

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

MODERATION AND SCALING POLICY FOR PGT PROGRAMMES IN LITERATURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE/LINGUISTICS

Approved at the PG BOS 26 April 2023

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Examination Conventions and Policy and Guidance of Moderation and Scaling.

1. Definition of Moderation

*'Moderation' applies broadly to a range of processes whereby assessment tasks, assessment 'component' marks and/or module marks are scrutinised to ensure that the assessment criteria are applicable and consistently applied and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to meet'. In a narrower sense it is also used to distinguish two types of second reading: moderation, where samples of work are scrutinised by a second reader, and second marking, where all pieces of work are scrutinised by a second reader. In both cases the second reader also considers the overall level and range of marks.

*Policy and Guidance on Moderation and Scaling:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching/effective-practice/assessment/exams-policy>

2. Organisation

The Head of School (or nominee) shall make arrangements to ensure that all work subject to the policy is moderated. Practical arrangements for marking and moderation are the responsibility of the Degree Programme Directors (DPDs), in consultation with Subject Heads (SHs). Marking and moderating duties, and the timetable for all assessment activities, are announced annually in the PG Examination Document.

- i) In the case of team-taught modules, the Module Leader sets assignments and may consult with other module tutors and lecturers. First marking is allocated across those teaching on the module by the Module Leader, in consultation with the Subject Head with regards to workload. The moderator will be the Module Leader.
- ii) In the case of sole-taught modules the Module Leader sets and marks the assignments.
- iii) The first marker for independent study modules (Dissertations) and Creative Writing modules is the supervisor or a colleague with appropriate expertise.

Second markers and moderators are chosen from academic staff with appropriate expertise, bearing in mind overall workload.

3. Different Types of Assessment

a) Examinations

Examinations are marked and moderated. Brief marker comments are recorded on the scripts.

b) Essays and any other Submitted Work (i.e. reports, blogs, exhibitions etc.)

Essays and other submitted work are marked and moderated. The marker provides feedback by annotating the work (in SpeedGrader).

c) Presentations/Performances

In the case of oral presentations or performances either or both of the following procedures are adopted:

- i) The presentation or performance is recorded so as to allow internal moderators and External Examiners to test marking standards. Recordings are stored until after the beginning of the next academic year.
- ii) They are viewed and assessed by at least two members of staff.
- iii) In both cases brief written feedback is provided. Excepted are presentations or performances constituting no more than 20% of the total module assessment: these may be first marked only.

d) Objective Tests

Objective tests are moderated by the first marker reviewing the spread of marks achieved and considering whether calibration or scaling of the results might be required. Where a question has been answered correctly by very few students, then it might be decided to ignore it.

e) Dissertations/Extended Studies/Projects/Portfolios

Dissertations, projects and portfolios are blind double marked, (i.e. they are independently marked by two people, neither of whom sees the comments of the other until afterwards).

4. Selection of Samples for Moderation

Any component worth 30% or more will be moderated unless the module is team taught or includes new colleagues, in which case, components worth 20% or more are to be moderated.

Samples of work for moderation should be selected so as to test the security of standards across the full marking range and where candidates have failed. Class borderlines are moderated. Work should also be moderated where a candidate fails to follow the rubric or is penalised for failing to answer the question.

External Examiners will be sent:

- i. The highest and lowest marked scripts
- ii. All failed scripts
- iii. At least one script from each classification
- iv. Moderation dialogue sheet
- v. Copy of essay questions, assessment rubric, and/or exam paper

Amongst these there will be a mix of moderated and unmoderated scripts (between 5 and 10).

5. Outcomes of Second Marking and Moderation

First and second marker should strive to reach a consensus on the mark awarded, using the Marking Criteria, and by referring to the QAA Benchmark Statements:

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

If they are unable to resolve the disagreement, the work is sent to a third marker for comments and decision. On rare occasions it may be necessary to involve an External Examiner to determine the final mark.

Where a sample of work is moderated, individual marks will not be changed.

6. Recording the Moderation Process/Communication between Examiners

In order that there should be an audit trail for moderation or second marking, there must be written evidence that the process has taken place. The moderator or Module Leader (in the case of second marking) should complete the SELLL Marking Dialogue/Moderation Form, recording the required details of the marking process and noting any additional comments, actions taken etc.

7. Scaling/Review of Module Performance across Modules and over Time

In order that marks fairly reflect student attainment the following procedures are in place:

- (a) Assignments are set in order to distinguish between a full range of levels of performance.
- (b) Markers award marks to individual pieces of work using the University's common marking scale and according to the relevant Marking Criteria and the appropriate learning outcomes.
- (c) Markers consider whether the level/class distribution of marks awarded to the module cohort as a whole approximates reasonably to the normal range of marking trends within the School. To aid this process, the first marker produces a profile of the provisional marks (average mark; range, i.e. distance between highest and lowest; spread, i.e. distribution across classes), and shares it with the moderator/second marker. If necessary, this can be compared with recent marking trends in the School.
- (d) Where the marks for an assessment exceptionally fail to meet normal expectations for the profile of marks and/or to map onto the Common Marking Scale, then the Module Leader must contact the DPD and SH to discuss the run of marks.
 - i) It may be concluded that the profile of marks is due to specific factors, and fairly reflects student attainment, in which case no action is required.
 - ii) Where this is not the case, scaling, i.e. systematic adjustment to the marks, should be discussed with the Chair of the Board of Examiners.

In the case of multiple-component assessments, adjustment operates on the part affected, not the module mark as a whole. Scaling can move marks both up and down and will not necessarily involve the same adjustment across the whole of the mark range. In determining how marks will be scaled sample scripts will be tested around key boundaries, such as the pass/fail threshold and key classification boundaries.

- (e) Scaling should normally take place before marks are released to students.
- (f) In the event of a disagreement over scaling, it will be referred to the appropriate External Examiner.
- (g) Prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners, a Module Moderation and Scaling Board (whose membership includes the PG Chair of the Board of Examiners (and PGT Director if not the same person), the Head of School, the DPDs, the Subject Heads, the PG Senior Tutor and Director of Education; the School Manager and may also be in attendance) will also review the sets of marks awarded across modules to ensure that the procedures above have taken place and that the pattern of marks fairly reflects student achievement. It is expected, and it is historically the case, that the need for adjustment very rarely arises.