20. MARKING AND MODERATION OF ASSESSMENTS

20.1 Anonymity in marking

20.1.1 Written examinations

It is a requirement, in respect of all written examinations whether administered centrally or by a School, that scripts remain anonymous until marking and (unless it is impossible) moderation has been completed.

The front covers of answer books used in centrally administered examinations have a folding flap which, at the end of the examination, is sealed by the candidate to conceal his or her name. The Examinations Office can normally supply Schools with similar cover sheets for use in School examinations, but for security reasons can no longer provide answer books. Schools are asked to make their request at least two weeks’ before the front covers are required.

In centrally administered examinations, candidates are asked to write their Examination Candidate Number on the cover of each answer book. Each student’s Examination Candidate Number is included in the information given on their personal timetable, and is also listed by their name on the seating list for each examination. A decoding list linking students’ names to their Candidate Examination Numbers is circulated to all Examination Representatives at the beginning of each examination period.

Candidates should normally remain anonymous until the results have been determined by the Programme Examiners’ Meeting. It is recognised that candidates who have submitted extenuating circumstances forms will need to be considered by name at the Programme Examiners’ Special Cases Sub-Committee.

Once marking is completed, marks for modules should be entered on RISIS by the specified deadline.

20.1.2 Coursework and in-class tests

Wherever practicable and appropriate, coursework and in-class tests should remain anonymous to the marker until the marking has been completed. Schools are responsible for determining whether anonymous marking is practicable and appropriate in relation to coursework and in-class tests in their modules. Where a School agrees that anonymisation of coursework/in-class tests is not appropriate and practicable, the School
should consider enhancing the moderation process for coursework/in-class tests and must ensure that the extent of the moderation carried out is clearly documented.

Unless it is impossible, candidates should be anonymous during the moderation process.

20.2 **Marking**

20.2.1 Marking shall be carried out by appropriately qualified and properly appointed persons. It should be noted that peer assessment may be used for formative purposes and a marker's determination of a formal mark may be informed by peer marking.

20.2.2 **Marking scheme and criteria for Bachelors and undergraduate Masters programmes**

The generic assessment criteria relating to mark ranges for Bachelors and undergraduate Masters programmes is set out in the [University-wide Framework for Classification and Progression for First Degrees](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx), available here:

Since October 2002, the University Marking Scheme for undergraduate programmes has been as follows:

- **A** = 70% or above
- **B** = 60% to 69%
- **C** = 50% to 59%
- **D** = 40% to 49%
- **E** = 35% to 39% (Below Honours standard)
- **F** = 30% to 34% (Fail)
- **G** = 0%-29% (Fail)

Some modules may be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis.

Other results include:

- **DN** = Deemed Not To Have Sat
- **RN** = Result Not Yet Available
- **NR** = No recommendation submitted to the Senate
- **U** = Unassessed module

For individual modules, marks should be whole numbers.
20.2.3 Marking scheme and criteria for postgraduate programmes

The generic assessment criteria relating to mark ranges for postgraduate programmes is set out in the University-wide Marking Criteria and Classification Framework for Taught Postgraduate Programmes, available here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx

Passing categories:

- 70-100  Work of distinction standard*
- 60-69   Work of merit standard
- 50-59   Work of good standard

Failing categories:

- 40-49  Work below threshold standard (Below Threshold Standard)
- 0-39 Un satisfactory Work

* See the section on step-marking below in relation to permissible marks within the distinction range.

Some modules may be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis.

Other results include:

- DN = Deemed Not To Have Sat
- RN = Result Not Yet Available
- NR = No recommendation submitted to the Senate
- U = Unassessed module

For individual modules, marks should be whole numbers.

20.2.4 Step-marking in the first-class and distinction range

Please note the following provisions in relation to step-marking in the First Class (or Distinction) range:

(i) It is essential that markers make full use of the range of marks available (i.e. all marks from 0 to 100), subject to the provision that work in the First Class (or Distinction) range should only be awarded one of the following ‘step marks’: 72, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100. Please note that modules which have a detailed marking scheme capable of yielding a mark of 100, and in which the highest marks are demonstrably achievable by the best candidates
performing within the normal range as defined by the University marking criteria (see the relevant classification framework), are excepted from the step-marking provisions.

(ii) The University is committed to rewarding excellence by ensuring that First Class (or Distinction) achievement is awarded appropriate marks from across the full First Class (or Distinction) range (70-100) in order that such achievement is appropriately represented in the weighted average used in classification.

(iii) For marking purposes, the First Class (or Distinction) range is divided in two. Marks in the range 85–100 should be awarded to work in the upper half of the normal range for First Class (or Distinction) work and are deemed starred first class marks. Marks in the range 70–84 should be awarded to work in the lower half of the normal range for First Class (or Distinction) work. These provisions are designed to ensure that appropriate use is made of the full First Class (or Distinction) range of marks.

The marker must use his or her professional judgement to assess the work and award the most appropriate allowable mark, in accordance with the following guidelines.

