University of Essex

Marking Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work

Policy approved by Senate in June 2020.
Re-approval by Academic Quality and Standards Committee in May 2022.

Purpose of Policy
The policy applies to all taught course students including the taught elements of postgraduate research awards.

The policy applies to assessment contributing to a mark at all levels, including level three, level four, as well as the mark appearing on the Examination Board grids from which a student's final degree classification is derived.

What's included in the Policy
- A list of definitions
- Marking policies setting out marking and moderation requirements
- Information on requests from students to have their work re-marked (including the form to use: Appendix B)
- Use of internal and external staff for marking
- A table showing the requirements applied to different forms of assessment.
- Guidance on the operation of anonymous marking of coursework (Appendix A)
- An overview of the coursework marking process (Appendix C)
- Assessment types from 2022-23 onwards (Appendix D)

Where a particular mode of assessment requires moderation, second-marking or double-marking the requirements outlined in the policy are a minimum. Departments can moderate, second-mark or double-mark more work if they wish, or if they are required to do so by a professional body.

1. Definitions

1.1 **Summative assessment**
Summative assessments are those which contribute to a module mark, award mark, degree classification or any professional requirements of a course.

1.2 **Formative assessment**
Formative assessments are those for which students may receive a mark, but which does not contribute to any module mark, award mark, degree classification or any professional requirements of a course.

1.3 **Assessment types**
1.3.1   Assessment is classified as either exams or coursework, according to definitions approved by Senate (S/21/73). Exams can be held either remotely or in-person. An overview of assessment types is given in Appendix D.

1.3.2   As of 2022-23, open-book exams replace closed-book exams except where there is a good case for retaining closed-book exams, for example professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. Such exceptions must be approved by the Faculty Dean.

1.3.3   **Open-book (unrestricted)** - the student may access any resources to support them to answer the assessment[1]. The work must be the student's own and guidance on the expected approach to referencing will be provided.

1.3.4   **Open-book (restricted)** - this applies in the case of in-person exams where the student may only bring specified materials into the exam.

1.3.5   **Coursework** formats include but are not limited to essays, presentations, projects, reports, portfolios, and oral exams.
> 1.3.5a   **Tests** are classified as coursework. They are scheduled in a student's teaching timetable. These can be open or closed-book, with closed-book requiring approval from the Faculty Dean. Tests can be in-person (invigilated) or remote. Closed-book tests would be held in-person. In-person tests can be computer-based (e.g., a Moodle Quiz or MCQ) and remote tests would normally be online.

1.1 **Single marking**
Student work is marked by one individual. Only for assessments up to and including 40% of an individual module. Students have the right to request that the work is re-marked if they disagree with the original mark (see [section 3 below Requests from students to have their work re-marked](#)).

1.2 **Single marking using a marking schedule, marking scheme or optical mark recognition (OMR)**
This is usually found in science departments. Normally there should be some kind of clerical check to ensure that the marks have been added up correctly, and assigned to the correct candidates where OMR is used. Where marking schedules are used for exams, they must be sent with draft exam papers to the External Examiner for comments and approval.

1.3 **Moderation**
Moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately, reflecting the shared understanding of the markers, and is an approach which enables comparability across academic subjects. (qaa.ac.uk). A moderator reviews a sample of the marked student work and liaises with the first marker if they believe that the marks were not at the correct level. A moderator would not change individual students' marks for the work, but the first marker and moderator would agree whether marks should be reviewed across the particular piece of assessment or module, which may lead to marks being adjusted. In the case of a major discrepancy, it might be necessary for all the work to be re-marked (by second marking or double-marking). This policy explains the role of both internal moderation and external moderation

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[1] There will be practical restrictions to the number and types of resources that a student can bring into an exam room. Students should be advised to bring in limited, well-structured notes or a specific text into an exam. Where an exam paper would benefit from being answered using a wide range of resources, that type of assessment would be better suited to coursework or an open-book, remote exam.

carried out by the External Examiner(s).

