1. Anonymous marking

a) Rationale

The main reason for anonymous marking is to avoid the risk of bias entering into the assessment process and thus ensure equity in the treatment of all students. This may be a positive bias – for example, because a marker knows that a student has worked hard, or has had to contend with personal difficulties – or a negative one - because a student has been difficult to deal with during the year or because of prejudice against someone of a particular race or culture. Such bias may be unconscious – a background belief that a particular type of person finds this subject difficult, for example, and so will perform badly. It is important to stress that practising anonymous marking does not indicate that the University believes that such prejudices exist or that they influence marking. It is rather to reassure students that they cannot influence the assessment process and so to guarantee equity of treatment. In this way it actually protects academic staff against accusations of bias from students who are dissatisfied with their marks.

b) Process

i. All examinations must be marked anonymously. Students write their names on the top right-hand corner of the front page of their script, and then fold over the corner, sealing it down so that the name cannot be seen.

ii. It is not a requirement to mark coursework anonymously. The advantages and disadvantages of this have been explored very fully and university Quality Management Sub-Committee (QMSC) has come to the conclusion that, on balance, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of anonymity. This is mainly because it is difficult to give meaningful feedback which relates comments to students’ previous performance when work has been marked anonymously. This is especially the case where oral feedback is given via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The risk of bias in assessment is addressed by moderation and double-marking practices. However this does not prevent a programme team or subject area which wishes to do so from marking coursework anonymously.

iii. Some forms of assessment such as performance, practical work (e.g. laboratory work), some forms of visual art and placement activity, cannot be marked anonymously since it is inevitable that the marker will know the identity of the student concerned. In such cases further safeguards are needed which may include one or more of:

- marking by a team or group of staff;
- having the external examiner present at the event;
- having a second marker or moderator present at the event;
- double marking all the work;
- recording the assessment event (audio or video);
• using robust assessment criteria translated into an assessment grid on which the reasons for the mark(s) awarded are clearly recorded;
• involving the student in the assessment process (e.g. for a placement) which may include formative feedback through the year as well as a summative decision.

2. Moderation of Assessment

a) Rationale

Moderation of assessment is employed to ensure that the standards of marking are consistent within programme teams and reflect the agreed subject-specific assessment criteria. Since these are aligned to institutional criteria this supports the comparability of standards across the University. All marking, including moderation, must take into account the relevant assessment criteria, the learning outcomes which the assessment is intended to assess, and any model answers or equivalent for the work in question.

b) Moderation before assignments/examinations are given to students

i. There should be internal moderation of all proposed assessments – examination papers, time-constrained tests, assignments etc - for assessment at all levels. This may be carried out by an individual (who may also be the marking moderator for the module) or by a group of staff. The moderator or group chair should confirm at the Module Assessment Board that this has taken place and this should be minuted. Faculties may also wish to put in place a process by which moderation can be signed off and monitored when it takes place.

ii. Module Assessment Board external examiners should be consulted on all examination papers for modules which count towards the final award. They should also be consulted in general terms about coursework assessment and it is good practice for external examiners to approve coursework assignments where this is feasible. Individually negotiated assignments (e.g. dissertation titles) would not normally be subject to the approval of an external examiner.

c) Moderation and double marking of student work - definitions

i. **Moderation** is the process of verifying the assessment by having a second and, on occasions, third marker cross-mark a sample of the work. **Moderation** is ‘seen’ as the mark and comments of the first marker are visible to the second marker when he/she reviews the assessment.

ii. **Double marking** is the same process undertaken for the work of all students in the cohort, not just for a sample, and is undertaken without sight of the original mark or of the previous marker’s comments. This is ‘blind’ double marking which may be used in preference to moderation and can be useful where there is a discrepancy between the first marker and the moderator which cannot be resolved.

d) Moderation and double marking of student work - process

i. **Internal moderation** by a member of university staff must be undertaken for work at all levels except for that which is entirely objectively marked (e.g. multiple-choice-questions (MCQ)). As a minimum:
moderation of all work (100% ‘sample’) should be used for all dissertations and projects worth more than 20 credits. (Note that this means that the second marking need not be ‘blind’, as it would be for ‘double marking’); moderation as per the sampling formula below should be used for all other work.

It is good practice also to moderate dissertations and projects worth only 20 credits especially where the supervisor is the first marker.

ii. **External moderation** by an external examiner applies only to work at the level of the award (level 5 for Foundation Degrees (FD), levels 5 and 6 for Bachelors degrees, levels 5, 6 and 7 for Integrated Masters degrees and level 7 for Masters degrees).

iii. **Moderation sample**: the minimum sample of work for moderation (whether internal or external) is 10% to cover all the mark bands. Where this raises concern about the standard or consistency of marking further sample(s) should be marked across the relevant mark band(s). If necessary all work will be moderated (100% ‘sample’), or all work in a particular mark band (or bands), or all work for particular question(s), depending on the problem identified. A decision could be taken to ‘double mark’ some of the work ‘blind’ (see below).

iv. **Moderation should be ‘seen’** because the moderation process is designed to verify the mark of the first marker. The work is marked by the first marker who enters the mark and the rationale for it on the assessment pro forma. The second marker does the same, usually (but not necessarily) using the same pro forma.

v. **Double marking should be ‘blind’** because it is a repeat of the full assessment process. The work is marked by the first marker who enters the mark and the rationale for it on the assessment pro forma. The second marker does the same, using a separate pro forma to ensure that the work is marked blind. If full (100%) second marking is carried out but is not ‘blind’ this is effectively 100% moderation. In some cases blind double marking cannot be undertaken, e.g. in the case of collaborative marking by a team of staff of a live performance or exhibition, although here the team itself acts as a check on the judgement of any individual.

vi. **Resolving discrepancies**: discrepancies identified by moderation or double marking are resolved if possible by discussion between the first marker and the second marker or internal moderator. If marks are to be changed this should be consistent across all work (or all work in the relevant mark band) and not confined solely to the sample. If consensus cannot be reached the assessment(s) should be referred to a third internal marker or to the external examiner. If the discrepancy cannot be resolved internally it must be referred to the external examiner. The pro forma must record the judgements of any further marker involved, the final agreed mark and the rationale for this.

vii. **Developing consistency in marking**: it is good practice for module teams to meet before the marking process commences to discuss assessment criteria in greater detail, if possible with sample assignments from previous equivalent cohorts to reach a consensus on marking standards. This is particularly helpful to a new team, new members of staff or associate (‘visiting’) lecturers and should help to refine assessment criteria and minimise discrepancies in marking.
viii. In the case of *ephemeral* assessments such as performances or presentations, consideration needs to be given in advance of the arrangements for assessment being made to ensure that a process of moderation and sampling equivalent to that laid out above is achieved. This may include attendance by more than one marker, video recording, or other means which would allow for review by a moderator.