

Policy for Internal (Strategic) Moderation and Double Marking

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3.1	Clarification regarding moderation of PGT dissertations for Brunel Online programmes.	Head of Quality Assurance	May 2022	University Education Committee

Policy for Internal (Strategic) Moderation and Double Marking

1. Introduction

1.1 Assessment is the process by which judgements are made on students' achievements against defined learning outcomes, which forms the basis of degree awards. The importance for individual students and for maintaining academic standards are clear, and the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on Assessment](#) states that

“Policies and procedures for marking assessments and moderating marks are clearly articulated, consistently operated and regularly reviewed”

1.2 Internal moderation supplements external moderation by External Examiners, and is undertaken to ensure that sound and consistent academic judgements are made during the marking process. Our External Examiners comment favourably on the moderation process used by Departments, and especially the clarity and transparency it provides in assuring academic standards.

1.3 The University has agreed to use the process of Strategic Moderation, which takes a risk-based approach to assuring the standards, consistency and fairness of the marking process. It implies that moderation does not need to routinely be carried out across all assessments every year, but is focussed on where it is deemed necessary.

1.4. Evidence of internal moderation should be available to External Examiners and the Panel of Examiners. The latter will monitor any particular issues emerging as a result of Strategic Moderation.

2. Definitions

2.1 **Blind-double marking:** assessment of students' work by two independent markers, each of which makes a separate judgement. In the event of disagreement, a resolution is sought. This must be used for all undergraduate projects and masters dissertations as described in section 5 below.

2.2 **Internal Moderation:** a process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and appropriate, and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently.

2.3 **Clerical checking:** checks that all marks have been totalled correctly and that there are no arithmetical or other errors in the marking process. This process does not require any academic judgement and may therefore be undertaken by administrative staff.

3. Internal Moderation - When should it take place?

3.1 The risk-based approach used for internal moderation is termed Strategic Moderation.

3.2 Internal Moderation should be undertaken where:

- Assessments are marked by GTAs /HPLs / temporary staff / probationary and inexperienced members of staff.

- An inexperienced module leader is in place.
- Persistent over- or under-performance by students in previous years is identified.
- External Examiners comment on the consistency/quality of marking.
- Student feedback indicate issues with assessment and/or feedback.

3.3 The above list is not exhaustive and does not preclude Divisions / Departments from undertaking moderation that is more extensive in order to assure integrity of the marking progress, nor does it preclude staff from asking for their work to be moderated.

3.4 Where multiple independent markers are involved with the same assessment, it is expected that a calibration activity be undertaken to ensure there is consistency between markers. In this case, there is not normally a need to undertake further moderation.

3.5 Random internal moderation will take place so that over time all assessments will be checked.

3.6 Moderators should be assigned by the Head of Department (or nominee) in advance of the academic year to ensure equity of workload between staff.

3.7 A schedule of Division/Departmental marking and moderation allocations should be provided at the beginning of the academic year to ensure transparency and allow staff to plan their work according to the expected timeframes.

4. Internal Moderation – assessment types

4.1 Moderation should be used for all coursework (including presentations and performances) and examinations where academic judgements are required as outlined below:

Type of Assessment (list not exhaustive)	Moderation Required	Action
Multiple Choice Questions	No	Clerical checking unless automated marking and reporting via WISEflow is used
Calculations	No – if marks are awarded only for the correct answer Yes – if judgement is used and marks are awarded for how the student has arrived at the answer	Clerical checking Follow moderation protocol for written work
Short-answer text questions	No – if marks are awarded only for a defined answer (eg. using a specific word) Yes – if judgement is used and marks are awarded for explanations	Clerical checking Follow moderation protocol for written work
Essays, Reports	Yes	Follow moderation protocol for written work
Presentations (oral, poster)	Yes	Follow moderation protocol for assessments not permanently documented
Performances	Yes	Follow moderation protocol for assessments not permanently documented

