

**Marking and Risk-Based Internal Moderation Policy**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Principle 1 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 requires that ‘Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.’

* 1. **Purpose:** This section should:
* Principle 1 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 requires that ‘Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.’  
  1. **Scope:**
  + The policy applies to the marking and moderation of student work on all taught programmes at St Mary’s University.
  + It also applies to all Academic Partnerships unless otherwise stated in the Operations Manual or the contract.

**2. POLICY/PROCEDURE**

**Definitions.**

**Double marking:** marking of a student’s work by a second marker after the first marker has completed their marking. The second marker will be able to see the first marker's comments and mark.

**Blind-double marking:** marking of a student’s work by two independent markers who do not see each other's comments or grades. Each marker makes a separate judgement of the work and then both agree on the final grade and feedback together. In the event of a disagreement, a final resolution (which could involve a 3rd marker) is required.

**Internal moderation:** the quality assurance process where academic staff from inside SMU look carefully at the marking of an assessment to ensure it is fair and consistent, that assessment and marking criteria have been appropriately applied, and that marks and feedback align.

**External moderation:** the quality assurance process where appointed academic staff from outside SMU (usually an external examiner) look carefully at the marking of an assessment to ensure it is fair and consistent, and that assessment and marking criteria have been appropriately applied, and that marks and feedback align.

Clerical Checking: a process that ensures all marks have been correctly calculated and that there are no arithmetical errors in the marking process.

**Marking**

All written assignments shall be marked anonymously to avoid bias (either inadvertent or deliberate).

Where assessments cannot be marked anonymously, due to the nature of the assessment (e.g. dissertations, projects, or live assessments such as presentations, performances, practical/clinical skills examinations), these will be permanently documented, and double marking will always be applied.

Live assessments that cannot be permanently documented must be blind-double marked.

Where the supervisor of undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations acts as the first markers, dissertations must be blind-double marked. To balance workloads, programme teams may, instead, want to appoint a single dissertation marker who has not been involved in supervising the project.

Markers should provide sufficient comments with the script for the student, internal moderator, and external examiner to understand the reasons for the mark given. Comments should align with Learning Outcomes being examined and the university grade descriptors.

Where 3 or more independent markers mark the same assessment, a calibration activity should be undertaken to ensure that marking is being done consistently.

There are several ways to undertake a calibration activity, but it should align with the following norms:

* Each marker marks the same few scripts (usually a minimum of 3). The marking team meets and compares marking to ensure that it is fair and consistent across all the markers, adjusting where necessary.
* An experienced marker shares a sample of their marking across grade bands with the rest of the marking team, as examples for markers to follow.
* Once marking is complete, the marking team meets and cross-checks a sample of marked work to ensure fairness and consistency across all the grade bands.

If the calibration activity is documented, there should not normally be a need for further internal moderation.

For specific details on providing feedback to students, please refer to the Feedback Policy.

**Internal Moderation**

St. Mary’s University has adopted a risk-based approach to internal moderation, meaning that not all assessments require moderation every year. This policy sets out the minimum expectations based on four principles:

1. Moderation is focused where it is needed, i.e., on modules considered to be higher risk (see below).
2. The moderation of all modules should take place at least once in a 3-year cycle.
3. Programme teams have the flexibility to increase the frequency of moderation, should they (or their regulatory body) require it.
4. Individual members of staff can request that their module, or a specific assessment within a module, be moderated.

**When should internal moderation take place?**

Internal moderation must take place for modules that are considered to be high risk. High risk modules are identified as modules where:

* The module marker is a new, probationary or inexperienced member of staff, for example a GTA, new HPA or temporary member of staff
* Previous internal moderation and/or external examiners have raised concerns on either the consistency/quality of marking or feedback provided
* Student performance is persistently either higher or lower than might be expected i.e. performance is skewed towards a high number of top grades (more than 40% of scripts/work is above 70% or the pass rate of an assessment falls below 85%)
* The module is new, or substantial changes have been made to the assessment within a module
* There have been concerns raised by students in relation to marking/moderation procedures not being followed
* Where student concerns have previously been raised through the student representatives, the staff student forum, or module evaluation forms. Additionally,
  + if concerns are raised in the mid-module evaluation form, internal moderation of work on the module will take place before marks are considered by that semester's programme exam board.
  + where concerns are reported through the end of module evaluation form, they are referred to the external examiner(s) for consideration.
* The module is taught and delivered by another HE provider via an Academic Partnership which is categorised as medium-high risk

Faculties and/or schools may add additional criteria to the list above and can choose to undertake more extensive moderation if they wish.

