

Zhejiang University-University of Edinburgh Institute

Principles of Internal Moderation of Taught Assessment

Purpose of Guidance

This guidance sets the definition and purpose of internal moderation and key principles for its operation. The information provided in guidance is not mandatory. Appendix 1 and 2 offer some examples of how this may be translated into practice.

Overview

The guidance meets the same expectations as the University of Edinburgh Principles of internal Moderation of Taught Assessment, and is derived from that guidance. The University of Edinburgh guidance is approved by the University of Edinburgh Curriculum and Student Progression Committee:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners>

The guidance is updated in line with the equivalent University of Edinburgh guidance. Any required changes are approved by the ZJU-UoE Institute Board of Studies. In cases where there is a deviation from the University of Edinburgh guidance, approval must be sought from the University of Edinburgh Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The guidance applies to staff and students, and covers taught assessment only.

Contact Officer ZJU-UoE Institute Academic Administrator

Document control

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15.12.16	September 2016	N/A	June 2017

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

ZJU-UoE Institute Taught Assessment Regulations

ZJU-UoE Institute External Examiners Policy

ZJU-UoE Institute Feedback Standards and Guiding Principles

ZJU-UoE Regulations, Policies and Guidance referred to throughout this document are located at:

<http://zjue.intl.zju.edu.cn/en/policies-regulations>

If you require this document in an alternative format please email ZJU-UoE Institute Academic Administrator (uoe@zju.edu.cn)

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DEFINITION OF MODERATION

“A process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. Forms of moderation include:

- Sampling, either by an internal or external examiner
- Additional marking, for example of borderlines, firsts and fails, or where there is significant difference between the marks of different markers that cannot be resolved without the opinion of another marker
- Review of marks: where there is a significant difference between several assessment marks, within or between parts of a programme, which indicate the marks may need to be reconsidered.”

(Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning)

PURPOSE

1. In accordance with QAA expectations, as specified in Chapter B6 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the primary purpose of moderation is to assure ourselves that assessment criteria are being applied fairly and consistently and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards that students are expected to achieve.
2. Moderation also provides an opportunity to assure the quality of feedback provided to students on their assessed work, in terms of its sufficiency, clarity, helpfulness and timeliness. (See ZJU-UoE Institute Feedback Standards and Guiding Principles on the ZJU-UoE Institute website).
3. Moderation also provides an opportunity to comment on aspects related to the design and implementation of the assessment that may feed into future enhancements of the assessment.

PRINCIPLES

1. Every piece of assessment will be subject to checking, then moderation and/or double marking if it is appropriate to the discipline and to the credit weighting of the assessment. This applies to all forms of assessment including written, oral, aural, performance and practice-based assessments.
2. All single items of assessment equivalent to 40 SCQF credits / 10 ZJU credits or more must be double marked.
3. The form of moderation used must be appropriate to the nature of the assessed activity, proportional to the size of the cohort and to the credits awarded for the course.
4. Moderation of written scripts will normally be in the form of sampled second marking.

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5. Moderation should be factored into the assessment process in terms of staff time and resources for moderation and be allocated appropriate time via workload models.
6. Boards of Studies and Boards of Examiners establish in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners what forms of moderation are appropriate to ensure adequate scrutiny and equity.
7. Course Organisers and/or Programme Directors and are responsible for the organisation of moderation at the course/programme level, and for supervising the recording of the occurrence and the outcome of moderation decisions.
8. Moderation may result in recommended mark adjustments or changes to feedback. No changes should be made to internal marking without the original marker's knowledge. Where possible, any changes should take place in discussion with the original marker. If timing makes this impossible, the marker should be informed of any changes and the reasons for them.
9. Evidence of moderation is an important feature of internal procedures. Written records of internal moderation should be kept so that Boards of Examiners, external examiners, and anyone else with a legitimate interest can scrutinise them upon request. Records should clearly show the rationale for decisions taken, including any decision that marks should not be altered. Decisions that cannot be justified (e.g. changing marks of those assignments that have been second marked without overall consideration of a marker's other scripts) should be avoided.
10. Internal moderation occurs before assessments are viewed by External Examiners and is designed to assure ourselves of our internal assessment processes and to ensure that appropriate decisions are taken regarding borderline cases.
11. External Examiners perform an external moderation role as set out in the ZJU-UoE Institute External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy.
12. The ongoing development of good assessment practice should include moderation.
13. Robust moderation should not inhibit innovative assessment practices.

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APPENDIX 1

OPERATIONALISING MODERATION: TWO MODELS FOR LARGE CLASSES

Moderation practices, particularly in those forms of learning where the judgement and connoisseurship of assessors is key to arriving at marks, have to balance the need for confidence in the reliability of marks awarded with an illusory confidence based on the false assumption that there can be a single, universally-accepted numerical mark for a piece of work. In other words, our practices have to give us confidence in the plausibility of a mark rather than its 'correctness', and need to take account of the fact that moderation, like marking, is complex and socially situated. The two models that follow are examples of how such understandings may be translated into practice.

