

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS **MODERATION AND SCALING POLICY FOR ALL UG PROGRAMMES**

2021-22

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's examination conventions and policy of moderation and scaling.

1. Definition of moderation

'Moderation' broadly understood applies to a range of processes 'whereby assessment marks for a whole cohort [= all students taking a module] are scrutinised with a view to ensuring that the assessment criteria are consistently applied and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to achieve'.¹ 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.

2. Organisation

The Head of School shall make arrangements to ensure that all work subject to the policy is moderated. Practical arrangements for marking and moderation are the particular responsibility of the Degree Programme Directors. Marking and moderating duties, and the timetable for all assessment activities, are announced annually in the School Examination Document.

a) At Stage 1 (= Level 4) the module leader sets assignments in consultation with other module teachers and acts as moderator. Marking may be undertaken either by academic staff or by tutorial assistants.

b) At Stage 2/3/4 (= Levels 5, 6)

i) In the case of team-taught modules the module leader sets assignments in consultation with other module teachers. First marking is shared between the module teachers, with the module leader as coordinator. The moderator will be the module leader.

ii) In the case of individually taught modules the module leader sets and marks the assignments.

iii) The first marker for independent study modules (Independent Research Projects, Extended Studies and Dissertations) and Creative Writing modules is the supervisor or a colleague with appropriate expertise.

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

3. Internal Moderation of Draft Assessments

a) At Stage 1 draft assessments are read by the other module teachers.

b) At Stage 2/3/4 Examination papers and sets of essay questions or assignment tasks worth 20% or more are read by an Exam Scrutiny panel (normally Subject Heads and DPD). They are also sent to External Examiners for approval.

4. Different types of assessment

a) Examinations

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

¹ 'Guidance on Moderation and Scaling' in the Newcastle University *Quality and Standards Handbook*.

b) Essays and other submitted work

These are marked and moderated or first and second marked.

The marker provides feedback to the student by annotating the work itself (either the hard copy or in Feedback Studio), and when marking a hard copy, by using the free comment space on the feedback sheet; where work is second-marked the second marker initials the agreed mark.

c) Presentations/performances

In the case of oral presentations or performances at Stage 2/3/4 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. In both cases brief written feedback is provided. Excepted are presentations or performances at Stage 1, and those at Stage 2/3/4 constituting no less 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

Dissertations are blind double marked, i.e. they are independently marked by two people, neither of whom sees the comments or marks of the other until afterwards.

5. Selection of Samples for Moderation

At stage 1 any component worth 20% or more is moderated. As stage 2 and 3, 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.

Externals will be sent:

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

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

6. Outcomes of Second Marking and Moderation

First and second marker should strive to reach a consensus on the mark awarded, if necessary by referring to the Subject Benchmark Statements. If they are unable to resolve the disagreement, the work is sent to an External Examiner to determine the final mark.

Where a sample of work is moderated, individual marks will not be changed, except in the case of Stage 1 work. Please see Moderation Policy above for further information.

7. Recording the moderation process / communication between examiners

a) At all stages 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 produce a brief report (Marking Dialogue Sheet – Appendix J) on the number and type of pieces of work sampled, the conclusions reached and the action taken.

8. 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) First and second markers award marks to individual pieces of work using the University's common marking scale and according to the Criteria of Assessment and the appropriate learning outcomes.

c) Markers also consider whether the level and class distribution of marks awarded to the module cohort as a whole approximates reasonably to the normal range of current and historic 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; and spread, i.e. distribution across classes), and shares it with the second marker/marker. This can be compared with recent marking trends in the School, about which information is supplied.

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 scaling is considered.

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 Chair of the Board of Examiners, the Head of School, the DPD, the School Manager, Subject Heads and the DELT) 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.