 The Academic Registrar (or their nominee) has primary and day-to-day responsibility for developing and implementing this policy, monitoring its use and effectiveness, and the ongoing review of procedures to ensure they are effective.

5.3 Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them understand this policy and how it applies to them.

5.4 Module Leaders must ensure that a standardisation meeting is convened each assessment marking period for all colleagues involved in marking on the module, and that internal moderation is conducted in accordance with this policy

5.5 Head of School are responsible for ensuring that all processes within this policy and related policies are duly completed.

5.6 All colleagues are responsible for ensuring they understand this policy and how it applies to them.

6. Marking

6.1 All submitted assessments (including standard assessments, dissertations and partner assessments) will be first marked within the timescales outlined below and in accordance with QA26:

Submission Type	Days to provisional grade release
Blended Learning Submissions	15 working days
Distance Learning Submissions	20 working days
Partner Submissions	15 working days

6.2 Standard Assessments

6.2.1 The module leader will lead and document pre-marking standardisation activities with all appointed markers prior to each marking cycle, to ensure consistent application of assessment criteria and marking thresholds. Evidence of standardisation will be included in the internal moderator's report within Grading Flow.

6.2.2 All standard assessments will be subject to first marking. Upon completion of the marking of on-time submissions, internal moderation will commence in accordance with Section 7 of this policy, and the outputs will be captured within the internal moderator's report in Grading Flow.

6.3 Multiple-Choice Questionnaires (MCQ)

- 6.3.1 MCQ assessments are delivered and marked automatically through the approved digital assessment platform, with marks generated through system-based scoring against pre-determined correct responses.
- 6.3.2 As MCQ assessments are auto marked and do not involve academic judgement in the allocation of marks, they are not subject to the standard marking and internal moderation processes outlined within this policy for non MCQ assessments.
- 6.3.3 The academic integrity, validity and reliability of MCQ assessments will be assured through the design, approval and moderation of the assessment content prior to delivery.
- 6.3.4 Internal moderation will be undertaken on the assessment artefact, including the question bank, answer keys, scoring configuration and assessment settings, rather than on student scripts.
- 6.3.5 MCQ assessments may additionally be subject to external scrutiny through the review of assessment materials by external examiners in accordance with University quality assurance processes.

6.4 Dissertation/Capstone Project

- 6.4.1 All postgraduate and undergraduate dissertations/capstone projects will be first marked by an appropriate qualified academic in line with QA 26.
- 6.4.2 When marking for on time submissions is completed, internal moderation will commence in line with section 7 of this policy, and the outputs will be captured within the internal moderator's report in Grading Flow.

6.5 Partner Assessments

- 6.5.1 The Arden University module leader will ensure that the partner module lead will coordinate and document pre-marking standardisation activities with all appointed partner markers prior to each marking cycle, to ensure consistent application of assessment criteria and marking thresholds. Evidence of partner standardisation will be included in the internal moderators report in Grading Flow.
- 6.5.2 Marking for assessments delivered through partnership arrangements will follow differentiated procedures. The level of required marking will be based on the stage of the programme delivery and will change in line with the below table subject to approval by the relevant partnership committee:

Partnership Delivery – Year 1	Standard assessments will be first marked by the partner and second marked by Arden University. Dissertations/Capstone projects will be first marked by an appropriate qualified academic from the partner and second marked by Arden University. All assessments will be subject to standard internal moderation principles as per section 7.
Partnership Delivery – Year 2	Standard assessments will be first marked by the partner. Dissertations/Capstone projects will be first marked an appropriate qualified academic from the partner. All assessments will be subject to 100% moderation as per section 7.
Partnership Delivery – Year 3	Standard assessments will be first marked by the partner. Dissertations/Capstone projects will be first marked an appropriate qualified academic from the partner. All assessments will be subject to standard internal moderation principles as per section 7.