(iv) Step-marking in the First Class (or Distinction) range should be applied at the point where the primary academic judgement about the quality of a piece of work is being made, i.e. where a piece of work is being marked. Step-marking should be applied once only, and, where more than one piece of work contributes to a module mark, the module mark calculated from its constituent elements should not then be raised to a step mark. In these cases, a module mark in the First Class (or Distinction) range need not be a step mark.

(v) However, step-marking should not be applied in an assessment for which an appropriate detailed marking scheme is available which is capable of generating all marks (for instance, an examination paper with a series of questions to which a detailed marking scheme applies). Such assessments are excepted from the step-marking provisions since the full range of First Class (or Distinction) marks (including 100) is demonstrably available and the highest marks are demonstrably achievable by the best candidates performing within the normal First Class (or Distinction) range as defined by the University marking criteria (see the relevant classification framework).
(vi) For example:

(a) Where a module mark is derived from one assessment which lacks a detailed marking scheme and where the work demonstrates First Class (or Distinction) quality, only stepped marks can be used, i.e. 72, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95 and 100.

(b) Where a module mark is derived from one assessment which has a detailed marking scheme capable of generating all marks, the mark generated from the marking scheme should be used, i.e. 0-100.

(c) Where a module mark is derived from several components which do not have detailed mark schemes, each component should be marked using step-marks for work in the First Class (or Distinction) range. But when these elements are aggregated, with whatever weighting, in order to produce a module mark, this overall mark can use numbers other than those in the steps.

(d) Where a module mark is derived from several components which do have detailed mark schemes, each component should be marked in accordance with the mark scheme. When these elements are aggregated, with whatever weighting, in order to produce a module mark, this overall mark can use numbers other than those in the steps.

(d) Where a module mark is derived from a number of assessment components, some of which have a detailed marking scheme and some of which do not, those components which have a detailed marking scheme should be marked in accordance with the detailed marking scheme and those which do not should use the stepped marks for the First Class (or Distinction). When these elements are aggregated, with whatever weighting, in order to produce a module mark, this overall mark can use numbers other than those in the steps.

(vii) All staff should be aware of these guidelines on step marking when undertaking any marking of coursework or examinations. It is also essential that external examiners are aware of these practices, to supplement the information they will receive as a matter of course from the Examinations Office.
20.2.5 **Module marks**

For individual modules, marks should be whole numbers. In calculating the mark for a module, .50 should be rounded up to the next higher whole number and .49 should be rounded down to the next lower whole number.

20.2.6 **Module marks of 29 and 39 not permitted for undergraduate modules**

Since September 2004, marks of 29 and 39 are not permitted as the final undergraduate module mark for a module in any Part of a programme.

Markers may continue to use the marks 29 and 39 in marking work which contributes towards, but is not the sole constituent of, the overall module mark. If the overall module mark, calculated from its constituent elements, computes as 29 or 39, markers must determine, after consideration of the relevant criteria, whether the mark for the module should be 28 or 30, or 38 or 40.

20.2.7 **Verification and submission of marks**

All marks which are arrived at through addition of subsidiary marks (a total from a mark scheme, a (possibly weighted) average of minor assessments, etc) should have the arithmetic and/or spreadsheet formulae checked by a designated person, who could be a suitable member of the administrative or support staff.

The Examination Representative is responsible for ensuring that module marks in respect of Finalists are reported accurately to the Programme Examiners’ Meeting. The Examinations Representative is also responsible for ensuring that marks for each module in all Parts are entered accurately in RISIS, in accordance with a published schedule of dates. Those responsible for producing papers for an Examiners’ Meeting, whether a Department or the Examinations Office, are required to check the accuracy of aggregate marks and the averages.

20.3 **Moderation**

The following procedures for internal and external moderation apply:

20.3.1 **Internal Moderation**

All marking which counts towards a formal mark for awarding or progression should be moderated appropriately internally. Such moderation should be sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the marking is accurate to common standards applied to
shared understandings of the criteria. In terms of the investment of staff effort, the moderation process should be commensurate with the weight of the assessment task and the size of the cohort.

Double marking of the whole cohort is a suitable method of moderation for cohorts of eight or fewer, for work which is automatically marked by a panel of two or more assessors or for assessed work of sufficient weight and significance to warrant the workload (some major final part dissertations, for example).

Otherwise, where possible, moderation of a sample should be arranged. The sample should contain a meaningful proportion of the total candidates, but it is suggested that a minimum of eight candidates might in most cases be appropriate with

- at least one exemplar of each class for which marks are given (nearest to the midpoint of the mark range for the class)
- all borderline candidates (see section 7.5.1 of the Framework for Classification and Progression)
- all failed candidates
- sufficient first class or distinction candidates to illustrate the range from lowest First Class/Distinction mark given to highest
- any individual candidates the first marker finds significant difficulty in marking.

Unless it is impossible, the marking, selection of the sample and moderating should be made while the candidates remain anonymous.

