Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy 2019/20

This Policy supports the aims and expectations expressed in the [University Assessment Policy 2014 - 2020](#) and applies to summative assessment on all University taught provision, including that delivered by partner institutions.

July 2019

Contents

1. Setting assessments

1.1 Principles for setting assessments

When designing assessments the following principles **must** be applied:

- The nature and weighting of the assessment (and referral assessment) must tally with that set out in the up-to-date version of the Module Record.
- The volume, timing and nature of assessments **must** be designed with the intention of enabling students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the relevant intended learning outcomes.
- All intended learning outcomes must be assessed.
- Information to students about what is expected of them **must** be provided clearly and explicitly at the beginning of each module and/or programme.
- Assessments must support student learning as well as measuring achievement.
- Information on any arrangements for referral assessment must be made available to students at the beginning of each module.
- When setting assessment(s) consideration must be given to the need to eliminate opportunities for academic misconduct.
- Guidelines on the use of assessment methods, criteria and feedback must be made available to all staff involved in the assessment and feedback process.

Resources to support staff in designing assessments can be found at
https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/assessment

1.2 Approval of assessment tasks

1.2.1 Internal approval

The internal approval process applies to the following tasks as appropriate for each programme:

- All Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative coursework and practical assessments
- All Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative in-class tests
- All Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative examinations
- All referral work (which should be set at the same time as the original assessment)

A standing "Assessment Task Approval Panel" must be established at School or Programme level to ensure all summative items of assessment (coursework, examinations, in-class tests and practical assessments) are approved via a formal process before they are made available to students or forwarded to External Examiners if required (see section 4.2 below). This is to ensure assessments set are appropriate to meet learning outcomes and of a consistent standard.

STLQCs will approve the membership of each Panel annually.

The Assessment Task Approval Panel is responsible for checking and confirming that assessments:

- Use the correct module title, code, and assessment weighting
- Are appropriate for the module and level
- Enable students to meet the learning outcomes
- Are complete and accurate in terms of instructions for students
- Use correct grammar and spelling

- Use an appropriate template
- Are accompanied by assessment criteria/outline solution.
- Are accompanied by Assessment Task Guidance (see 1.3 below)
- Comply with the University policy on the re-use of assessment tasks (see 1.4 below)

An exemplar Internal Assessment Task Approval Form is at Appendix 3.

The Panel should also consider the overall assessment pattern in respect of type, amount and scheduling of assessment across the programme, particularly to avoid 'bunching' of assessment.

Clear records of the Panel's decisions must be kept: it is the Head of School's responsibility to ensure that this occurs.

1.2.2 External examiner scrutiny

Following internal approval (as above), the Subject External Examiner will be asked to scrutinise draft examination papers (including those for resit examinations), assessment criteria/outline solutions and marking schemes for all modules within their remit. External Examiners will also confirm, at the Subject Assessment Panel, the appropriateness of the form of coursework assessment used in each module.

1.3 Assessment task guidance

All assessment tasks (original and referral) must be accompanied by:
- clear instructions about the task/brief
- confirmation of the learning outcomes to be assessed
- assessment criteria and associated marking scheme
- details of tutorial and/or other support

This information must be made accessible in a timely manner to students.

1.4 Approval of re-use of summative assessment tasks (coursework, examinations, in-class tests and practical assessments)

The following applies to both first attempt and all subsequent summative assessment tasks.

i.   Re-use of assessment tasks is generally poor practice as it is likely to lead to unfair student experience.   Multiple choice tasks which draw questions from "banks" are permitted to re-use questions. However, the bank of questions must be extensive, and evolve to ensure students cannot predict questions.

ii.   The Assessment Task Approval Panel (see 1.2.1 above) must be assured that no question has been used in any assessment task in the previous 2 year period, unless there is explicit agreement from the external examiner. However, a question which was approved as part of a "resit" task which was never used (e.g. because no students undertook the resit task) may be included in the following year's assessments.

2. Marking

2.1 Anonymous marking

Anonymous marking is defined as where an assessment is assessed without the student's name or identity being made known to the marker, moderator or external examiner. Anonymous marking avoids the risk of bias entering the assessment process and endeavours to make sure all students are treated equally.