1.4 **Single marking with moderation**
Moderation must take place on individual assessments worth more than 40% of an individual module. Moderation must also take place where the original marker is a Assistant Lecturer (AL) or recently appointed member of staff, or where a team of markers is involved in marking coursework. All fails must be second - marked and a random sample (10%) must also be moderated.

1.5 **Second marking**
This is where a second marker marks the work but has access to the first marker's marks and/or comments. Marks must be reconciled – see section 4 below.

1.6 **Double marking**
Two markers mark the work independently without access to each other's marks or comments about the work. Marks must be reconciled – see section 4 below.

1.7 Reconciliation of marks

1.7.1   Where two members of staff are involved in marking a piece of work, the markers should make every effort to agree a mark, rather than merely averaging the two marks. Departments must keep a full record of both individual and agreed marks for all work which is second or double marked.

1.7.2   Where the two internal markers are unable to reach agreement, the department should make every effort to resolve the matter internally, for example by involving a third person to arbitrate or, if necessary, to act as a third marker. Work should only be sent to an External Examiner, who will be asked to arbitrate, in exceptional circumstances. The External Examiner must be given access to written comments from internal markers on the piece(s) of work involved. The department should then make every effort to agree a mark by reference to comments from the three markers (not purely by averaging).

1.7.3   In instances where a mark is not agreed upon after involving a third marker, departments should seek further guidance and advice from Quality and Academic Development and the Faculty Dean.

1.11 Performance-based coursework with non-permanent output

This is coursework such as presentations, acting and dance, where the student does not provide an output capable of being shown to the external examiner. (A presentation where output such as a PowerPoint presentation is submitted would still count as performance- based coursework with non-permanent output, unless the key learning outcome being assessed is academic content rather than presentation skill.)

2. Marking Policies

2.1 **Assessment Strategy (requirement of all departments)**
Departments should develop an assessment strategy for each course, or set of courses, for approval in the annual monitoring process. The assessment strategy should address the following issues:
2.1.1   Diversity of assessment within a course;
2.1.2   Coverage of module learning outcomes by assessment methods;
2.1.3   The balance between assessment methods and types
2.1.4   Approaches to prevent and detect plagiarism in assessment;
2.1.5   Professional Body Requirements, if appropriate;

and in cases of Departments proposing to have modules assessed by 100% coursework:

2.1.6   Appropriate use of the academic year;
2.1.7   Approaches to assessment for the discipline at other comparable institutions.

2.2 Assessment of performance-based coursework (including oral presentations)

Performance-based assessment with a permanent output, capable of being shown to the External Examiner should be subject to the normal policy for essays/assignments, but only where the permanent output relates directly to the assessment criteria. For example, a presentation where output such as a PowerPoint document is submitted would still count as performance-based coursework with non-permanent output, unless a learning outcome being assessed is academic content rather than presentation skill.

Performance-based assessment with a non-permanent output worth up to and including 40% of a module may be single marked. Where this type of assessment contributes to more than 40% of a module, work must be either double-marked, team marked, video/audio recorded or attended by the external examiner based on 100% coverage of the whole cohort.

2.3 Assessment of group work

2.3.1 Group work with a permanent output should be subject to the normal moderation process for essays and assignments.

2.3.2 The allocation of marks for group work should be in line with the learning outcomes of the module, drawing on examples of good practice (for instance see Moodle).

2.3.3 The assignment criteria should make clear how marks are awarded for teamwork and individual performance. This balance should be considered carefully when such assignments are being designed.

2.3.4 The maximum amount that a joint mark (where a single group mark is derived from people working together in a group) can contribute to a single module is 25%.

2.3.5 Group work with a non-permanent output should be subject to the policy for the assessment of performance-based coursework

2.4 Marks for participation in tutorial, class or seminar discussions

Marks for participation may contribute no more than 5 percent of the overall mark of a module and the marks should relate to a module learning outcome.

2.5 Moderation of work-based learning/placement

The University publishes guidelines on work-based learning which state that 'the assessment of work-based learning/placement should be subject to the normal departmental procedures in respect of moderation and external examining'.