Where double-marking of a sample is not possible, some other form of moderation should take place, subject to the two conditions of being sufficient for and commensurate with the assessment task. See the Framework for Classification and Progression for First Degrees, section 5.1 for examples of alternative forms of moderation.

All marks which are arrived at through addition of subsidiary marks (a total from a mark scheme, a (possibly weighted) average of minor assessments, etc) should have the arithmetic checked by a designated person, who could be a suitable member of the administrative or support staff.

If more than two markers are involved in marking an assessment, appropriate arrangements for moderation across the cadre of markers should be agreed in advance and a report on the outcomes and process provided to the relevant School Director of Teaching and Learning and made available to the External Examiner responsible for the module.

For each assessment, the Module Convenor (in collaboration with the relevant Programme Director, where appropriate) shall propose a suitable method of moderation.
to be approved by the School Director of Teaching and Learning who will report on moderation processes to the External Examiners. The External Examiners have the right to comment on and suggest changes to moderation processes.

The outcome of moderation should normally be that a single, internally agreed mark for each module is recommended to the External Examiners. The moderation process must be adequately documented: a record must be kept in respect of each module indicating:

- the pieces of work which have been moderated internally and those which have been moderated externally
- how moderation was undertaken
- any action taken as a result of moderation
- the rationale for those actions
- (in the case of internal moderation only) confirmation that the full range of first class/distinction marks has been used, where appropriate

Where a piece of work has been referred to a third marker, following an irreconcilable difference between the first and second markers, the third marker should prepare a brief report on the resolution of the mark.

Records of internal moderation must be made available to the External Examiner.

20.3.2 External Moderation

The University requires that the standard and consistency of the marking of assessments which contribute directly to an award be confirmed by the appropriate External Examiners.

External Examiners have the right of access to all assessed work which contributes to an award. In practice, in most cases they will necessarily concentrate on a sample of assessed work. The School Director of Teaching and Learning or a member of staff designated by the Head of School/Department (for example, a Programme Director) should seek the agreement of the External Examiners as to how the sample is selected, bearing in mind that, in the first instance, the same principles as for internal moderation should determine the selection of the sample, but that, in the case of external moderation, consideration should be given to candidates’ profile of marks and indicative overall classification as well as to marks for individual modules.

In considering candidates’ profile of marks and indicative overall classification, External Examiners may wish to give consideration to: (a) those candidates who fall within the borderline and who fail marginally to fulfil one or other of the criteria for promotion; (b) those who fall marginally short of the threshold overall average which qualifies for
inclusion in the borderline and who have fulfilled one or other of the criteria for promotion; and (c) candidates whose profile is marginal and sufficiently unusual to give rise to concerns about the security of the implied classification. Statistics from previous Sessions indicate that the numbers of students who fall within these categories for any programme will be small.

For the Part 1 Examination, External Examiners would be expected to consider a sample which allows them to moderate the full range of marks, and to attend particularly to the pass/fail borderline and the borderline at the 30% threshold. It is expected that the sample may be smaller than the samples for the Part 2 and Part 3/4/Final Examination.

The School Director of Teaching and Learning (or other designated member of staff) should seek to establish whether External Examiners wish for access to assessed work which might not be readily available (e.g. coursework), and should make appropriate arrangements to accommodate such requests.

External Examiners are asked to comment on the monitoring of assessment, and explicitly to report that moderation procedures are satisfactory.

Further information on the requirements for moderation by External Examiners is contained in the Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes.

20.3.3 Timing of moderation in relation to awarding and progression decisions

Marks must be agreed, following internal and external moderation, before awards or progression decisions are determined.

This demands a two-stage external examining process – first the confirmation of all marks and then awarding. The major problem is that with more flexible, modular programmes agreement of some marks may depend on external examiners outwith the programme. Since it would not be reasonable to expect External Examiners to attend two meetings within a short space of time, it is expected that module marks will, where possible, be moderated by post in advance of the period in which Programme Examiners’ Meetings are held. In those instances where a student’s marks have not been moderated, a final decision on the recommended award should be deferred. This imposes tight constraints on the moderation process.

20.4 Retention of scripts

Examination scripts are normally retained for a period of two years after the examination has been sat.
Schools are responsible for making reasonable provision to enable Examiners or the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results to have access to coursework which contributes to classification. Schools may wish to retain copies of coursework. Alternatively, Schools may wish to inform students that each student is responsible for retaining the marked copies of his/her coursework contributing to classification and for ensuring that such coursework is available for return to the School on request, and that failure to return coursework on request may be detrimental to their classification or review of result.

20.5 **Students’ access to markers’ comments**

A student may apply under the Data Protection Act (1998) for access to an Examiners’ comments on their examination answers, whether those comments are held on the script or elsewhere. In such a case, a student should submit a written application to the Data Protection Officer and pay the relevant fee. **Markers must ensure that any comments about examination answers are appropriate, fair and relate to the answer and not to the candidate.** It is recognised that, where markers provide comments on examination answers, the purpose of the comments is to indicate for the External Examiners the rationale for marking and not to provide feedback to students.