

## **Institute Policy on Grade Moderation**

*(guideline for reference)*

### Part I: The Rationale for Grade Moderation

1. Grades awarded to students need to be:

#### **Credible**

Results need to reflect the range of talent and effort that is normally associated with learning. Thus, skewed results (everyone fails or everyone gets A+) *on the surface* are not credible. Credibility refers to both *internal* and *public* perception.

#### **Consistent/reliable**

Assessment results are reliable to the extent that they reflect the consistent application of common standards and criteria.

#### **Fair/objective**

Assessment is fair/objective when it has not been influenced by subjective criteria other than those inherent in the academic discipline and when common standards or criteria have been consistently applied.

#### **Defensible**

Assessment processes used must enable results to be publicly defended either internally (e.g. BoE) or externally (e.g. Ombudsman).

#### **Comparable**

An 'A' given by one lecturer in as far as possible represent the same value as an 'A' given by another lecturer, irrespective of course or programme.

#### **Accurate**

Assessment results must reflect the real talent of students and the effort they make. Individual results must be as close as possible to the 'true' level of a student's achievement.

2. Any one of these qualities provides a good reason to ensure that grade allocation processes are open, transparent and fair. Taken together, they serve to ensure the highest standards and professionalism in grade allocation processes whilst making them able to withstand public scrutiny.

## Part II: Grade Moderation Processes

3. It is universally acknowledged that there is no single approach to grade moderation. A review of grade moderation practices in other universities shows clearly that multiple methods can be used. It also indicates that different disciplines adopt different approaches to grade moderation. Following these findings, three different approaches are identified below:

- a. Double marking

This generic process is widely used within the Institute. It is suggested that **10-25%** scripts ranging from high, medium and low be double-marked. The departments, however, have discretion to decide on the exact percentage. If a review of this percentage range is required, the concerned department should write requesting this to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee. All scripts marked A+ and fail should be double-marked. Departments may decide if A or A- should also be double-marked as well. Course coordinators have the flexibility to decide the best method for the course concerned. If anomalies are found, the course coordinator should consult the Head of Department who is the gatekeeper for upholding quality assurance.

Occasionally, if “A-/A/A+” or “D” grades are over 40%, the students’ course assignments concerned (i.e. those awarded A-/A/A+ or D) should be double marked.

- b. Consensus or Social Moderation by the Teaching Team

This moderation process involves a number of steps and processes:

- i. Pre-moderation meeting of teaching team to establish standards

It involves sample scripts being marked by the whole teaching team and standards established through discussion and with reference to any existing common standards.

- ii. Discussion and group interaction

These are the key processes for establishing standards that will guide the

marking of the remainder of the scripts.

iii. Post-marking meeting

This meeting will help to align marks in relation to the standards established at the pre-marking meeting. It will involve a review of another sample of marked scripts and a discussion of problematic marks.

c. External Moderation

This is where an individual or group not involved in the setting or grading of an assessment task will confirm:

- i. that the task being set and the criteria being used to determine grade differences are at an appropriate standard for the level concerned; and
- ii. the grades given to students for completing the task are consistent.

Moderation will not change the grades of individual students. If moderators identify anomalies in the grading of work, the grades of the whole cohort should be modified where appropriate.

Normally, the moderation of completed assignments will be based on a sample of graded work and moderators will have access to all the grades awarded for the course, not just the sample grades.

4. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to grade moderation. Each model is capable of meeting the rationale for grade moderation. Departments can choose either one of these three or a mix of them. The prime objective is to ensure that grade moderation is conducted in accordance with the rationale in Part I.

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