Wherever possible, assessment will be marked anonymously. There are necessary exceptions to anonymity where assessments include performance, practical work, presentations, fieldwork, placements, clinical skills and some team or group assessments.

The University's Policy on Anonymous marking can be found under "Assessment and academic progression" at https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations

2.2 Second marking of dissertations and final year projects

Each final year undergraduate/postgraduate dissertation and project must be independently second marked. Second marking is not routinely used for other assessment tasks.

Second marking will normally be unseen (the second marker will have no knowledge of the first marker's grade). The second marker re-marks (or may co-mark in the case of presentations) all work applying the same assessment criteria as the first marker. The outcome of this process will be either confirmation of the first marker's judgement without need for a meeting or a discussion between markers to resolve the differences between the two markers or where first and second markers cannot agree, a third marker will be assigned. Third marking will normally be unseen (the third marker will have no knowledge of the first and second marker's results).

All first, second (and third, where relevant) marking should be evidenced on a record sheet.

2.3 Involvement of postgraduate research students in marking
The University's *Policy on Postgraduate Students who teach* states that:

"PGR students may be involved in formative or summative marking, with appropriate training and supervision/mentoring. All marking will be subject to clear marking criteria and appropriate moderation. They should not be designing or setting assessments. PGR students should not normally be involved in teaching or assessing at Masters level, or marking level 6 dissertations unless they have relevant specialist knowledge and/or approaching the submission of their thesis".

3. Internal Moderation of student work

3.1 Requirements
Moderation involves a review of assessments within a module by an appropriate member of academic staff.

Moderation is a process separate from the marking of assessments. It ensures that an assessment outcome (e.g. mark and/or grade) is fair, valid and reliable, that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, and that any differences in academic judgement between individual markers can be acknowledged and addressed. It ensures consistency in marking within cohorts and across time.

Moderation is not a form of second or double marking. It is separate from the question of how differences in marks between two or more markers are resolved, and is not about making changes to an individual student's marks.

Wherever possible, moderation is required for **all components of summative assessment**, (with the exception of **dissertations and final year projects, which must be second marked – see 2.2 above),** irrespective of the level of the work or the credit weighting of the assessments. Within the University regulations a component equates to an assessment task (a piece of coursework, a presentation, a lab report, etc.).

Moderation should be appropriate to the subject area, the type of work being produced, and the credit weighting of the work.

Moderation must be completed before provisional marks are released to students.

Moderation must be evidenced and recorded (see 3.5 below).

3.2   Sampling

Moderation is carried out on a sample of the component of assessment. Because the sample of moderated work will be used to make a decision about the marking of all work that has been submitted, it is important it complies with the minimum requirements for sampling set out below.

The **minimum** sample for each component is:

- All fails
- 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the First (or Distinction) range to demonstrate the lowest and highest marks awarded in that classification band
- 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the remaining classification bands with a focus on work at borderlines

The sample should normally be representative of all markers involved in marking the component.

Discretion in sampling may be exercised where there are:
- Modules with small numbers (i.e. less than 30 students) where for example all assessment can be included in the sample
- Modules with large numbers, where Module Leaders may wish to discuss the content of the sample with the relevant Programme Leader and liaise with the External Examiner to confirm what they wish to receive
- Requirements imposed by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies

3.3   Process
In undertaking the process moderators should ask three broad questions:

1. Are the marks awarded justified by comments made on the assessment? For example, if the marker has written 'excellent', 'outstanding' and 'insightful' but awarded a mark of 72%, this may indicate under-marking at the top end.

2. Has there been use of the full mark range? The moderation process should for example, guard against the bunching of grades in one classification or under-utilisation of the top range of grades.

3. Is there broad agreement that the marks awarded are justifiable?

Outcomes of moderation
The moderator may decide to:
- **confirm all marks;**
- **raise or lower all marks;**
- **move a boundary** (e.g. put all high 2:2s into the 2:1 classification);
- **make an adjustment to a particular class of marks** (e.g. raise all First class marks, lower all Third class marks).

Where there are discrepancies evident in the case of multiple markers, adjustment to all marks awarded by a marker is permissible.