Seminar contributions	<p>No – if total contribution of seminars is $\leq 15\%$ of overall mark (eg. 5 seminars@2% = total 10%)</p> <p>Yes – if total contribution of seminars is $> 15\%$ of overall mark (eg. 4 seminars@5% - total 20%)</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Follow moderation protocol for assessments not permanently documented</p>
Taught Masters Dissertations and for Undergraduate Final Year Dissertations	NO – these are blind double marked; however, it is considered good practice to ensure equity of judgement across the board.	See section 6 below

5.1 **Internal Moderation Protocol for written work:**

- a. The Block Leader provides all marked work, indicative/model answers, marking criteria and a completed Part 1 of the Internal Moderation Form to the moderator.
- b. The moderator selects a minimum of 20% of marked work, comprising all work provisionally graded below threshold (D- for UG; C- for PGT) and a selection of all other grade bands, ensuring that work at the borderline between grade bands are included. The sample size must be sufficiently large to confidently agree that marking is consistent and appropriate.
- c. The moderator determines whether:
 - the marked work, when viewed in rank order, is consistent and in agreement with the marking criteria;
 - the comments/feedback reflect and are consistent with the awarded mark/grade.
- d. Where no issues are found, the moderator completes the Internal Moderation Form, confirming that the marks/grades are agreed.
- e. If any systemic issues are noted such as marking being too lenient or stringent; the full range of marks not being used effectively; or marking is unsound, then all students' work should be looked at again or remarked as appropriate, taking the moderator's comments into consideration. Single inconsistencies (for example, an issue across a borderline for individual student(s)) are resolved in discussion with the marker.
- f. The 'conversation' between the moderator and marker is documented such that there is an evidence trail of any concerns and the actions taken that is available to the External Examiner and Panel of Examiners.
- g. If the Block Leader fails to adequately address the moderator's queries this should be reported to the Chair of the Panel of Examiners who will determine the appropriate course of action.

5.2 **Internal Moderation of assessments not permanently documented:**

- a. The assessor and moderator should both be present during the assessment, so that assessment and moderation takes place concurrently.

- b. The assessor provides marking criteria in advance.
- c. The mark/grade and feedback to students will be agreed by the assessor and moderator.
- d. Where recordings of the assessments are made, the moderation process for written work can be used.

6. Protocol for the Assessment of Taught Masters Dissertations and for Undergraduate Final Year Dissertations: Blind Double Marking

- 6.1 The following protocol applies to the assessment of all taught Masters dissertations and undergraduate final year projects. Colleges should ensure that appropriate structures are in place to administer the assessment process as per this protocol.
- 6.2 Appropriate guidance on the assessment of dissertations and final year projects (including clear assessment criteria and appropriate grade descriptors) shall be provided to all assessors before assessment commences.
- 6.3 Each report shall be assessed by two internal assessors, at least one of whom must have had no part in advising the student concerning their dissertation or project. The assessors shall be selected such that their combined knowledge of the topic is appropriate.
- 6.4 Independent assessment forms, addressing all of the grading criteria and providing an overall grade, shall be received by the dissertation/project coordinator from each assessor separately and independently.
- 6.5 Where the two independently assessed grades differ, a final agreed mark/grade, with written justification, shall be provided to the dissertation/project coordinator by the two assessors jointly. In all cases where:
- a. The two independent assessments (step 6.4 above) differ by more than 10% or 3 grade points (for pre-2013 SR3, 1 grade) even if they have reached agreement in step 6.5; OR
 - b. The two assessors cannot reach agreement in step 6.5 (irrespective of the grade difference in step 6.4)
- a 3rd internal assessor shall be appointed to moderate the assessment and shall be provided with both of the independent assessment forms (step 6.4 above), the joint assessment form (step 6.5), and the dissertation/project report. The 3rd assessor shall have the opportunity to discuss the report with the first two assessors and the decision of the 3rd assessor, with documented justification, shall be final.
- 6.6 For Brunel Online programmes, masters dissertations/research projects or undergraduate final year dissertations will, in addition to blind double marking, be subject to moderation by the University in accordance with section 5 of this Policy.