

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Marking and Moderation Policy

1. Introduction

The University assessment principles are described in the Assessment Policy. Reliability is a core principle for assessment. This means that the outcomes of assessment for a student should be fair and justifiable. It assumes that if the marking process is repeated, a student can expect to receive a similar result. We know this is difficult to ensure when dealing with large numbers of markers and a diverse student body and so, the policy for marking and moderation is designed to ensure that each student's work is considered appropriately, and to minimise the possibility of unfair outcomes for students. It also protects and supports the staff who are responsible for making judgments about the quality of student work. Finally it is a way of ensuring and maintaining academic standards in the University and its partners.

2. Principles of marking and moderation

The minimum standard which all University programmes must adopt is that all assessed work which contributes to a final award should be subject to an element of independent internal scrutiny. This scrutiny seeks to contribute to consistency in marking standards and practices across a subject area and programme, and to provide written feedback on how this can be achieved.

Marking is a process indivisible from assessment and embedded within particular disciplines, therefore the marking process for any particular piece of student work needs to be understood within that context. Some assessments can be benchmarked to an established set of marking criteria, or 'correct' or 'model' answers. Some assessments require objective marking of a student's performance through the academic and/or professional judgment of student performance against broad marking criteria.

Moderation is the process which should make sure that the marking of assessments is fair, reliable and is consistent with the marking criteria.

3. Assessment briefs and guidance

All assignments must be accompanied by explicit assessment guidance including information about the assessment task, learning outcomes to be assessed, assessment criteria which indicate the standards required, marking and grading criteria for different categories of pass marks and details of tutorial or other support. The assessment guidance and briefing sheets should be accessible to all students and staff normally through programme and/or module handbooks, and the digital

learning environment

4. Marking criteria

It is the responsibility of the module leader to identify that the marking criteria for a particular assessment are appropriate, and to ensure that the criteria are accurate, transparent, and available to markers in a timely fashion. Marking and grading criteria should be available to all students and staff and external examiners.

5. Anonymous marking

Anonymous marking is defined where an assignment or examination 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, assignments will be marked anonymously. There are necessary exceptions to anonymity where assignment elements include performance, practical work, presentations, fieldwork, placements, clinical skills and in some team or group assessments.

6. Pass Rounding up of marks

It is vital that within a module "rounding up" only happens once in the final calculation of a module mark. Element marks are never rounded up in advance.

The following will be rounded up to pass standard

- Level 4, 5 or 6: 39.5% at module level
- Level 7 (postgraduate): 49.5% at module level

Please refer to the guidance on rounding up of marks

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/governance/central-quality-office/external-examiners>

7. Internal Moderation

Moderation involves a review of assignments within a module by an appropriate member of academic staff. The internal moderation process will sample assessments to satisfy the moderator that there is consistency and fairness, sampling a minimum of 10 assignments in small modules. Selection of assessments should ensure there is a representative sample of

- assignments from all elements of the module

- borderlines and fails

Moderators should pay particular attention to, and **may** need to sample further where for example there are

- new modules
- assignments are taught or assessed by staff new to Plymouth University and partner institutions

When a moderator has concerns they will have a conversation with the module leader and may suggest a review and revision of marks.

If, following discussions, the module leader or moderator has concerns about the process, this should be raised with the Programme Leader or Associate Head of School, Teaching and Learning, who may arrange for further moderation or marking.

All moderation activities should be recorded with marker's, module leaders and moderator comments. These will be available to external examiners, and at subject assessment panels.

8. Second marking of dissertations and final year projects

All final year, and postgraduate dissertations and projects will be independently second marked. Marking will normally be unseen (the second marker will have no knowledge of the first marker's grade). 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.

Where first and second markers cannot agree, a third marker will be assigned. Marking will normally be unseen (the third marker will have no knowledge of the first and second marker's results).

All marking should be evidenced on the record sheets for dissertations and final year projects and made available to external examiners and at subject assessment panels.

9. Releasing Marks

Provisional marks accompanied by feedback should be made available to students as soon as possible, and normally within a maximum of 20 days

10. External Examiners

Subject External Examiners 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 being assessed in accordance with the assessment programme and the intended learning outcomes for the subject modules.

