

to School Directors of Teaching and Learning

Please reply to

Richard Sandford
Secretary to the Sub-Committee for
the Delivery and Enhancement of
Learning and Teaching

from Professor Katja Strohfeldt and Dr Karen Poulter
Co-Chairs, Sub-Committee for the Delivery and
Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

copy Teaching and Learning Deans

date 5 November 2020

Anonymous marking and moderation: guidance on practical and appropriate considerations

The University's assessment procedures state that:

"The University requires that wherever practicable and appropriate, coursework should remain anonymous to the marker until marking has been completed" (section 6, Assessment Handbook).

Internal moderation: "Unless it is impracticable, the marking, selection of the sample and moderation arrangements should be made while the candidates remain anonymous" (section 13, Assessment Handbook).

Anonymous marking seeks to allay concerns around the potential for bias (either conscious or unconscious) to be shown by the marker. Students need to have confidence in the marking process and reassurance that their mark/grade has been fairly awarded. With widening participation in higher education, and with an increasingly diverse student body, it is important for universities to be pro-active in demonstrating non-discriminatory practices.

Purpose

This guidance has been devised to supplement the existing policy by explaining:

- In what circumstances it might not be *appropriate* to mark and/or moderate anonymously.

With particular regard to online marking and moderation:

- In what circumstances it might not be *appropriate* for an online submission to be set



THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
2011

up for anonymous marking.

- In what circumstances it might be *impracticable* to moderate anonymously using Blackboard.

When it might not be appropriate to mark and/or moderate anonymously

- A marker can easily identify a student by their work, for example:
 - There is a small number of students.
 - The title of an assignment is unique to a student e.g. dissertation.
 - Group assignment.
 - Presentation.
 - Named drafts have already been seen.
- All assignments are being double marked or blind double marked.
- There are clear criteria for marking correct or incorrect answers and calibration between markers has taken place.
- There is an overriding pedagogic advantage in knowing who the student is in order to provide appropriate feedback. For example, feedback is directly related to or informed by another assignment.
- The weighting of the assignment is a small proportion of the module mark.
- Where internal moderation is done by a different overseas campus (e.g. UK and Malaysia)

Online Marking and Moderation

All online assignments can be marked anonymously within Blackboard using (i) the Blackboard Assignment tool or (ii) using the Turnitin tool.

The *practicality* of undertaking anonymous moderation online is affected by whether moderation is done within or after the 15 day TAT.

- With both the Blackboard Assignment tool and the Turnitin tool, it is *impracticable* to moderate anonymously **after 15 days**.
- Certain features of the Blackboard Assignment tool make it *impracticable* for some types of assessment to be moderated anonymously **within 15 days**.
- When using the Turnitin tool, it is *practicable* to retain anonymity during moderation **within 15 days**.

The [Help Guides for Staff on Internal Moderation](#) explain how to carry out Internal Moderation depending on the assignment tool used and when moderation takes place. It can be used to determine if anonymisation is appropriate and practical.

Marking: When it might not be appropriate for a submission to be set up for anonymous marking

- When assignments need to be printed out by a person not marking/moderating to allow hard copy marking/moderation (for example, where a marker/moderator has an accessibility requirement). In this case, marking/moderation is still done anonymously, but anonymity is applied to the hard copy outside of Blackboard or Turnitin.
- Marking is automated and therefore no staff are involved in the marking process.

Moderation: When it might be impracticable to moderate anonymously using Blackboard

Anonymous moderation is not possible:

- If the assignment has not been marked anonymously.
- Where anonymisation of an assignment has been lifted for any reason.
- Where moderation takes place **after** the 15 day turnaround time.

Anonymous moderation of anonymously marked assignments is possible *within* the 15 day turnaround time but the following might make anonymous moderation impractical:

- The size of the cohort. A large cohort makes identifying and administering a sample more time consuming. For example:
 - Finding marks on grade boundaries for the sample.
 - Identifying the sample selected by the first marker.
 - Ensuring the Attempt ID is recorded to relocate a student's work when anonymity is lifted after the 15 day TAT.
- If multiple moderators need to be allocated specific work from multiple markers. It is practical to set up for Turnitin assignments but is a complex and time-consuming manual process for Blackboard Assignments.