Internal and External Moderation Processes

1) As detailed in Section 4.28.2 of the Assessment and Feedback Policy, the process of providing moderated grades and feedback to students comprises the following 5 stages: Standardisation, First Marking, Second Marking, Internal Verification and External Examination. These processes are required to be adopted for all items of assessment, including non-written submissions such as presentations, performances, audio or video assessments and portfolios.

Standardisation

2) The purpose of a standardisation process is to establish that all assessors are applying the agreed grade criteria consistently. In practice, this involves the relevant group of assessors (e.g. a module marking team) each independently marking a sample of pieces of student work and assigning grades using pre-agreed criteria. The marking team then compare and discuss the outcomes to standardise their approaches. Following this exercise, the assessors continue to mark student work in the usual manner.

Guidance: Standardisation is particularly useful for new assessment items, newly reworked assessment items or where new staff are involved in the assessment and feedback process as it enables everyone to become familiar with the marking standards and conventions for that particular assessment item.

It is also possible to undertake standardisation prior to an assessment deadline using samples of work from previous years where the assessment item is the same. This can include assessment items where the deliverable is a presentation and these have been recorded for internal moderation purposes.

First Marking

3) First Marking is typically carried out by the module tutor (the first assessor). It is acceptable for large numbers of assessment items to be marked by module teams. The first assessor will provide both feedback and feedforward to the student (i.e. feedback to justify the allocated grade, and feedforward to support learner development via ‘advice for action’ (see further section 4.27 of the Assessment & Feedback Policy).

4) Where assessments are highly numerical or broken down into several constituent parts, it is the responsibility of the first assessor to ensure that the summation of all grades awarded is accurate by checking all submissions and calculations.

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1 It is considered good practice to use an assessment rubric or marking grid for this purpose.
Second Marking

5) The purpose of second marking is to corroborate the reliability of the marking standards applied by the first assessor. It is considered to be the first stage of Internal Verification. A second assessor must review the grade and any feedback/feedforward provided using the published assessment criteria. The second assessor can suggest awarding a different grade to that allocated by the first assessor as well as offer additional or different feedback/feedforward. (See further Expectation 7) and also the section on Internal Verification below for guidance on how to resolve any differences in grades). There is no requirement for second marking to be undertaken ‘blind’ as our sample sizes provide sufficient robustness (see Expectation 11).

6) It is possible for second marking of an item of assessment to occur within a subject or programme team as long as it is always undertaken by a different member of staff from that undertaking the first assessor role.

7) Where a student’s work has been included in the sample for second marking, the feedback/feedforward must be combined into a single set of feedback/feedforward and one agreed grade that will be provided to the student. This is the responsibility of the first assessor.

8) While assessors are always expected to provide feedback to justify the grade allocated, there is no expectation for feedforward to be provided where the assessment being submitted is the final piece of assessment in a programme (typically the dissertation/project), unless a fail grade is being awarded (see further Expectation 9).

9) In the case of fail grades at the first sit, feedforward must be provided in addition to the feedback that justifies the grade to enable the student to benefit from this ‘advice for action’ during their resit.

10) Second marking must be carried out on a sample basis for all non-principal modules, and on all assessment items submitted as part of a principal module.

11) The sample/process for second marking of assessment items in modules must:

   a. Include at least 10% of the total number of assessments, or 100% where the total number of assessments is less than eight or is submitted as part of a principal module (dissertations/projects etc).
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b. A sample size of 100% for all principal modules (dissertations/projects etc) reflects the nature of the relationship between the student and the dissertation/project supervisor who is typically also the first assessor and also the likely knowledge differential between the first and second assessors arising from the first assessor’s supervisory responsibilities. It is also appropriate given the additional weight allocated to principal modules in the final degree classification algorithm.

c. Comprise assessments (i.e. assignments and examinations) from across the range of grades. The exception is assessments at Level 4, where only fail and borderline pass/fail scripts will be included in the sample\(^2\).

d. Require that all assessment fails will be considered by two assessors except at Level 4 where a sample will be considered\(^3\).