Individual members of staff can request that their module, or a specific assessment, be moderated. They also have flexibility to ask for an opinion on the marking of specific scripts.

All modules that are not deemed to be high risk must be moderated within a 3-year window. Programme teams will report to the first Faculty QCSE of the academic year which modules are being moderated that year.

**Moderation Process**

Moderation requires that a representative sample of students’ work will be reviewed to ensure consistent application of the assessment criteria.

All written assessments at FHEQ Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 will be moderated in accordance with the risk-based approach described.

A minimum sample of 10% will be chosen for moderation, which includes an even spread from the top, middle, and bottom of the marking scale. Modules with low student numbers will require a moderation sample greater than 10% to ensure that a representative sample across all grade bands is selected.

Additionally, all borderline fails (2 percentage points below the pass mark), including those at FHEQ Level 4, must be moderated.

Course leads, in conjunction with subject leads, will allocate moderators to specific modules/assessments in order to align subject expertise and workload expectations. Moderators will be required to complete a standard moderation form which will need to be made available to both the external examiners and the programme/module boards.

**Do all assessment types require moderation?**

In some cases, marked work may not need to be moderated. See table below for details of when moderation is required:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment Type** | **Moderation Type** |
| Multiple choice questions | Clerical Checking unless submitted online and marking is automated |
| Calculations | Clerical checking if marks are only awarded for a correct answer.  Risk-based moderation if marks are awarded for the ‘working out’ stage |
| Single word answers | Clerical Checking if marks are awarded for a defined answer |
| Short answers questions | Risk-based moderation |
| Written work | Risk-based moderation |
| Recorded live assessments | Risk-based moderation |
| Live assessments that are not permanently documented or recorded | Work must either be blind double marked or, where there is a single marker, the marker marks the work in the presence of the moderator, and they agree on a grade together. |
| Undergraduate and taught Master’s dissertations | If work is blind double marked, there is no need for internal moderation. If there is a single dissertation marker not involved in supervising the project, then moderation should take place. |
| Work placement activity | Assuming there are multiple markers, placement work should always be moderated, unless the marker has been involved in supervision of the student on placement, in which case submission must be blind double marked |

**3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The policy applies to all staff involved in the marking and moderation of student work on all taught programmes at St Mary’s University.

Strategic oversight is provided by the Dean of Education and Outcomes and This section should include further detail about who the policy/procedure applies to, but Queries should be addressed to the Dean of Education and Outcomes ([amanda.harvey@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.harvey@stmarys.ac.uk))

Compliance will be monitored through FQCSEs and LTSO.

**4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

UK Quality Code: [UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/uk-quality-code-for-higher-education-2024.pdf)

University Assessment and Feedback Policy

University Assessment Criteria: [all-assessment-criteria-3.docx](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stmarys.ac.uk%2Fctess%2Fdocs%2Fassessment%2Fall-assessment-criteria-3.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

**5. REVIEW, APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION**

* CTESS are responsible for reviewing the policy on an annual basis with review being discussed at LTSO and ASPSE
* Academic Board are responsible for final approval
* The policy will be located/published on the CTESS section of the [policy web pages](https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/policies/view-all.aspx).

**6. ANNEXES**

NA

**7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION**

The table below should be completed by the document owner.

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| --- | --- |
| **Document Name** | Marking and risk based internal moderation policy |
| **Executive Owner** | Amanda Harvey  Dean of Education and Outcomes, CTESS. |
| **Operational Owner** | Faculty QCSE |
| **Version Number** | 1.0 |
| **Approval Date** | Day/month/year |
| **Approved By** | Committee name |
| **Date of Commencement** | Day/month/year |
| **Date of Last Review** | Day/month/year |
| **Date for Next Review** | Day/month/year |
| **Related University Policy Documents** | List all applicable |
| *For Office Use – Keywords for search function* |  |