2.6 Moderation of study abroad work

The University should take the mark awarded by the host institution and use the established conversion tables to convert the mark to the standard University scale. The External Examiner should have oversight of the marks awarded by a host institution and the conversion used.
The External Examiner should be invited to provide comment, through his/her report, if he/she observes any anomalies between the converted marks and the rest of the students' marks profiles.

2.7. Marking or moderation of the work of students who are partners or close relatives

Staff should not mark or moderate (including second or double-marking) the work of partners or close relatives.

2.8 Moderating/second marking/double-marking where the first marker is a partner or close relative

Staff should not act as moderator or second marker where their partner or close relative is the first marker.

2.9 Anonymous Marking
2.9.1 Formative and Summative Assessment

Anonymous marking only applies to summative assessment. It does not apply to formative assessment. (see 1.1 and 1.2)

2.9.2 Anonymous Marking of Examinations

The University operates an institution-wide policy of anonymous marking of all examinations. (see 1.3 for definitions of examinations).

2.9.3 Anonymous Marking of Coursework

a. All summative coursework should be marked anonymously where it is practical to do so.

b. Where it is not practical for coursework to be marked anonymously, departments will make students aware, in advance of the assessment task, that this is the case.

c. Appendix A gives guidance on the operation of the policy on anonymous marking..

3. Requests from students to have their work re-marked

3.1 The following apply to all requests for a re-mark:

    3.1.1   Students may only request a re-mark of work under the circumstances set out in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 below.

    3.1.2   If a request for a re-mark is approved, work will be either second or double-marked and marks must be reconciled (see Section 4).

                Where there are exceptional circumstances that prevent the second or double-markers from reconciling the marks, the work will be marked by two new markers who will reconcile their marks (see Section 4 below). Departments should explain the process for re-marking to students.

    3.1.3   Departments must make clear to students their policy on how to request a re-mark and are advised to set an appropriate deadline for requests. Please note the particular deadlines and procedure for requesting a re-mark set out in 3.3.2 below cannot be changed.

    3.1.4   Departments must warn students that marks can increase, decrease or remain the same after a request for a re-mark.

    3.1.5   Departments must determine the appropriate level of feedback to give students after a re-mark in line with in line with University expectations on feedback.

    3.1.6   The right to request a re-mark can only be requested on one occasion for any particular piece of work (unless a procedural/administrative error is suspected).

3.2 Coursework which is single-marked (see 1.4)
Where coursework has a permanent output and is single marked, students have the right to request formal re-marking of a piece of work if they disagree with the original or if they suspect there has been a procedural/administrative error. Requests for a re-mark should be made following the department's policy.

3.3 Coursework which is moderated (see 1.6 and 1.7)
Where coursework has a permanent output, has been single marked with a sample being moderated, students have the right to request formal re-marking of the piece of work under one or both of the following criteria:

3.3.1 Procedural/administrative error is suspected.
Students have the right to request formal re-marking of a piece of work if they suspect there has been a procedural/administrative error. Requests for a re-mark should be made following the department's policy.

3.3.2 If the work was not initially included in the sample for moderation.
The student may only request a re-mark under this criteria if:

- The student has met with the initial marker (or suitable nominee appointed by the relevant Director of Education) to obtain further feedback on the reason for the initial mark before making a formal request for a re-mark; and
- The form requesting a re-mark has been completed and submitted with the signature of the first marker (or nominee, see above) confirming that the meeting has taken place, no later than two weeks of term time from the date of the initial feedback to students.

3.4 Other circumstances
There may be exceptional circumstances where approval is given for a piece of work to be re-marked which falls outside those defined in 3.2 and 3.3. Where this is the case, the conditions set out in 3.1.1 – 3.1.6 apply. Students should contact their department for advice, and should also note that approval will only be given in exceptional cases.

3.5 Examinations
Students may only request a re-mark of examination scripts if procedural/administrative error is suspected.

4. The use of internal and external staff for marking

4.1 **Examination marking by Assistant Lecturers (ALs) or Graduate Lab Assistants (GLAs)**
It is generally desirable that examinations should be marked by permanent teaching staff. Where it is necessary for graduate students to undertake this role, the following policy applies:

4.1.1 A graduate student should be employed to mark examinations only when the individual has taught the whole or a significant part of the module.
Permission to employ a graduate student for marking must be sought in advance from the relevant Dean, on the basis of a case made by the Head of Department or partner institution, indicating the monitoring arrangements proposed. There is an application form which must be completed and submitted to the relevant Dean.

