ASSESSMENT MODERATION POLICY

Scope

1.   This policy applies to all programmes of study at the University of Suffolk that are summatively assessed.

Principles and purpose

2.   This policy underpins the institution's assessment practice and seeks to ensure that

   a. all assessments are fit for purpose, conform to validated course documentation, and provide accurate and accessible instructions and guidance to students.

   b. all marking decisions are robust, consistent, and fair.

This is aligned with 'Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning' of the QAA Quality Code, which expects us to have 'Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks [that] are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.'

3.   All summative assessment utilises clear marking criteria against which student performance and achievement is measured. This process is operated by academic staff in accordance with this policy in order to ensure that each student is treated in a fair and equitable manner, that the grades are awarded consistently, and that the process is transparent and clearly documented.

Definitions

4.   For the purposes of this policy:

a.   **Verification** is defined as the initial (pre-issue) checking of all proposed summative assessments to ensure alignment with validated documentation, course schedules and University of Suffolk expectations.

b.   **Moderation** is defined as the examination of a sample of student work (derived from a module/course as appropriate) by a second internal assessor to check that all elements of the assessment have been duly marked and graded and that the standards of assessment are appropriate. The comments and grades of the first assessor will be available to the second assessor. The second assessor will be expected to make separate notes as evidence of the moderation process and, where appropriate, to provide additional written feedback to the student.

c.   **Blind double marking** is defined as the marking or grading of student work by a second internal assessor where the comments and grades of the first assessor are not available to the second assessor at the time of marking. The second assessor will be expected to make

separate notes which will underpin their decision and to provide independent written feedback to the student.

Note: It is recognised that dependent on the size of the module/course being assessed the assessor roles may be undertaken by more than two people. In such cases it is important to ensure that the policy's principles are applied as consistently as possible.

Process

Verification of assignments and examination questions

5.   All summative assessments and assessment criteria (i.e. assignment briefs and examination papers), at all levels of assessment, will be subject to verification by an independent team member, normally appointed by the Course Leader, prior to submission to external examiners or release to students. In the case of examinations, both the examination paper and the retake examination paper should be verified at the same time. Where identical modules are delivered at more than one site, the assessment at each must be the same.

6.   Assignment verification should ensure that the proposed assignment matches that set out in the validated module specification, that the scale and complexity of the assignment is appropriate to the level of study, that the module/course learning outcomes are addressed by the assignment task and that the requirements are clear and achievable.

7.   Examination question verification should ensure the proposed examination matches with that set out in the validated module specification, the scale of the examination (number of questions and tasks involved) is appropriate to the level and the proposed duration of the examination and all questions are unambiguous and appropriate. Normally for examinations some indication of what is expected in each answer should be prepared at the same time as the questions and be available for verification. This could be in the form of model answers, answer plans or a brief review of the possible scope of an answer. The intention is to inform the verifier what is expected. However, it is accepted that for some questions, the breadth of possible answers is wide and this should be acknowledged. (The aim is *not* to penalise creativity.)

8.   Copies of summative assignments and assessment criteria (i.e. assignment briefs and examination papers) will be sent to external examiners for approval for all Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 taught work, unless defined otherwise in the requirements of Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). In the first year of delivery of a new module/course/route or where required by the Chair of the Assessment Board or by a relevant PSRB, Level 4 assignments and examinations will also be sent to the external examiner for approval.

9.   Evidence of the verification process (verifier, meetings, date sent to the external examiner, outcomes) should be lodged in the module file by the Module Leader.

Post-issue moderation and blind double marking

10.   Marking of student work and assessment feedback to students will comply with the published assessment regulations for the course and relevant institutional policies, including the Assessment and Feedback Framework.

11.   Blind double marking should be used:
   a. Where a first assessor has not marked at a particular level of study previously (all assessments at that level in that semester should be 100% blind double marked).
   b. For all Level 6 and Level 7 dissertations or research projects.

12.   All presentations, performances and other instances of student work that are not written or otherwise reproducible should be witnessed and graded by both first and second assessors at the point of production unless they can be recorded in which case they will be treated as other summatively assessed work in accordance with paragraph 13 below..

