This document is to be read in the context of the University Assessment Policy 2021. It does not supersede or replace any part of that policy and instead is intended to add additional guidance.

1. Background

Students and their studies are one of our key responsibilities. Student results are the official representation of their learning and form an important part of the record of a student’s time at university. It is concomitant upon us to ensure that student results are arrived at, calculated and reported with all due care.

One of the key ways of ensuring fairness and accuracy in our results handling and reporting is to apply moderation at all stages of the assessment lifecycle.

Given the sheer scale of the results reporting that we undertake it is inevitable that errors will arise. Even when all due care is taken, students can become especially anxious if they perceive that errors have occurred and their enquiries need to handled swiftly and appropriately. Students may still have questions even when results have been reported accurately and these needed to be dealt with in the same manner.

In the vast majority of circumstances these enquiries can only be handled by staff that were involved in awarding the results, i.e., the staff that have taught the unit and normally the unit convenor.

This guideline is to ensure that the results handling proceeds in as error-free manner as possible and that any resulting student enquiries are dealt with in the shortest possible timeframe.

2. Moderation

Moderation is an important aspect of our teaching. It should be applied at all stages of the assessment lifecycle. It is a process of review by which we ensure and enhance the quality of our assessment practices. Moderation includes, but is not limited to:

- Review of assessment items, standards, and rubrics before assessment items are released to students
- Review of grading and application of standards post assessment
- Review of appropriateness of standards

Moderation must be carried out in every delivery of all units.

2.1. Review of Assessment items

The major summative assessment (final examination or major piece of assessment where there is no final examination) of every unit will be reviewed every offering by an academic not currently involved in the teaching of the unit. This review will also include the standards for the assessment item and the marking scheme/rubric/marking guideline and sample answer (as appropriate), and will be carried out in the context of the unit learning outcomes. The review is to assess whether the assessment item properly addresses the corresponding learning outcomes and that the standards stated in the marking scheme/rubric/marking guideline are appropriate.

The moderation will occur before the assessment item is released to students and in time for any revisions suggested by the review to be implemented.

Other major pieces of assessment should be periodically subject to the same process.
2.2. Marking teams

Sometimes a single piece of assessment requires more than one marker. This is often due to the number of submissions being more than one person could be realistically expected to handle within the allowed time. Where submissions from multiple students are distributed to multiple staff members for marking:

- Assessment items and rubrics/markig schemes will be distributed to the marking team for comment before release to students.
- There will be a process (such as pre-marking meeting, joint marking of a subset of submissions (pilot marking), etc.) to ensure consistency of assessment.

Note this only applies where the same question/particular task is marked by more than one staff member. If, for example, all attempts at a single question in an examination are marked by the same staff member this requirement does not apply.

2.3. Review of Standards

Moderation needs to apply not only to the preparation of assessment items and rubrics and agreement on standards before marking but also to the review of how assessment standards were applied.

For the major summative assessment in a unit (final examination or major piece of assessment where there is no final examination) 10% of submissions (but no less than 51 actual submissions and no more than 20 actual submissions) will be reviewed every offering (including review of every marker). This is to ensure both that the standards have been applied consistently and that these standards are appropriate. If possible, this moderation should occur before results for the assessment item are released to students to ensure accuracy in reported results.

Other major pieces of assessment should be periodically subject to the same procedure.

3. Scaling and other alterations to overall assessment results

Before the results of an assessment item are released, the moderation process may reveal issues with the results of a particular assessment item. This may require alteration of the ‘raw’ marks in some manner, such as scaling. Such scaling should be rare and must be applied before the results of an assessment item are released to students. Scaling or other alterations to marks cannot be applied after such release. Any scaling or other alteration of marks must be applied considering both the results of the moderation, the rubrics, standards, and learning outcomes of the unit and the principles of the Assessment Policy. Any method used to scale raw marks must be fair, equitable, and transparent. As this information may be accessed during an appeal process, a clear record of the process used should be recorded.

4. Rounding

Due to the varied nature and weightings of assessment, calculation of the final unit results for students may initially result in values which are not whole numbers. To arrive at whole number results the following faculty principle on rounding must be applied to the final results for a unit:

Results are rounded to the nearest whole integer value.

e.g.,

49.5 would be rounded up to 50
49.499 would be rounded down to 49

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1 Or the number of submissions made if that number is less than 5. Note that the requirement refers to review, not full remarking.
5. Release of results

Students need to be informed of their results in each assessment item a timely fashion. At the very latest results should be released to students, together with appropriate feedback, before the next assessment item which deals with the same content. The only exception to this may be where students are not all submitting at the same time, for example weekly student presentations spread over a session.

All results of assessment items must be released to students in a timely fashion, including final exam results. This release must occur through a unit’s iLearn site. The results released to the students must include the marks the student has been awarded.

Once a result for an assessment item has been released it should not be subsequently altered except in highly unusual circumstances, such as when errors are found, the result of a special consideration submission, grade appeal, etc. Once a result has been released, its contribution to a student’s final grade is, in effect, locked in. This follows the “Fair, Transparent and Equitable” principle of the Assessment Policy.

6. Responsibilities of Convenors and co-examiners

a) Unit convenors taking leave during the results processing and release period must ensure that some other staff member on campus can carry out the convenor’s duties in relation to results during the period of absence

b) Co-examiners need to assure themselves that the calculation of final results from individual assessment results is accurate and are reported to the student system error-free.

6.1. Presence of Convenors for results awarding and student enquiries

Convenors need to effectively oversee the collating and awarding of results in their units. When staff are absent from campus, including absence on duty, the reasons for that absence are likely to preclude staff from devoting appropriate time to the results process. This means that some other staff member must undertake these duties. The absence on duty policy requires staff to ensure that another colleague can carry out their duties during the absence.

Before a Head of Department can approve convenor absence in the results handling period the unit convenor must identify, and obtain the agreement of, another staff member who will be on-campus for the period of absence and is willing and able to handle all matters concerned with results processing for the affected unit. It is the responsibility of the unit convenor to ensure that the nominated staff member has all the information necessary to handle results processing and grade appeals, as appropriate to the period of absence.

Unit convenors will only be allowed absence on duty, annual leave or long service leave for the period from the start of the formal examination period until one week after the official release of results if the Head of Department is convinced that the leave is fully justified and if the arrangements described above are in place.

Approval of leave applications, including for absence on duty, from unit convenors for the period nominated above should not be assumed. Identification of a staff member to undertake results processing duties that will be required in the period of absence must occur well in advance of the projected absence dates. Heads of Department have a responsibility to ensure that the appropriate arrangements are in place when they approve the convenor’s leave application.

6.2. Responsibility of Co-Examiners

Co-examiners are assigned to all units to, in part, ensure the reliability of results processing. Co-examiners have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with all details of the process of awarding results in their units and ensure the reliability and accuracy of that process. This should include checking the accuracy of results calculations, such as in spreadsheets used to collate marks and determine results. The signature of a co-examiner on the final results will be taken as a statement that they have properly exercised this function.