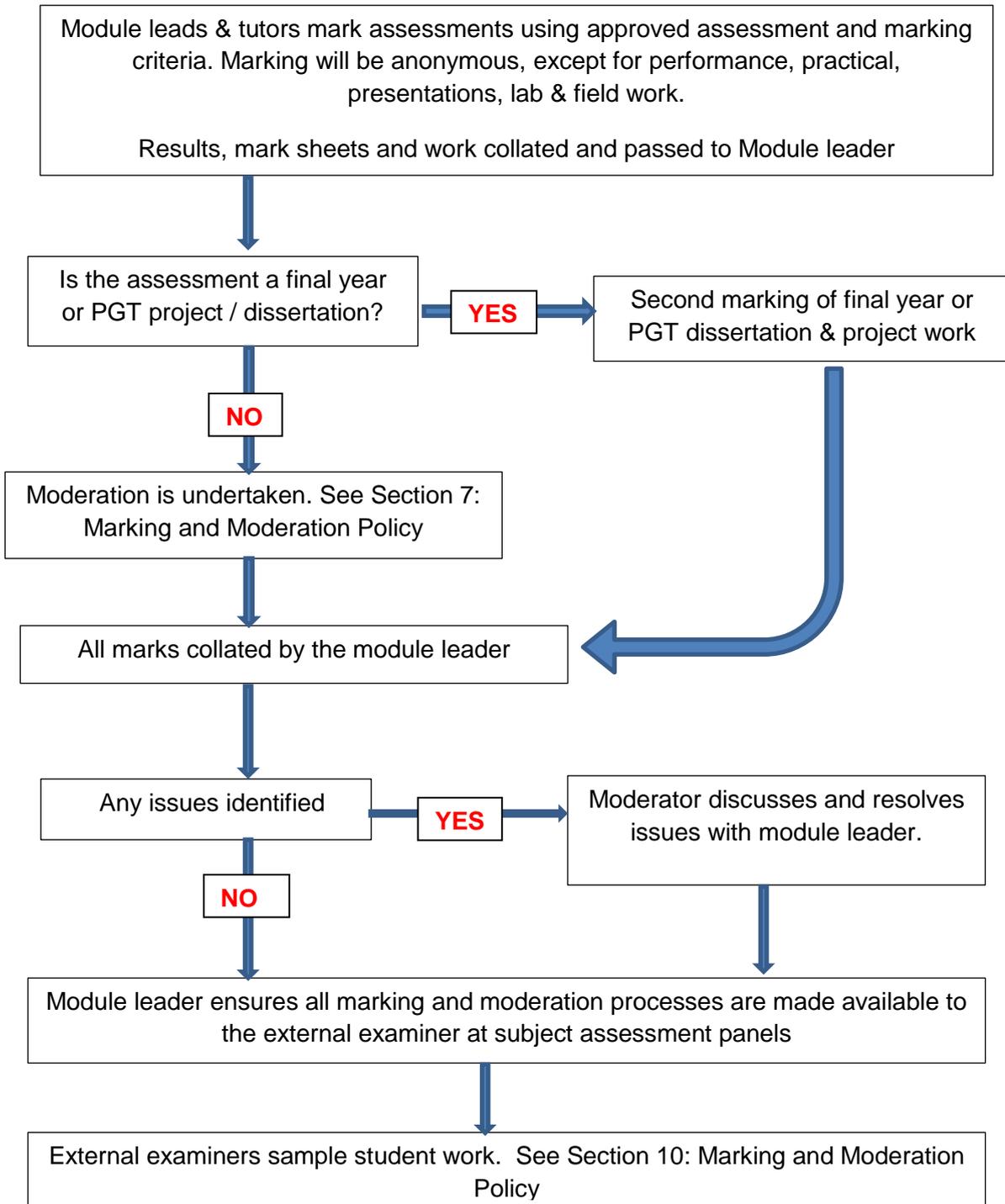
The University's **Notes for Guidance for External Examiners** provide further details of the role and responsibilities of external examiners. External Examiners do not double mark or moderate **individual students'** work. If a Subject External Examiner believes that standards of marking overall, or 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.

The Subject External Examiner has the right to see all elements and forms of subject assessment, including examination scripts, coursework, project reports, design work and dissertation in order to fulfil the role. In order to most effectively focus externals' input to the University's quality assurance framework, the normal expectation is that there would be detailed scrutiny of approximately one third of the modules (across all Levels) to which the external is assigned in each academic year. Scrutiny will normally include modules which:

- Are running for the first time
- Have been taught and/or assessed by staff new to Plymouth University or partner institutions
- Modules which have a pass rate below 85% at level 0, 90% at level 4 and 95% at levels 5, 6 and 7.
- Modules identified by the School/Academic Partnerships/Partner Institution (e.g. as part of annual review action planning) as requiring specific attention.
- Modules identified by the external examiner
- A selection of undergraduate final year or postgraduate dissertations or projects.

Each module must receive detailed scrutiny within the three year cycle.

Plymouth University Marking and Moderation Flowchart



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