4.2 **Coursework marking by ALs or Graduate Lab Assistants (GLAs)**

It is generally desirable that coursework should be marked by permanent teaching staff. Where it is necessary for graduate students to undertake this role, the following policy applies:

4.2.1 A graduate student should be employed to mark coursework only when the individual has taught/demonstrated a relevant part of the module in the current or previous academic year(s) or the relevant Dean has accepted a case made by the Head of Department on the competence of the graduate student.

4.3 The Role of the External Examiner
Unless the External Examiner has been specifically sent work to arbitrate on a dispute between internal markers, the External Examiner's role will be as a moderator. External Examiners should not act as second markers. In moderating student work the Module External Examiner is providing an independent overview of the consistency of approaches to assessment. As such, the Module External Examiner's primary concern is with the overall marking standard in the module rather than with marks obtained by individual students. The External Examiner should not alter the marks of any individual student.

4.4 The Use of External Markers
All student work is marked by staff working directly for the University in connection with the teaching and assessment of students. This ensures that the University's responsibilities to maintain academic standards are met.

5. Exemptions to the University's Marking Policy

If a department believes it is not possible to comply with an aspect of the University's marking policy, the department must apply for an exemption to this aspect and propose an acceptable alternative arrangement for approval by the Executive Dean of Faculty and PVC (Education).

Marking Policy for all Taught Students

Coursework	Marking Protocol*
An individual item of coursework worth up to and including 40% of an individual module: - Essays/assignments - Coursework tests using written answer papers, including in- class tests and progress tests - Performance-based coursework with a permanent output, capable of being shown to the External Examiner - Performance-based coursework with a non-permanent output - Group work with a permanent output	Single marked. Moderation required for Assistant Lecturers (ALs), new staff**, and assessed coursework titles and tests marked by multiple staff.
An individual item of coursework contributing more than 40% of an individual module: - Essays/assignments - Coursework tests using written answer papers, including in- class tests and progress tests - Performance-based coursework with a permanent output, capable of being shown to the External Examiner - Group work with a permanent output	All fails must be second-marked and a random sample (10%) must also be moderated. (For PGT courses, "fail" encompasses marks in the condonable 40-50% range).
Coursework testing using OMR sheets, marking schemes or online testing tools Coursework marked to a marking schedule	An independent check must be made to ensure that the programme is working accurately and that marks have been assigned to the correct candidates.
Individual items of coursework comprising at least 30 credits (including PGT Dissertation and final year undergraduate project reports)	All must be second marked or double marked.
Performance-based coursework with a non- permanent output that contributes to more than 40% of a single module Group work with a non-permanent output that contributes to more than 40% of a single module	All must be double-marked or team marked, or video/audio recorded or attended by the external examiner.

Examination	Marking Protocol
All exams at level 3 and 4; and exams at level 5 which count for 50% or less of the module mark***.	The scripts only need to be single-marked, but all fails must be second-marked and a random sample (10%) must also be moderated. Where a formal marking schedule is in place it is not necessary to second-mark or sample - but an independent check must be made on all marks calculations. Marking schedules must be reviewed as part of the department's procedures for reviewing draft exam papers.
All exams at level 5 which count for greater than 50% of the module mark; and all exams at level 6 and 7***.	All scripts must be second marked, double marked or marked to a marking schedule

*   These are minimum requirements and departments can moderate, second mark or double mark more work if they wish, or if they are required to do so by a professional and/or regulatory body. If a department believes it is not possible to comply with an aspect of the University's marking policy, then the department must apply for an exemption to this aspect and propose an acceptable alternative arrangement for approval by the Faculty Executive Dean and PVC Education

**   It is for departments to determine how long moderation needs to continue for a new member of staff.

***   An independent check on all marks calculations must be made where a marking schedule is used. Marking schedules must be sent with draft exams to the External Examiner for comments and approval.

