**Guidance on Marking Processes**

These guidelines have been prepared to assist Institutes in determining and operating marking processes that are most appropriate for their Programmes of Study. This guidance should be read in conjunction with Chapter 7 ‘Assessment: Taught Programmes’ of the *Academic Quality Handbook*.

**Selecting a marking process**

Consideration should be given to whether all formally assessed work at particular levels of a programme should be treated to the same marking process. Where material of different kinds is assessed at a given level in a programme, it may be appropriate to adopt different marking processes. The marking process should be determined at the module level and appropriate for the discipline.

Academic Directors as line managers should ensure that the selection of markers for all marking duties meet acceptable teaching quality standards. In this context the suitability of staff to serve as markers should be carefully considered. All markers should be assigned duties compatible with their experience and capacities.

**Criteria for selection of marking process**

The following are some of the criteria which should be taken into account in determining an appropriate marking model:

1. the nature of the material being assessed: for example, whether written work or a different form of submission, whether material is qualitative or quantitative; whether marking requires the judgement of the examiner or merely the checking of objective fact; whether material is presented in essays or numerical answers; whether questions and answers are structured or unstructured; whether questions are multiple choice or open; whether assessment involves short, discrete questions or questions which have a wide coverage; whether innovative or more traditional.
2. the level of study of the module: the importance of objective second opinions increases with closeness to the determination of the final degree classification;
3. resource considerations: e.g. staffing capacity; student numbers; deadlines;
4. the credit weighting of the individual piece of work being marked;
5. the form of assessment: conventional examination; other assessed work such as essays, projects, case studies, practicals, portfolios, seminars, orals, presentations, individual or group work;
6. the specific requirements related to discipline norms.

**Definitions**

The definitions that follow have been expressed in terms of written work, and will need to be adjusted to meet the requirements of other forms of assessment such as practicals, orals, presentations, etc.

* ***Internal Moderation***

The marker marks and annotates the work fully. The role of the moderator is to check that the marking is appropriate, exercising a professional judgement about whether the process of marking has been fair, appropriate and in keeping with the assessment criteria for the module. The requirements of moderation process are given in paragraphs 7.8 (5) (i)-(iv) of the *Academic Quality Handbook*.

* ***Second marking***

The first marker annotates the work and the second marker marks the work in the knowledge of this information. Second markers may be required or advised not to take into account the first marks in determining their own marks, or may be required to resolve differences in marks for all cases or within ranges as part of their second marking responsibilities.

* ***Blind double marking***

The first and second markers make no annotations of any kind on the work being marked. Both examiners record their marks and comments separately and then compare marks and resolve differences to produce an agreed mark. Agreed marks and comments may then be entered on the work and/or on an appropriate assessment form. This might be an appropriate method of assessment for a dissertation.

* ***Marking teams***

It may be necessary for several markers to share the marking for large groups of students. It is crucial that all the markers apply the assessment criteria in the same way and that an assessment strategy for this is in place. The team should, for example, start by blind double marking a sample of scripts, before discussing the marks awarded by each marker for each script and reaching agreement on any discrepancies. Any of the above models could apply equally to conventional examinations or other assessed work. With adaptations, the models described above could also apply to non-written assessments. For example, two or more observers independently marking a practical is equivalent to blind double marking.

**Resolution of differences between markers**

1. Any differences in the marks awarded must be resolved.
2. Whatever marking practice is applied, differences in the marks awarded by the two markers should be resolved by means of discussion and negotiation. The process by which a final mark is agreed must be carefully documented so that the external examiner is able to follow that process.
3. Paragraph 7.8 (4) (iv) of Chapter 7 of the *Academic Quality Handbook* states the formal process.

**Group Working and Assessment**

* ***General Principles***

1. The University recognises the educational significance of collaborative and group working as integral to the effective learning and teaching of specific disciplines.
2. The University also considers that the capacity to work effectively with others is a key transferable skill, desirable for all graduates.

* ***Delivery***

1. The ability to work as an effective member of a team is not necessarily an inherent skill for all students. A methodology for such practice should be integrated into any project where students have the capacity to impact upon the learning experience of their peers.
2. The requirements of any project with regard to group working must be clearly explained to all participants.
3. Tutors, using their academic and pastoral judgement, should create groups in what is considered to be the best educational interests of the student cohort as a whole.
4. Students should be encouraged to work with a range of colleagues over the course of a programme.
5. The process of the project should be carefully monitored by the module tutor/project supervisor through, for example, such methods as regular tutorials, observed sessions, minuted group meetings, and self and peer assessment procedures.
6. Enforceable, transparent sanctions must be in place for those students unwilling to participate in an acceptable and agreed manner. These could include withdrawal of the student from a group project when a student’s behaviour and/or attitude persistently impacts adversely on the learning of others in the group.

* ***Assessment of group work***

The assessment related to any group project should always be able, by means of the nature of the project tasks or the assessment criteria, to differentiate between individual student achievement. Furthermore, section 7.8 (1) (ii) of the *Academic Quality Handbook* requires that ‘marks are awarded to students on an individual basis irrespective of the nature of the assessment task’.