3.4   Agreeing marks
The moderator will often share the same view on the work they have seen and agree the marks should stand without adjustment. On occasions, some discussion is required and marks should be agreed based on a negotiated outcome. In the rare cases where agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be brought to the attention of the relevant Programme and/or Discipline Group Leader and/or Associate Head T&L, who may decide on further action such as additional moderation or marking.

3.5   Recording the process and outcome
A moderation form must be completed for each component of assessment in order to ensure the consistent recording of the process. Schools and Partners are responsible for providing templates to ensure the consistent recording of moderation processes and outcomes. A sample Record of Internal Moderation is included in Appendix 4.

Moderators should not make comments on individual pieces of assessment, but overall comments on the sample, the marking and any recommended changes. **All changes recommended must be recorded.**

These records must be included as part of the minimum module box content as set out in the Minimum Module Box Content Checklist so the External Examiner has clear information on the marks awarded and the moderation process operated in order to be able to confirm the maintenance of academic standards.

The assessment sample provided in Module Boxes for External Examiner scrutiny should normally be the same sample as that which has been internally moderated. External examiners retain the right to request to see any or all assessment.

4.   Subject External Examiner

4.1   Role

Subject External Examiners (SEEs) are assigned to a specific set of modules, agreed on appointment with the relevant Faculty/Partner College. As set out in the University's **Notes for Guidance for External Examiners**, SEEs comment on assessment processes, and on the standard, content and development of the modules within the subject. They are members of the Subject Assessment Panel which confirms or modifies module marks and ensures that the students are assessed in accordance with the assessment programme and the intended learning outcomes for the subject modules. The Notes provide further details of the role and responsibilities of external examiners.

The SEE will be provided with access to a 'Module Box' for each module in their remit. The contents of this will comply with the University's minimum requirements as set out in the attached Minimum Module Box Content Checklist.

The SEE has the right to see all elements and forms of subject assessment, including examination scripts, coursework, project reports, design work and dissertations in order to fulfil the role. External Examiners do not double mark or moderate individual students' work. If a SEE believes that standards of marking overall, or within a particular classification, are inappropriate, s/he may propose that all marks in that category be revised following a review of an appropriate sample of students' work.

4.2   Scrutiny of assessment tasks

See section 1.2.2 above.

4.3   Scrutiny of assessed work

In order to satisfy the University's requirement for external comment on assessment processes and the standard, content and development of modules, assessed work from **all** modules within a SEEs remit will be considered each year.

Version number July 2019 v1	Status: Final
Document objectives: To describe the University's policy on Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation	
Approving Body and Date Approved	UTLQC 8 July 2019
Date of Issue	July 2019
Review Date	Spring 2020

Appendix 1

University of Plymouth Marking and Moderation Flowchart

Assessments are marked using approved marking criteria.

Is the assessment a final year or PGT project / dissertation?

YES → Second marking of final year or PGT dissertation & project work. See Section 2: Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy.

NO

Internal moderation is undertaken. See Section 3: Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy

All marks collated by the Module Leader

Are any issues identified?

YES → Discuss and resolve issues (discussions may be between moderator and Module Leader, and where necessary involve Programme Leader and/or AHTL).

NO

Module Leader ensures marking and moderation processes are recorded, including outcomes, and that the record and assessment sample are included in the Module Box for external examiner scrutiny. See Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy, Appendix 2.

External examiner scrutiny. See Section 4: Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy.

Appendix 2

<div align="center">

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH
Minimum Module Box Content Checklist
</div>

NB: the University also has an agreed list of subject/programme level briefing material sent to external examiners on initial appointment and as part of the annual update – see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/governance/central-quality-office/external-examiners/support