Appendix A:

Guidance on the operation of the policy on anonymous marking of coursework

1. **Duration of anonymity**
   1.1. When work is marked anonymously, anonymity should be maintained until the marks for the piece of work have been released to students. In cases where work is subject to second marking, double marking or moderation, anonymity should be maintained until all stages of the marking and moderation process have been completed.
   1.2. When work has been marked anonymously and a student subsequently requests that the work should be re-marked (see *Marking Policy* section 3, *Requests from students to have their work re-marked*), the designated second marker(s) should receive an anonymised copy of the student's work, and should not be told the student's identity until the re-marking process has been completed.

2. **Circumstances when it is not practical for work to be marked anonymously**
   2.1. The University recognises that it is not practical for all coursework to be marked anonymously. Where this is the case, departments should make students aware, in advance of the assessment task, that their work will not be marked anonymously.
   2.2. Coursework which falls into the following groups will not be marked anonymously and there is no requirement for the Department to seek permission not to use anonymous marking. This applies to individual pieces of coursework, and not to assessment for a module as a whole (unless all pieces fall into these categories).
       a. **Marks which are based on observation of students**
          This includes performance-based coursework, student presentations, practical demonstrations or activities, and marks for participation or contribution to class discussion.

       b. **Work which has been closely supervised or negotiated where a marker has had interaction with the student such that the student's work cannot be anonymous to that marker**
          This includes laboratory work, assessment of work-based learning activities, specific dissertation or capstone projects where the student has received close supervision to an extent that prevents anonymity being maintained, and agreed forms of assessment and feedback in case of individual student learning needs. Where work which falls into this category is subject to moderation, second marking or double marking (see *Marking Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work*, sections 1.6, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9 for definitions), the second assessor should receive an anonymised copy of the student's work. For work which falls into this category and is subject to moderation or second marking, the second assessor may see the first marker's comments on the work, with the exception of any comments which might reveal the student's identity.

3. **Other circumstances when identity may be revealed**
   3.1. In the following circumstances, anonymity may be lifted:
       a. **Where it is not possible to maintain anonymity and carry out our duty of care or to follow a policy or procedure effectively,** including:
          ▪ Investigation into a suspected academic offence, and marking of work submitted in response to a penalty relating to an academic offence;
          ▪ Where the nature of work submitted for an assignment raises concerns that a student, or someone else, may be at risk of serious harm.
       b. **Where marks from another institution contribute towards an award**
          Marks awarded by other institutions, for example those which are recognised through accreditation of prior or experiential learning, or through study abroad, will follow the other institution's policy on anonymous marking.

Requests for coursework not to be marked anonymously

   3.2. Where a Department wishes to argue that it is not practical for anonymous marking to be used in situations other than those listed in section 2, the Director of Education may make a case in writing to the Faculty Dean.
   3.3. The written case should be sent in the first instance to the Quality and Academic Development Manager for the relevant Department. The Department should explain why it would not be practical for anonymous marking to be used in the particular circumstances, and should state what alternative measures will be taken to ensure consistency of marking (for example, second marking or moderation, where these are not already required by the Marking Policy). The decision of the Faculty Dean will be final.
   3.4. Requests should be made annually, and will be considered for individual pieces of coursework. Where reassessment does not mirror the format of original assessment tasks, a separate anonymity waiver request will be needed for the reassessment.

Appendix B: Form for requesting a re-mark of work which has not previously been included in a sample for moderation

Name of student	
Registration number	

Title and code of module affected and a brief description of the piece of work, with date on which feedback was given to students, for which you are seeking re-marking.