- 6.5.3 Where second marking for assessments submitted at a partner cannot be agreed between the partner marker and the Arden University second marker, the Arden University marker judgement will supersede that of the partner marker.

6.6 Use of AI in Marking and Moderation

- 6.6.1 The University may utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation tools to assist with elements of the marking and moderation process. Such tools are intended to support, and not replace, academic decisions. AI outputs will not be used as the sole determinant of marks, grades, progression decisions, or final feedback provided to students. Responsibility for all assessment decisions remains with appropriately authorised academic staff, who will review, validate, and approve all marks and feedback before release.

7. Internal Moderation

- 7.1 All modules leading to an Arden University award will be subject to these internal moderation procedures.

- 7.2 Internal moderation is normally undertaken by the module leader and will commence once all on time submissions have been first marked.

- 7.3 The internal moderator will view a summary of the marking data as listed below and note this data within their internal moderator's report within Grading Flow (GF):

- The standard deviation of marks across the module (GF)
- The average mark across the module (GF)
- Spread of marks across the module (PBI)
- The highest and lowest mark (not including non-submissions) across the module (PBI)
- Spread of marks per band across the module (PBI)

- 7.4 The moderation sample will be randomly selected from all submissions received on time, and will ensure the following principles are applied:

- 7.4.1 For standard assessment and dissertation/capstone project moderation the minimum sample size will be 20% of the submissions received,

subject to a minimum of 12 or all submitted work on a module if there are less than 12 submissions.

7.4.2 A maximum of 50 submissions will be moderated where there are more than 250 submissions in total.

7.4.3 The sample will include 2 submissions from each classification band:

Undergraduate

- Fail – marks of 39 or less
- 40 – 49
- 50 – 59
- 60 – 69
- 70+

Postgraduate

- Fail - marks of 49 or less
- 50 – 59
- 60 – 69
- 70+

7.4.4 The highest and lowest graded script from the eligible submissions (excluding 0 graded submissions).

7.4.5 For partner assessments in year 1 of delivery which have been second marked, the internal moderation principles as outlined in 7.4.1 to 7.4.4 above will apply.

7.4.6 For partners assessments in year 2 of delivery, internal moderation will be subject to 100% moderation, all assessments will form part of the sampling.

7.4.7 For partner assessments in year 3 of delivery, the internal moderation principles as outlined in 7.4.1 and 7.4.4 above will apply.

7.5 The sample size and basis may be exceeded to address any professional body requirements.

7.6 The internal moderator may request additional scripts if they deem this to be necessary to assure the effectiveness of marking.

7.7 During the sampling process, the internal moderator will review every script in the sample, consider the following principles and record their acknowledgement of these within the internal moderator's report:

- Has QA26 been followed correctly by the marker in terms of feedback.
- Has each submission been marked to the standards that align with the marking matrices and the work undertaken during the standardisation meeting.
- Has each submission been marked consistently across all marking bands.
- Has the relevant word count penalty been applied consistently.
- Has the Academic Misconduct policy been applied fairly and consistently.
- Is the breakdown of marks been calculated and recorded correctly.

7.8 Where variances or issues arise during moderation, these should be discussed and resolved by a discussion between the markers and the internal moderator.

7.9 Individual student marks must not be changed through moderation, to ensure that no students are advantaged or disadvantaged because of the inclusion of their work in the sample.

7.10 Where an internal moderator disagrees with the first marks awarded, they should discuss their concerns with the Chair of the Subject Assessment Board (SAB). The following actions may result:

- Where there is only one marker for the assessment, the Chair of the SAB may resolve the discrepancy through discussion with the marker covering the full set of scripts.
- The Chair of the SAB may recommend scaling the marks across the entire cohort or subset thereof (e.g. all fails, the work of one or more markers, all work from a specific campus). Any classification changes caused by scaling must be considered and accepted before the adjustment is applied: if not then remarking should be considered instead.
- The Chair of the SAB may recommend remarking all or a defined part of the cohort (e.g. all fails, all the work of one or more markers, all work from a specific campus).