Item	Notes
Checklist of module box contents	Including who is responsible for supplying which documents
Module Record	
Module Handbook/ Briefing/ Outline	Local descriptions vary, but this is the document given to students describing module content, etc. Where available, a link to an electronic version of this material (e.g. on Moodle) should be provided
Assessment tasks/briefing	i.e. coursework questions, practical tasks, examination questions
Assessment criteria/outline solution/marking scheme	
Sample of moderated students' work and feedback given to students	Selection of assessments should ensure there is a sample for all components of the module. The **minimum** sample for each component is: • All fails • 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the First (or Distinction) range to demonstrate the lowest and highest marks awarded in that classification band • 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the remaining classification bands with a focus on work at borderlines
Cover sheet for sample of work	
Internal Module Moderation Form	See the exemplar template at Appendix 4 of this Policy – please check with your Programme Leader, Discipline Group Leader and/or Programme Administrator for the approved template for your School/ programme/ partner institution
Module marks	For example, a copy of the Subject Assessment Panel papers (for UoP modules this will be provided by programme administrators)
Student Module Evaluation	
Module Review	
Additional material as required by PSRB	

Optional material (examples): Faculties may wish to include these in Module Boxes, but they do not form part of the University's minimum requirements

External examiners' reports (previous 3 years)	These should have been provided to the EE on appointment, but Faculties may wish to include for ease of reference.
Module data downloaded from the S3 site for that module	This may contain programme yearly means, achievement rates, how the module marks correlate with other modules taken by that body of students.
Additional Guidance material	E.g. generic feedback made available to students, indicative answers (for externals or students), material made available to students in feed-in sessions that are not contained within the assessment brief.
Module Evaluation by Module Leader	
Examples of formative assessment and feedback	
Examples of module handouts	Note that key module teaching materials are part of the "minimum content" requirements on Moodle and if EEs are provided with access to Moodle sites that there is no need to replicate the information in hard copy
Sample of lecture/teaching material	

Appendix 3

EXEMPLAR INTERNAL ASSESSMENT TASK APPROVAL FORM TO BE USED FOR ALL ASSESSMENT TASKS

School:	Module Code and title:
Module Leader:	Type of assessment:
Name of reviewer(s):	Date:
Year of study:	Programmes to which the module contributes:

Checklist		
Are the module code, title and assessment weighting(s) accurate?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Is the assessment appropriate for the module and level?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Does the assessment enable students to meet the learning outcomes?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Are instructions for students complete and accurate?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Are there any typos or grammatical inaccuracies requiring correction?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Is the task accompanied by: • clear instructions about the task/brief • confirmation of the learning outcomes to be assessed • assessment criteria and associated marking scheme • outline solution • details of tutorial and/or other support	Yes	No
Comments:		
Where relevant, is the assessment on the appropriate template?	Yes	No
Comments:		
If an examination paper, are any questions the same as on any examination paper in the previous two years (unless an unused referral paper)?	Yes	No
Comments:		
If a coursework task, is this the same as any other task set for this module in the previous two years (unless an unused referral task)?		
Comments:		

Appendix 4

UNIVERSITY of PLYMOUTH

Record of Internal Moderation of student work

Internal moderation of assessment ensures the consistent use of marking criteria; comparability and equity of standards; and consistency and fairness in marking. This document provides evidence this has taken place, in line with the University's Assessment Setting, Marking and Moderation Policy and the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Before completing this form please ensure you are familiar with the above Policy and Guidance Notes for Moderation.

This form should be completed for every component in a module and provided as part of the minimum content of the Module Box for External Examiner scrutiny.

Module Code: **Module Title**: **Module Leader**: **Academic year and semester**: **Component :** [*state the nature of the component e.g. exam, CW, in-class-test, practical and the weighting*]
Name(s) of internal marker(s):
Module Leader comments: [*reflect on performance, any issues affecting the taking of the assessment, any issues affecting the marking of the assessment, feedback given to students etc.*]
Name of internal moderator:
Internal moderator comments: [*delete as appropriate; if answering no to any question please explain below*] **Have appropriate assessment criteria been used?** Yes/No **Has the work been marked fairly and consistently?** Yes/No **Are the marks awarded appropriate for the task and level?** Yes/No **Is the sample size sufficient?** Yes/No **Is the nature and level of feedback to students appropriate?** Yes/No Comments: **Do you confirm all grades?** Yes/No If no, explain what you recommend should change and why.

Module Leader's Response and any actions taken:

Internal Moderator's Signature:	**Date:**
Module Leader's Signature:	**Date**: