



Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedure

This document outlines the procedure for both the moderation and verification of assessment.

Verification involves checking that the structure and content of assessment briefs and tasks are suitable, inclusive and fair, meet required standards and enable effective appraisal of how learning outcomes are met at an appropriate level.

Moderation ensures that marking is undertaken to set academic standards and criteria throughout a module or course, enabling fair and consistent assessment of student cohorts.

It is important that moderation and verification are considered separately to avoid confusion (in the past these terms may have been used erroneously and interchangeably when in fact they are different).

1. Verification of Assignment Briefs and Examination Papers

a. Coursework and Examinations

The Head of Department has overall responsibility for overseeing the internal verification of assignment briefs and examination papers for modules at all levels of study.

Internally verified briefs and papers for those modules delivered both on campus and at partners and which contribute to the classification of students' awards (levels 5 -8 and 4 where the assessment contributes to the classification), both first sits and resits, will be sent to the External Examiner for approval prior to their publication. Any changes recommended by the External Examiner, if accepted by the module leader, shall be incorporated into the final version of the brief or paper. If the proposed changes recommended by the External Examiner are not accepted by the module tutor, the module tutor should discuss the issue with both the Head of Department and the School Associate Dean Students before providing feedback to the External Examiner.

Details of coursework assignments including submission dates, and assessment criteria/rubric should be available to students on Blackboard. Partners may use Blackboard or equivalent platforms, which designated School staff shall be given access to for monitoring and compliance purposes.

Students should be directed to submit coursework through Blackboard. For collaborative partner institutions an alternative online learning resource may be used. In some circumstances submission through the VLE may not be possible (artefacts etc.). Manual submission of assessments must be approved by the School on an exceptional basis only

and in such instances digital storage of the assessment is still required (for example through a digital recording or photograph).

Schools and Partners will also take reasonable steps to ensure that all students are aware of the procedures and process with regard to claims for extenuating circumstances.

The University will ensure that information on the date, time and location of all examinations is published in good time. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of the date, time and venue for all examinations that they are required to take and for presenting themselves at the examination room in good time before the examination is due to begin.

b. Coursework and Examinations – Partner Institutions

For franchised and validated provision Schools must ensure that:

Partners are provided with approved University examination papers, coursework tasks and other assessments in good time, where the partner is utilising assessments developed by the University.

Where a partner is not using assessments developed by the University, School staff should review and approve the form and content of proposed examination papers, coursework tasks and other assessments developed by the partner (all levels). Internally approved assessments will then be submitted to the External Examiner where the assessment contributes to the final classification. Designated staff will ensure that:

- All assessment briefs are appropriate for the level of study and will enable students to demonstrate that they have met the identified learning outcomes for the module; and
- Clear assessment criteria are produced for each assessment and that the criteria are closely linked to the learning outcomes being assessed.

School staff should review comments submitted by the External Examiner on any proposed examination papers, coursework tasks and other assessments developed by the partner and liaise with the partner to respond to these.

In the case of common assessment tasks used by multiple partners, Schools should ensure that:

- All partner course teams have a common understanding of the assessment brief; and
- All course teams have a common understanding of the assessment criteria.

In the case of dual awards, a shared understanding must be reached at validation regarding the assessment responsibilities of each partner in relation to maintaining oversight of the academic standards of those components of the programme for which they are responsible. This should be clearly documented.

c. Anonymous Marking

All formal written examinations, including those at Partners, must be marked anonymously.

Where possible, summative coursework assessments should also be marked anonymously.

2. Moderation of Assessment Results

Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately, reflecting the shared understanding of the markers (UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Assessment (QAA, 2018).

Moderation is an aspect of examining and assessment which is important for a number of reasons. It is one of the means by which the University seeks to ensure that students are assessed accurately, fairly and with only those aspects of subjectivity which are academically justifiable.

The University does not accept appeals from students against the marks awarded as to do so could question academic judgment. The University will accept appeals against a failure of a process. This distinction is an essential protection and is an important part of academic freedom which is dependent on the integrity and efficiency of the assessment processes used.

a. Moderation Process

Moderation of module results involves marking and second marking by tutors and review by External Examiners. Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that this takes place. It is not the expectation that external examiners review resit assessments.

Tutors are responsible for ensuring that students have been fairly assessed in accordance with the module assessment criteria and also for maintaining accurate records of students' marks. Where two or more staff are involved in the assessment of a module, the module leader is responsible for moderating marks, entering those results into the University's computerised student record system and checking them.

The dissertation in masters programmes must be 'double blind' marked. This means that the two markers must mark the work without having sight of the mark awarded by the other marker. The markers must then determine an agreed mark and the form and content of the feedback.

All final year undergraduate dissertations (and not a sample thereof) must be second marked for moderation purposes. The second marker will review all work already first marked, with annotations and/or marks still attached from the first marker, in order to moderate overall standards.

For all other forms of assessment (at all levels), Heads of Department have overall responsibility for ensuring that a sample of all coursework submissions and examination scripts are second marked for moderation purposes.

The sample for moderation second marking is at least ten or ten per cent (whichever is the greater) of the assessments. Where the number of assessments is less than ten, then the marking sample should be set at 50%. The size of the sample will only vary in exceptional circumstances, such as being a requirement of a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

A full range of marks should be included in the sample, with each band represented. Samples should normally include all fails and firsts and some borderlines. The sample should normally be selected by the second marker, who has sight of all the marks.

Where there are significant discrepancies between the first marker and second marker (either within classification boundaries or at a classification borderline), and this discrepancy cannot be resolved between the two markers, this should be reported to the Head of Department to take appropriate action, which might include:

- Requiring the first marker to review all assessment marks for the module in the light of the second marker/moderator's comments.
- Asking a third marker to mark the same sample of work.
- Requiring that all work in a particular class be re-marked.
- Requiring that all work for the module be re-marked.

It must be noted that any amendment to the marks of the sample as a result of the internal moderation process must be applied to the rest of the cohort in order to ensure equity and consistency.

In those cases where the overall module mark is at the borderline of pass/fail or a classification threshold (module marks of 39, 49, 59 or 69), the module leader must review the mark in advance of the moderation process.

Where review of work by external examiners is required, the external examiner will receive the sample which has been internally moderated including evidence of the moderation. For dissertations which have been 'double blind' marked or second marked, the sample parameters above apply when sharing a sample with the external examiner. External examiners may request to see further student work beyond the sample originally provided. In line with the University's External Examiner Policy, where the external examiner is not satisfied with the standard of the marks awarded they may recommend that the university re-mark all student work (not just the sample) for that piece of assessment.

Once moderation is finalised, all assignments must be digitally stored; the completed storage exercise will then be signed off by a designated School representative following university policy. This requirement includes accounting for the storage of assessments in collaborative set ups in ways appropriate to validated and franchised arrangements.

Marks will only be considered by a Board after moderation has taken place.

b. Partners

The moderation process above applies to partner provision with partner academic staff undertaking the marking and initial moderation in line with this. As with on-campus provision, Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that moderation takes place. Moderated work at all levels must then be reviewed by Staffordshire University staff to verify the standard of marking. Where required this sample will then be shared by the University

with the external examiner. Oversight by Staffordshire University staff of the moderation process to verify the standard of partner marking must be undertaken for at least the first three years of (a) a new partnership or (b) the delivery of programmes in a distinctively new subject area by an existing partner.

Following this period of three years, the Partnerships Committee may decide that the partner can assume more responsibility for internal moderation. The outcomes of course monitoring and reports from External Examiners will inform the Partnership Committee's decision. Schools wishing to delegate internal moderation to a partner must make a recommendation to Partnerships Committee.

3. Integrated Degree Apprenticeships – End Point Assessment

Verification of End Point Assessment

In relation to the End Point Assessment (EPA) element of integrated-degree apprenticeships, verification involves checking that assessments are **in line with those delineated in the EPA Plan specific to each apprenticeship**.

The Head of Department must ensure that the assessment tools used in the End Point Assessment are fit for purpose. As such they must ensure that:

- Assessment and support materials are clear, accessible and pitched at the right level and covering the right content for the standard
- Assessment materials allow for consistent, valid and fair assessment of occupational competence
- Assessment materials allow prescribed grading judgements to be made
- Support materials are clearly differentiated for different audiences (e.g. employer, apprentice, course team)

Assessment materials must be approved by the EPA External Examiner before being issued to apprentices as outlined in section 1 above.

Anonymous Marking

Anonymous marking/double blind marking is not applicable to integrated-degree apprenticeship End Point Assessment. Final grading decisions must be made by the appointed Independent End Point Assessor in accordance with the relevant EPA Plan.

End Point Assessment - Moderation Process

The moderation process outlined in section 2 above applies to EPA assessments. Any sample of assessments for moderation must be representative of the students enrolled on the apprenticeship with the following included: a range of apprentice demographics; full breadth of reported assessment occurrences; full range of assessment methods; all Independent End Point Assessors; number and nature of attempts; and outcome. The

University recognises that in exceptional circumstances a variation to the standard sample size may be needed due to the volume and complexity of EPA assessments; any such arrangements must be approved by Quality and Enhancement Committee.

While the University's External Examiner Policy states that where the external examiner is not satisfied with the standard of the marks awarded they may recommend that the university re-mark all student work, for the EPA this is only in relation to the academic standard/level of marking that contributes to the embedded academic qualification. The Independent End Point Assessor (where not also the EPA EE) makes the final judgement regarding the award of each individual apprenticeship.

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