13.   All other summative assessment should be subject to moderation. Moderation of work will occur as follows:

For each summative assessment (e.g. assignment, examination) the second assessor will check that all elements of the assessment have been duly marked, with mark totals calculated correctly where applicable. In consultation with the first assessor, the second assessor will select and moderate a sample of each summative assessment which will not normally be less than 10% of the submitted assessments and include at least ten assessments, unless there are insufficient assessments to achieve this sample. The sample will include **all** work that is marked by the first assessor at 70% or above, **all** work which is marked by the first assessor as not meeting the required pass standard (40% at undergraduate levels, 50% for postgraduate work), and a representative selection of work from each other mark band.

14.   Where identical modules are delivered at more than one site, cross moderation should be employed to ensure equity of assessment marking. The arrangements for cross moderation should be put in place in advance of the marking and moderation processes by the course coordinator

15.   The Chair of the Assessment Board is empowered to extend the requirement for, and extent of, moderation or blind double marking at any time.

Grade resolution

16.   In all cases of moderation and blind double marking first and second assessors should meet to confirm all elements of the assessment have been duly marked and to discuss the marks awarded.

17.   In cases of moderation, due care should be taken to ensure no students are either advantaged or disadvantaged through their work being included or not included in the moderation sample. In particular, where as a result of moderation the mark allocated to a piece of work is altered, all other student work should be checked to ensure, where appropriate, any adjustment(s) is/are applied in a consistent manner.

18.   If the first and second assessors agree on mark allocation (initially or after discussion), a moderation record form should be completed making explicit which work was included in the moderation sample and recording any discussions undertaken in reaching agreement, and this form should be lodged with the Course Leader.

19.   Where first and second assessor's marks are 10% apart and agreement cannot be reached after discussion; sampling or blind double marking (as appropriate) of all other work in the disputed band should be undertaken and the first and second assessors should then meet again to compare and discuss the marks.

20.   Where after discussion agreement cannot be reached by the first and second assessor, a third assessor will be appointed by the Assessment Board Chair to blind double mark the disputed work. The first, second and third assessors should then meet to agree the grade, with the third assessor having the final say if agreement cannot be reached.

21.   When the process outlined in 19 and/or 20 is complete, the procedures in 17 and 18 should be followed.

22.   The only marking indicated on feedback to students should be the agreed mark for the work following the completion of the moderation or blind double marking processes set out above. In the case of moderation (where appropriate) the second assessor may provide additional written feedback to the student. In the case of blind double marking the second assessor should provide independent written feedback to the student. In both cases this feedback may be included on the feedback sheet.

23.   In all cases the external examiner will be sent or shown the same sample of assessed work and shall have access to other assessments from the set. In the case of the Dissertation or research project or other instances where the blind double marking process has occurred, the sample will be selected by the Module Leader as appropriate, following the principles outlined in 13. The external examiner will also be sent the moderation record form and may make any comments regarding the marking process on it.

24.   In all cases (moderation or blind double marking) the moderation record form should be lodged in the module file by the Module/Course Leader as appropriate.

Activities following the completion of moderation and blind double marking processes

25.   Where possible, work granted extensions as agreed through the Extenuating Circumstances Policy should be marked alongside the work submitted in accordance with the original deadline. However, this will often not be possible without detrimentally delaying the marking and reporting process. Where work is marked following the completion of a moderation process, all work submitted according to an agreed extension should be moderated. Where work is marked following the completion of a **blind** double marking process, all work submitted according to an agreed extension should also be **blind** double marked.

26.   All resubmitted referred work will be **blind** double marked and will follow the procedures outlined in 18 - 26 above.

27.   When, in accordance with the Academic Appeals process, student work is remarked, where possible this shall be done by the same second assessor as was involved in the original moderation process. If, as a result of the remarking process, the mark proposed for the work involved was increased, effort should be taken to ensure that a similar adjustment is proposed for other students' work where the same grounds are applicable. However, if as a result the mark is revised downwards, proposals to revise other students' work should not be put forward.