

Guidance for Moderation of Examination Papers

Examination Papers preparation

Moderation of examination papers (during the semester 1 and semester 2 preparation periods) is applied to all undergraduate and postgraduate papers (and also postgraduate coursework) prior to all assessments being sent to the External Examiners for their consideration and comment.

The purpose of moderating an examination is to help ensure that it achieves the normal goals of end-of-course assessment. Obvious things to check include the following:-

- (i) Do the questions unambiguously communicate the examiner's intentions? I.e., could a student sitting the exam reasonably be expected to know what is required of him?
- (ii) Are the questions completable in the time allotted?
- (iii) Is the marking scheme sufficiently detailed to allow efficient and consistent marking?
- (iv) Does the examination fairly cover the material examined?
- (v) Are there any technical (e.g. mathematical) errors?
- (vi) Could the writing style be improved?

The main value of the process is simply to ensure that a fresh pair of eyes gets to see every examination paper before it goes to the External Examiners. (Basically, this is just common sense.) Moderating an examination will seldom take more than one hour.

Examination Paper marking

Moderation of exam marking is applied to all final year and postgraduate papers, and also postgraduate coursework weighted more than 50%.

The moderator does not have to agree with the method of marking, only agree that it is has been fairly applied without blatant error. The moderator is not trying to reconcile blind double marking, merely agree that the first marker has acted reasonably. **If any one mark is changed we have to go through all the papers. We hope to avoid this unless a significant mistake is detected.**

Academic moderation will normally take place before the clerical checks where members of the Student Support Office check each individual script to ensure that each subsection has been marked and that the marks tally. Any unmarked pages, sections or arithmetic errors will be noted and the marker will be asked to look at all queries and make any necessary amendments.

Wherever possible academic moderators will be staff who are not involved in the setting of the examination and are capable of interpreting the answer scripts and the marking scheme for the papers concerned. However mutual cross moderation by the examiners between two halves of a paper will be permitted if no other appropriate member of staff is available.

A sample of the answer scripts will be taken comprising:

- All the scripts if the total number is less than 10.
- 10 papers if the total number is 10-100.
- 10% otherwise.

The sample should represent a reasonable distribution of marks including a script with top marks and one with poor marks but representing a reasonable attempt at the paper (i.e. not a paper with less than 10%).

The marking pack will contain a detailed marking scheme showing the breakdown of the marks allocation. Ideally this will be sufficiently detailed to see how individual marks are allocated. If the marking scheme is modified or refined during the marking process it will be the marking scheme actually used for the marking.

The moderator will check that the marking of the sample is consistent with the marking scheme. The moderator will initial every question on the papers checked in this way. The moderator will sign the front cover of the script.

If the moderator identifies any discrepancy of more than 2/20 in any question or more than 5% (e.g. 3/60) in the paper overall then this will be brought to the attention of the School's Exams officer. If, on further investigation, the marker, the moderator and the exams officer agree that original mark stands no further action need be taken.

If any mark is changed as a result of this moderation process, then all the scripts will be moderated, not necessarily by the original moderator. This will effectively be a non-blind double marking of the papers or a selected question if a problem relates to a specific question. As many staff will be used as necessary to complete this moderation in time.