Principles of Moderation (UG)   Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

1. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the *overall* marking of the unit is fair, rigorous and consistent. Section 21 of the rules (COP) mandates a moderation process. The definition of moderation given in these rules is:
   a. *A quality assurance process whereby the marks are reviewed, to ensure that the individual marks awarded are appropriate in terms of consistency, fairness and rigour in the assessment. Methods of moderation include:*
      i. *Sampling, either by an external examiner or by an internal second marker;*
      ii. *Additional marking of borderlines, firsts and fails;*
      iii. *Additional marking where there is significant disparity between the different elements of assessment for an individual student, in a unit or across the programme;*
      iv. *Additional marking where there is significant disparity between the marks of different markers in a particular unit or programme.*
2. Moderation is not the same as second-marking, blind or otherwise. Remarking a sample of scripts creates a systematic inequality between those scripts that are read by the moderator and those that are not.
3. In previous Undergraduate classification systems used in the Faculty, such Giles or the Law system, it was possible to identify the whole population of borderline scripts, namely those with a score ending in "9" and possibly also "8" in some cirumstances. The practice in some schools was to take **all** such borderlines, along with all first and fails, and to second mark them. This procedure did not introduce bias because the sampling was purposeful, not random
4. Moderation procedures should take an adequate sample, preferably including all firsts/distinctions and fails, to ensure that the level of marking across the distribution accords with marking criteria.
5. The purpose of moderation is not to identify minor discrepancies in individual marks between first markers and moderators, but to get a sense of whether the entire set of scripts has been marked consistently and fairly.
6. Moderators should pay attention to the fairness of marking across the distribution as a whole. They should identify if any part of the distribution has been marked too harshly or too generously. Any corrective re-marking should be applied to all scripts in a range and NOT to individual papers (though dissertations are an exception). In some circumstances it may be appropriate to recommend that corrective action be applied to a unit as a whole. In others it may be appropriate to apply corrective action to particular ranges of marks only (for example, a moderator may feel that papers below 50% have been marked too harshly or leniently, but that in other parts of the distribution the marks are appropriate).
7. Where agreement cannot be reached between marker(s) and moderator, a third examiner should be nominated by the Head of School (or his or her nominee) to adjudicate. Although it is hoped that consensus can be achieved, the decision of the adjudicator will be final. Disputed scripts should not be sent to the external for final adjudication.
8. Schools should try to ensure that the marking is taking place consistently across all markers. This can be done after the marking has taken place or during the marking process. For example, first-markers and moderators may wish to meet after having marked a handful of scripts each to ensure that marking is taking place consistently across all markers.
9. In determining whether the marking has been fair and consistent, the moderator should look out for unusual patterns in marking, such as: a heavy concentration of marks in a particular classification; a large number of fails; a very large proportion of firsts; very few marks in the high 2:1/merit or first/distinction range, and so on. An unusual marking distribution does not, in itself, reflect an inherent problem with the marking (there can be good reasons for seemingly abnormal marking distributions), but the moderator should satisfy him- or her-self that the marking is in line with the school's conventions and the relevant marking criteria.
10. In units with a number of markers, moderators should look at the distribution of marks across the different first markers and assure themselves that any systematic differences between first markers can be accounted for by the content of the scripts that were allocated to those markers.
11. Schools should determine an appropriate sample to be used for moderation. It is likely that this will be dependent on the size of the unit.

Example: Sample composition

The sample should include:

       All fails (but not necessarily all firsts/distinctions)

       At least one script from each classification awarded

       Any script the first marker has specifically requested that the moderator read

Unit size	*Minimum* sample size (after following composition rules below)
Units with more than 60 students	20% of all scripts
Units with 37-60 students	12 scripts
Units with 19-36 students	9 scripts
Units with 18 or fewer students	6 scripts
NB: Units with more than one marker	At least 6 scripts per marker, as well as meeting minimum requirement

The above table lists the minimum number of scripts that should be moderated. If a moderator thinks that there are potential problems or inconsistencies in the marking, they should sample as many scripts as necessary to reach a considered judgement. The first marker can also request that more than the minimum specified should be moderated.

Dissertations: Because first marking of dissertations is not anonymous, and because dissertations play such a significant role in final degree classifications, all dissertations should be moderated.