

Heriot-Watt University

Policy on the Moderation of Assessment

With diversity in form of assessment across multi-location/mode programmes now being an approved practice (September 2011), it has become imperative for the University to assure itself of the maintenance of academic standards, consistency, comparability and fairness to students across the wide variety of its taught provision.

Moderation has been identified as one of the key principles for assuring quality and standards across multiple variants of a programme. The University needs, therefore, to ensure that robust, effective and consistent internal moderation processes are taking place in all disciplines, across all Schools and in all modes or locations of study.

The University Policy on Moderation of Assessment applies to all qualifying assessments, but may be extended by Schools to non-qualifying assessment.

An accompanying *Guide for Schools on the Moderation of Assessment* has been provided to assist Schools in producing or revising their own moderation policies.

Aim of Policy

The purpose of moderation, and hence the aim of this Policy, is:

To assure the University that the standard of student learning required to achieve a specific grade, credit or award is consistent as far as possible across each discipline and is fair to all students.

Implementation: University and Schools

The University Policy will be implemented with effect from the start of academic year 2013/2014. Schools should have their moderation policies in place by the start of 2013/14, with a copy being submitted to the Clerk of the Quality and Standards Committee by end of September 2013.

Adherence to Policy

The University Policy is designed to provide a framework which is sufficiently flexible to enable Schools to continue with, and build on where appropriate, their current well-established moderation processes.

The requirements set out in this Policy are a minimum level of acceptable practice, which all Schools must meet.

Review of University Policy and School Policies

The University Policy on Moderation shall be reviewed every three years by the Learning and Teaching Board¹.

School policies on moderation shall be reviewed on a 3-year cycle through the Internal Audit as part of the review of internal management processes.

¹ In practice, the Learning and Teaching Board is likely to devolve responsibility for undertaking this review to the Student Learning Experience Committee.

Key Principle

Schools must have a formal moderation policy which sets out the School's procedures and responsibilities, and must retain records showing that moderation has occurred. These records (and the policy and its implementation) shall be reported on by the External Examiner each year and shall be reviewed by the Internal Audit team every three years.

All Schools must have robust moderation processes to ensure that there is equivalence between assessment activities on any given course. This should include equivalence: over time; between different authors; across different activities that may be used in different locations; between different graders/markers; between different languages.

Scope

The scope of the University Policy and associated School moderation procedures encompasses:

1. All qualifying assessments which contribute to the degree awards associated with a programme:
 - All forms and variants of summative assessment, ie those which contribute to the overall mark/grade and award of credit, irrespective of mode or location of delivery of a programme.
 - All stages of the assessment process, from design of, and criteria for, assignments to the final marking and confirmation of results.
2. Stage Three assessments of programmes from which substantial numbers of students exit with an Ordinary degree.

Schools may opt to apply moderation processes to assessments associated with non-qualifying courses.

Template for School Moderation Procedures

A template for School moderation procedures has been outlined below. The accompanying *Guide for Schools on the Moderation of Assessment* provides more detailed information. Both are designed to assist Schools in reviewing, and revising as appropriate, their own processes in order to meet the requirements of the University Policy.

Schools may differentiate their moderation processes to take account of the extent to which there is a potential risk to consistency of quality and standards, and equity of treatment of students in assessment.

1. School Policy Statement

Schools must have a formal (written) moderation policy which sets out how the School will ensure consistency and maintenance of academic standards, and, where appropriate, equivalency across multiple versions of programmes.

The School moderation policy should make explicit the process for approving, reviewing and modifying the policy and associated procedures.

2. Scope of School Moderation

School moderation policies should set out the range of activities subject to moderation (eg, review at the design and marking stages; double-marking of dissertations; review across different modes/locations; overview of marking by Approved Teachers). *See Guide for Schools on the Moderation of Assessment for further examples of activities requiring moderation.*

3. Roles and Responsibilities

A summary should be given of the individuals and groups responsible for the various moderation activities and of their respective responsibilities. It is recommended that each discipline (or School, depending on the size and scope of the School's activity) has a "Moderator" who oversees the implementation of the School's moderation policy.

The roles and responsibilities should include how the School:

- resolves differences between individuals in their marking of assessments;
- oversees the moderation processes;
- ensures the independence of individuals involved in moderation

In the *Guide for Schools on the Moderation of Assessment*, a suggested remit is given for: Moderator; External Examiner; Chief External Examiner; Exam Board.

4. Reporting Procedure

The reporting and formal record-keeping procedure should be outlined, for example: the Moderator's Report to the Exam Board; statement of the effectiveness of the moderation process in the minutes of the Exam Board; judgement of the Chief External Examiner in his/her Report to the University.

5. Communication of School Process

The mechanisms by which the School communicates its moderation process to all staff, Externals and students should be included. The School process must be transparent and clear.

Academic Registry
6 May 2013

Approved by the Senate, 22 May 2013
Reviewed by the Student Learning Experience Committee, 7 September 2016