Signature of first marker (or substitute nominated by the Director of Education of the relevant Department, School, Centre or Partner Institution) to confirm that a meeting to discuss the initial feedback has taken place. Signed: Date Print name:

Very brief description of the grounds for wanting a re-mark:

Declaration by student: I declare that:
    ▪ this individual item of assessment was originally marked by one person (single marked) and that my work was not initially included in the sample for moderation;
    ▪ I have had a meeting with the initial marker (or substitute) to discuss the feedback on my work, and that I am still dissatisfied with the mark;
    ▪ I request remarking of the work. I understand that marks can go up as well as down as a result of re-marking. I further understand that the decision of the new marker is final relating to this piece of work (unless procedural irregularity is suspected).
Signed:
 	
Date:

Appendix C: Overview of coursework marking process

1. **Student coursework submitted, marked and moderated.**

   Coursework falls into one of the following categories, which determines the required marking and internal moderation.

   a. **Individual item of coursework up to and including 40% of an individual module (including group work).**
   Single marked (moderation required for Assistant Lecturers (AL), new staff and course titles and tests marked by multiple staff).

   b. **Individual item of coursework contributing more than 40% of an individual module.**
   All fails must be second marked and a random sample (10%) must also be moderated.

   c. **Coursework testing using OMR sheets, marking schemes or online testing tools and coursework marked to a marking schedule.**
   An independent check must be made to ensure that the programme is working accurately and that marks have been assigned to the correct candidates.

   d. **Individual items of coursework comprising at least 30 credits (including PGT dissertations and UG Capstone projects).**
   Second marked or double marked.

   e. **Performance-based coursework or group work with a non-permanent output that contributes to more than 40% of a single module.**
   Double-marked or team marked, or video/audio recorded or attended by the External Examiner.

2. **Provisional marks released to students.**

3. **Samples of student coursework are made available for External Examiners to moderate.**

   External Examiners should be sent the following as a minimum:

   - *At least 10% of examples across all classifications (including fails).*
   - *If the cohort is under ten, all student work should be seen.*

   Samples should include all of a sample student's work and classifications should be calculated on the module aggregate unless there is a variation to the Rules of Assessment requiring students to pass all assessments. The full range of assessed work (dissertations, examination scripts and so forth) should be sent.

4. **The Board of Examiners meets and confirms the coursework and examination marks.**

5. **Marks released – All successful students progress to the next level of study or graduate.**

Appendix D: Assessment types from 2022-23

Assessment type			
Exams			
Remote exam	Open book (default)	Centrally timetabled in main exam periods	Remote assessment. Students have a restricted time in which to complete the assessment either short duration (less than 24 hours) or 24/48 hours. The shorter duration exams could be computer-based.
		Department run (at any time)	
In-person exam, invigilated	Open book (default)	Centrally timetabled in main exam periods	This is a time-bound assessment in controlled conditions. Could be computer-based.
		Department run (at any time), this includes practical exams	
	Closed book (requires FD approval)	Centrally timetabled in main exam periods	
		Department run (at any time)	
Coursework			
In-person timed test, invigilated	Open book	On teaching timetable; department run	Tests are classified as coursework. They are scheduled in a student's teaching timetable and are undertaken in controlled conditions. The approach to invigilation varies. Could be computer-based.
	Closed book (requires FD approval)		
Remote test	Open book	On teaching timetable; department run	Remote assessment but scheduled in a student's teaching timetable. Could be computer-based.
Coursework Includes essays, projects, presentations etc	Open book	Departmentally run; deadlines are published in advance	

See the future of assessment (S/21/73) paper for further information on what was approved by Senate for 2022-23 and beyond.

Title	Marking Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work
Document manager	Quality and Academic Development
Section	Academic Section
Document owner	Liz Laws, Senior Quality and Academic Development Manager
Approved by	Senate
Date of approval	June 2020
Effective date	September 2019
Frequency of review	Annual
Date of last review	May 2022
Date of next review	2023
Document status	Approved - published
Document classification	Public
Reporting required	Annual updates or rollover to Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Questions and queries	Email quad@essex.ac.uk
Related policies	Assessment Policies for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Awards of the University of Essex Feedback Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work External Examiner Policies for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Awards
Supersedes	N/A
Superseded by	N/A
Stakeholders	Academic Registrar; Departments & Schools, including Heads of Department, Departmental Managers and Directors of Education; Faculty Deans (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, and Postgraduate Research; Professional Services teams; Faculty Managers; members of Senate, Education Committee and Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact the Quality and Academic Development Team (quad@essex.ac.uk)	