- 7.11 A clear record of which pieces of assessment have formed part of the internal moderation sample and the results of any actions undertaken as set out in 7.10 should be noted within the internal moderator's report within grading flow and they should also be discussed with the external examiner.
- 7.12 Where any further action is required as a result of internal moderation (e.g. scaling or remarking entirely or in part) in partner institutions, it will normally be the responsibility of the partner institution to ensure that this is carried out to the required standard.
- 7.13 The internal moderator's reports will be made available to the external examiner in support of external moderation and to the SAB responsible for ratifying those marks.
- 7.14 Oversight of the moderation process will be achieved through annual quality monitoring procedures which include a review of all Module Leaders and External Examiner reports.

8. External Moderation

- 8.1 All first attempt assessments which contribute to an Arden University award are subject to these external moderation procedures.
- 8.2 External Examiners will be provided with samples of assessed work for all modules that they are responsible for as detailed below:
- 8.2.1 The sample selected for external moderation will comprise a randomly selected sub-sample drawn from the assessments included within the internal moderation sample.
- 8.2.2 The external moderation sample size will be 10% of the total of on-time submissions received, comprising a maximum of 20 submissions and a minimum of 12 submissions, or all submitted work on a module if there are less than 12 submissions.
- 8.2.3 Samples selected for the external examiner should cover full range of grades awarded with submissions from each classification band and the highest and lowest graded submission (excluding 0 graded submissions).

- 8.2.4 The internal moderator's report will be shared with the external examiner which will include the summary of statistics reviewed by the internal moderator.
- 8.2.5 External examiners may request additional scripts if they deem this necessary for effective moderation.
- 8.2.6 The external examiners sample size and basis may be exceeded to address any professional body requirements.
- 8.2.7 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 the Chair of Subject Assessment Board as per section 7.10 above. This should be recorded in the external examiners end of cycle report and also reported to the Subject Assessment Board.
- 8.2.8 It is not appropriate for external examiners to request changes to individual grades within a sample of work.
- 8.2.9 External Examiners will be asked to confirm the module marks at the end of the external moderation period (prior to the Subject Assessment Board).
- 8.2.10 The lead external examiner will be required to attend the relevant Subject Assessment Board where the results of the module are ratified and confirm that the marking on the module is fair, consistent and feedback meets the required standard.
- 8.2.11 External examiners are also required to provide a report at the end of each moderation cycle to confirm that these procedures have been followed accordingly.

9. Exceptional External Moderation Arrangements

- 9.1 External moderation will normally be undertaken by the appointed external examiner within the timescales prescribed by the University to support the timely release of marks and feedback.
- 9.2 Where an appointed external examiner is unavailable to undertake external moderation within the required timeframe, the School will seek to reallocate the

external moderation activity to an alternative external examiner with appropriate subject expertise and relevant academic experience.

9.3 Where reallocation to an alternative external examiner is not possible within the required timeframe, the Head of School may be requested to undertake the duties associated with external moderation on an exceptional basis to assure academic standards and support progression of the assessment process.

9.4 In undertaking this role, the Head of School will review the assessment sample, internal moderation outcomes, marking approach and module performance to assure that the academic standards, learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the module have been appropriately met.

9.5 The use of this arrangement will be exceptional, documented, and subject to appropriate oversight to ensure continued assurance of academic standards and quality.

Policy Name:	Marking and Moderation Policy (formerly Policy on Internal and External Moderation)
Policy Reference:	QA21
Approval Authority:	Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee
Approval Period (start and end date):	September 26 – September 27 (Interim update)
Version:	1.5
Implementation Date:	October 2026
Responsible SMT Lead:	Academic Registrar
Responsible Department:	Registry
Policy Contact:	Head of Registry Services
Review Frequency:	3 years
Policy Classification:	Academic

Record of Amendments			
Date	Version Number	Details of Change	Approval