Model One

Standardisation meeting	All assessors meet at the start of the marking process to discuss a small number of assignments and arrive, as far as possible, at a common interpretation of the marking criteria using the sample assignments as benchmarks. The Course Organiser may then choose to write up feedback to model good feedback practices to the team.
Marking	Each assessor marks their batch of assignments.
Review by moderation team	A small group of assessors reviews a sample from each marker: all fails and borderline passes, plus one from each passing grade. Where marks are considered plausible (allowing for minor discrepancies attributable to taste and judgement) no changes are suggested. Where marks are considered implausible, decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, for example by raising or lowering all of an assessor's marks, or by re-marking. Ideally this is done in dialogue with the original assessor. Careful written records are kept of all decisions. Feedback is also reviewed to ensure, as far as possible, that students receive constructive comments.
Feedback to assessors	Where time constraints make dialogue with each assessor impossible, assessors are given written feedback and the opportunity for further discussion if necessary.

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Model Two

Standardisation meeting	All assessors meet at the start of the marking process to discuss a small number of assignments and arrive, as far as possible, at a common interpretation of the marking criteria using the sample assignments as benchmarks. The Course Organiser may then choose to write up feedback to model good feedback practices to the team.
Marking	Each assessor marks their batch of assignments.
Pair checking	Pairs of assessors meet to discuss a sample of their marking, including any assignments they are finding it difficult to place. Following discussion, assessors may amend their existing marks and/or feedback.
Moderation meeting	All assessors meet to review samples of each other's marks and feedback. Following this meeting, assessors may decide to amend marks and/or feedback.

Some Issues Arising

Both of these models share a number of characteristics. They are premised on the understanding that marking and moderation are complex and inexact sciences, and that, in order to make judgements, assessors interpret marking criteria within existing social, relational and intellectual contexts. The first model is arguably the less dialogic of the two, since it concentrates the dialogue around plausibility of marks and quality of feedback in the hands of a small group of assessors. It may be seen as a more appropriate model for courses where a large number of assessors are teaching assistants who have not yet developed the 'academic connoisseurship' of more experienced academics, though it could also be argued that a fuller involvement in moderation would be a necessary part of such development. The second model is a more fully dialogic one and relies on the academic connoisseurship of all assessors. It is also likely to be more timeintensive across the team, since dialogue necessarily takes time. Accountability in the first model rests very clearly with the Course Organiser and the small group they appoint as the moderation team: in the second model, accountability resides with each individual assessor.

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF MODERATION FROM MORAY HOUSE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, University of Edinburgh

EXAMPLE 1: ESSAY-BASED ASSIGNMENT, LARGE UNDERGRADUATE (UG) COURSE

Large undergraduate course (about 300 students and a team of 15 markers some of whom are postgraduate (PG) tutors)

Standardisation meeting: The team reads three assignments and discusses them in relation to the marking criteria, arriving as far as possible at a shared understanding. The Course Organiser

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writes up feedback sheets, both as a record of the meeting and to model appropriate feedback styles.

Tutors mark individually.

An experienced team meets to mark a sample of each marker's scripts (sampling each other's first) for plausibility of marks and standard of comments given to students, and discusses any changes that might need to be made. The team also review all fails and marginal passes. A detailed record is kept on a marker-by-marker basis. Marks cannot be changed in isolation, but a variety of actions may be recommended, including upward or downward adjustment of all of a tutor's marks, remarking of a batch by an inexperienced marker, or additional reading of scripts at a particular point in the mark scheme for instance where the initial sampling suggests marks are plausible in the lower ranges but too harsh in the higher ranges.

Any proposed changes to marks and/or comments are discussed with the original markers.

All markers are given feedback on their marks and comments.

EXAMPLE 2: GROUP ORAL PRESENTATION, LARGE UG COURSE

Large undergraduate course (about 300 students and a team of 15 markers some of whom are PG tutors)

Oral presentations are held over a morning. A small team of experienced markers visits the groups, observing (usually) one group presentation per marker. Presentations are video recorded.

Standardisation meeting: The team meet at the end of the morning. They watch examples from the videos together, discussing them in relation to the marking criteria. Markers and moderators share their impressions of the presentations they watched together, also in relation to the marking criteria.

Tutors mark their presentations independently.

In borderline cases, and/or where markers are unsure, the Course Organiser and other experienced team members view videos and review reflective diaries.

Course organiser reviews a sample of comments sheets to check the standard of commentary, and to check that the comments match the marks awarded.

EXAMPLE 3: ESSAY-BASED ASSIGNMENT, SMALL COURSE

Small undergraduate course (30 students and a single course organiser/marker)

Tutor marks the scripts.

Another member of staff with knowledge of the subject area and of U/G teaching reviews a sample of scripts, noting a brief comment for each.

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Where any changes are suggested, these are discussed with the Course Organiser – changes cannot involve changing the marks of those scripts read in isolation, but a general upward or downward movement may be recommended.

EXAMPLE 4: ESSAY-BASED ASSIGNMENT, LARGE PG COURSE

Large postgraduate course (400 students and a team of 17 markers, mostly experienced members of staff)

Standardisation meeting: The team discuss three scripts in relation to the marking criteria, arriving as far as possible at a shared interpretation.

Tutors mark independently in the first instance.

Tutors meet in pairs (either midway through the process or towards the end, depending on preference) to share impressions and adjust marks in the light of discussion.

Team meets to moderate examples of each other's scripts and discuss them.

Tutors adjust their own marks and comments as necessary, in the light of discussion.

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