**Internal Verification**

12) Internal Verification is the process whereby grades and feedback are confirmed to ensure that they are appropriate, fair and reliable across all items of assessment. It begins with the process of second marking in relation to the appropriate sample size (see Expectation 11).

13) Internal Verification is usually carried out by the first and second assessors discussing and agreeing the grade and any feedback/feedforward. Where agreement cannot be reached between the first and second assessors, the Programme or Subject Leader will adjudicate.

14) All Internal Verification discussions regarding first, second and agreed marks, as well as information regarding the assessment sample must be recorded in the Instructor/Grading Notes fields in the NILE Grade Centre.

15) If there are any queries about the reliability of the grading, the Programme or Subject Leader will provide oversight to ensure that one of the following will be undertaken:

   a. Second marking of a larger sample
   b. Agreed revisions to the markers’ interpretation of assessment criteria
   c. Use of a third assessor
   d. Remarking or adjustment of grades for the whole batch of scripts

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\(^2\) The processes of marking and moderation of Level 4 assessments are otherwise standard.

\(^3\) *Ibid.*
e. Where provision involving Education With Others (EWO) relates to a programme that is not run at the University, the named Academic Adviser in the partner institution will work in collaboration with the Programme/Subject Leader to identify the practicalities of how internal moderation will take place.

25) Internal Verification (including second marking) of ‘live’ assessments (e.g. presentations, vivas, performances, exhibitions etc) can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

26) Synchronous Moderation occurs when both the first and second assessors are present during the ‘live’ assessment. It is often referred to as ‘live’ double marking. Synchronous moderation should **always** occur for ‘viva voce’ assessments. The assessors will discuss and agree the feedback and grade during a face-to-face discussion. The first assessor retains responsibility for providing the feedback and grade to the student and for recording the outcome of the moderation discussion in the NILE Grade Centre where it can be viewed by the External Examiner.

27) Asynchronous Moderation occurs where it is not possible or necessary for both assessors to be present for the live assessment. In this situation, all presentations should be recorded by the first assessor and the second assessor will review a sample (sample size determined according to the nature of the module and the cohort size - see Expectations 10) and 11)). This enables the selection of an appropriate sample for moderation and external examination purposes, drawing from all submissions.

28) The recording of live assessments for asynchronous moderation is not considered to change the nature of the assessment into a public performance. Responsibility for making and storing the recording rests with the first assessor.

29) Once Internal Verification has occurred, grades will be provided to the Student Records team for input onto the student records system.

30) Once graded, all assessments must be stored for external scrutiny, in line with the University’s policy on data storage.

**External Examination**

31) Following a robust process of Internal Moderation, a sample of assessment items will be reviewed by the External Examiner. All items reviewed by the External Examiner will have been subject to Internal Moderation, although not all items scrutinised by the External Examiner will have been second marked. The role of the External Examiner is to provide an objective,
external engagement with the assessment items to ensure that they have been graded reliably and reflect the required academic standards set by the University in line with sector expectations.

32) External Examiner scrutiny should occur as follows:

a. The sample size within a module will be at least 10% or at least six pieces of work from each assessment item, whichever is greater. Where a cohort comprises eight students or fewer, all items will have been second marked.

b. The sample should be taken from all modules in those levels which contribute to the final award classification. In addition, the sample should include material from Level 4 of any new course.

c. Attention should focus on those items that have been awarded:
   - A fail
   - A borderline pass/fail
   - A mark at an interface between grades
   - Extremes of grade boundaries

d. The sample will contain items that were chosen for internal second marking and those that were not.

e. A copy of the Assessment Moderation Form is available to all External Examiners via the External Examiner area in each NILE site.

f. External Examiners must be provided with a sample of student work clearly identified as coming from provision involving Education With Others, including where provision is delivered at multiple sites and/or where students studying different levels of award are studying the same module (e.g. HNC, HND, BSc).

g. External Examiners can view other pieces of students’ assessed work, beyond that which is included in the sample, if they wish.

h. External Examiners will not be asked to adjudicate in cases of disagreement between internal assessors. Such disagreements will be referred to the Programme and Subject Leader⁴.

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⁴ In the event that the Programme and Subject Leader were involved in the disagreement the case would be referred to the Dean or Deputy Dean of the Faculty.