School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
Moderation and Scaling Policy for All Undergraduate Programmes, 2024-2025

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Examinations and Assessment Policies, and especially the Policy and Guidance on 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 scrutinized to ensure that the marking criteria are applicable and consistently applied and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to meet" (Policy and Guidance on Moderation and Scaling, §2). It is also used to distinguish two types of second reading: moderation, where samples of work are scrutinized by a second reader; and second marking, where all pieces of work are marked by a second reader. In both cases the second reader also considers the overall range of marks, and samples of borderline scripts.

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 UG Degree Programme Directors (DPDs), in dialogue with Subject Heads (SH) with regards to workload, and bearing in mind appropriate expertise. 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 (ML) sets assignments (and may consult with other module tutors and lecturers) and acts as moderator. Marking will be undertaken by academic colleagues (including Associate Lecturers and PG Demonstrators).

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

   i) *Language & Linguistics and Literature Team-taught Modules*: the ML sets assignments (and may consult with other module tutors and lecturers). First marking is allocated across those teaching on the module by the ML, in consultation with the SH. The moderator will be the ML or another colleague with appropriate expertise, as confirmed by the SH.

   ii) *Language & Linguistics and Literature Sole-taught Modules*: the ML sets and marks the assignments. The SH will allocate a moderator.

   iii) *Independent Research Projects*: The first marker is the supervisor or a colleague with appropriate expertise. The SH will allocate a second marker (usually another member of the teaching team).

   iv) *Creating Writing modules:* The marking team are colleagues with appropriate expertise.

3. Review of Assignment Guidelines/Rubrics (Examinations and Submitted Work)

Drafts of assignments in Stage 2/3/4 modules are subject to internal review by the relevant DPD, with a main focus on those summative components worth 30% or more of the module assessment. The drafts of summative components worth 30% or more are also sent to External Examiners for review. Through access to the relevant module Canvas sites, Externals also have the opportunity to review the details of smaller summative assessment components and any formative components, as appropriate. The deadlines by which draft assignments must be submitted for the internal review, and then sent to the External Examiners, are recorded in the Examination Calendar [Section 1, UG Examination Document].

4. 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; podcasts; exhibitions, et al.)*: Essays and other submitted work are marked and moderated. The marker provides feedback by annotating the work. Stage 2 Creative Writing submissions are subject to team marking, as appropriate to the module/assignment. (See 'e' below for details of capstone project marking.)

c) *Presentations/Performances*: In the case of oral presentations or performances at Stage 2/3/4 one or both of the following procedures are adopted (*n.b.* in all cases written feedback is provided, with the exception of those at Stage 1):
   i) It is recorded to allow internal moderators and external examiners to test marking standards (recordings are stored until after the beginning of the next academic year).
   ii) It is viewed and assessed by at least two members of staff.

d) *'Standardized' Assignments / Tests* (i.e. problem-set assignments, data analysis tasks, etc. where there are correct answers to the set questions and therefore a high degree of regularity/uniformity in what students are asked to do and in the marking): Moderation of assignments of this kind takes the form of the first marker reviewing the spread of marks achieved and considering whether calibration/scaling might be required. For instance, where a question has been answered correctly by very few students, it might be decided to ignore it.

e) *Capstone Projects (Dissertations, Independent Essays, Portfolios)*: Dissertations and Independent Essays are blind double-marked (*i.e.* they are independently marked by two markers, neither of whom sees the comments of the other until afterwards). Creative Writing Portfolios and dissertations where blind double-marking is not practical (SEL3405, Digital Exhibition; SEL3417, Digital Edition) are first- and second-marked.

5. Selection of Samples for Moderation

At Stage 1 any component worth 20% or more is moderated. At Stage 2/3/4, any component worth 30% or more will be moderated (unless the module is team taught or includes colleagues in the first year of appointment: in this is the case, components worth 20% or more are to be moderated). Samples of work for moderation should be selected so as to confirm the standards across the full marking range. Class borderlines are moderated. Work should also be moderated where a candidate fails to follow the rubric or is penalized for failing to answer the question. Externals will have access to all scripts on a module, with a list of recommended samples for review including details of: (a) the highest and lowest marked scripts; (b) all failed scripts; and (c) at least one script from each classification band. Among these will be a mix of moderated and unmoderated scripts (between 5 and 10). Externals will also have access to the relevant Marking Dialogue/Moderation Form.

6. Outcomes of Second Marking and Moderation

The first and second marker should strive to reach a consensus on the mark awarded, using the relevant Marking Criteria, and by referring to the QAA Benchmark Statements. If they are unable to agree, the work is sent to a third marker for comments and a decision. Where a sample of work is moderated, rather than second marked, individual marks will not be changed, except in the case of Stage 1 work, in relation to marking by Associate Lecturers and Postgraduate Demonstrators.

7. Recording the Moderation Process / Communication between Examiners

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 ML must complete the SELLL Marking Dialogue/Moderation Form, recording the details of the marking process, and noting any additional comments, actions taken, etc.

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) Assessments 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 University's Common Marking Scale, then the ML 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. 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.

 iii) Scaling should normally take place before marks are released to students.

 iv) In the event of a disagreement over scaling, it will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Examiners (who may consult the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee). The appropriate External Examiner will be advised of the disagreement, but not involved in the solution.

e) Prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners, a Module Moderation and Scaling Board (membership: Chair of the Board of Examiners, Head of School, the DPDs, the School Manager, SHs, and the Director of Education) 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 historically the case that the need for adjustment very rarely arises.