

Department of Graduate Studies

Procedures for developing and applying Component-specific Marking Criteria

1 Scope and audience

- 1.1** This document provides for the development and application of Component-specific Marking Criteria, including review and approval. It is for the attention of all staff involved in the assessment of a given programme, including External Examiners, the Head of Department, Programme Leader, Module Leaders, lecturers and markers (including second markers).
- 1.2** This document should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents: Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy (Department of Graduate Studies; DGS); Teaching and Learning Strategy (DGS); the Handbook for Teaching and Assessment (DGS); and *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (2014; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education).
- 1.3** Accessibility: If you need this document in a different format, please ask a member of staff.

2 Definitions

For the purpose of clarity, definitions are provided below for key terms used in this document:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Assessment Brief	<i>Found in the Module Outline:</i> A description of the task students must complete as part of the assessment for the module, which is written in line with the requirements of the Assessment Specifications. Information about submission and/or examination will be included here.
Assessment Specifications	<i>Found in the Module Outline:</i> Details of how a module will be assessed, which contain information about the type of task (e.g. essay or question paper), including the weighting of the tasks relative to the overall modular mark and the target ILOs. These are validated by the Validation Panel.
Assessment title	A task set to assess performance with regard to the ILOs for the module. These may be, for example, essay titles, essay questions, presentation titles, written examinations.
Component-specific Marking Criteria	Documents containing explicit guidance for the criteria applied in marking with regard to a particular assessment component. Each component requires specific marking criteria which demonstrate how anticipated student performances should be marked at each of the grade bands, with due reference to the ILOs to which the component is tied. They must be pitched at the appropriate FHEQ level and reflect the details for assessment contained in the validated Module Outline. Before marking, all markers for a given component must work together to develop a shared and consistent understanding of the marking criteria, also consulting during the marking process as necessary.
FHEQ	<i>The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies</i> (2014) issued by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
ILOs	<i>Intended Learning Outcomes</i> : The knowledge, skills and understanding that students should be able to demonstrate by the end of teaching and learning for the module. Each assessment component is tied to one or more ILOs.
Marker	A qualified subject expert who judges the student performances, assigning a mark out of 100 to each performance and providing contextual feedback both to justify the decision reached about the mark and to provide formative guidance for students to improve on their performance in the topic areas and/or skills in question. First markers work closely with second markers as necessary for the purpose of marking and moderating marks.
Marking (including second-marking)	<p>Marking is the critical review of students' work for the purpose of subsequently assigning marks to the work.</p> <p>Second-marking is the involvement of two separate markers in the critical review and assignment of marks to student work. We operate a policy of full open second marking, meaning that second markers review all assessments, and the second marker is informed of the first marker's marks and feedback before commencing and can take these into account. Each marker assigns a mark to each performance. The two markers' marks are subsequently reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment – we use the term moderation to refer to this process.</p> <p>Double marking (<i>used only for the marking of the Field Research Report</i>) means that each of the two markers assigns a mark independently without recourse to either's marks or feedback on the work. The two marks are subsequently shared and then reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment – we use the term moderation to refer to this process.</p>
Moderation	Arrangements to ensure the consistency of marking, including the proper application of the marking criteria, across students or modules. When first and second markers confer to agree or reconcile their independently awarded marks, this is moderation across students for a module. When the External Examiner for a programme reviews a sample of assignments for each module, this is moderation across modules for the programme as a whole.
VLE	<i>Virtual learning environment</i> : In the IIS' case, this is Moodle.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 Module Leaders or an appropriate nominated deputy develop marking criteria for each assessment component according to the requirements of the Assessment Specifications and Assessment Briefs.
- 3.2 The Head of Department and Programme Leader check the criteria for consistency and coherence.
- 3.3 The first time a set of Component-specific Marking Criteria is developed, programme staff may decide that an external scrutineer should be appointed to ensure appropriate oversight of the process for developing the Component-specific Marking Criteria. The external scrutineer must possess requisite experience of the target standard (FHEQ Level 7), and of assessing at that level, but does not need to be a subject expert.

- 3.4** For components with more than one marker, all markers must share the same understanding of the marking criteria. It is the responsibility of all markers to work together to achieve this in good time; it may be necessary to hold a meeting to ensure standardisation or parity in marking approaches.

4 General principles

- 4.1** Component-specific Marking Criteria must be developed, approved and used for the marking of students' responses to the assessment task set, details of which are in the previously approved Assessment Briefs for the module. Feedback on student performances should refer to the marking criteria to demonstrate how achievement has been measured and recognised.
- 4.2** Due planning is necessary for the development of marking criteria, as this is a task involving careful thought and several stages of development, review and approval; instructions for this are below. Where a team of markers is required, it may take a minimum of three months to produce an approved version of marking criteria for one component.
- 4.3** *Where Generic Marking Criteria exist:* The relationship between the Generic Marking Criteria (found in the Student Handbook and as part of the marking criteria pro forma) and Component-specific Marking Criteria is complementary: the Generic Marking Criteria describe gradations of the expected standard (equivalent to FHEQ Level 7) for either written assignments or oral presentations, which the Component-Specific Marking Criteria then relate explicitly to the targeted ILOs for the component. **Student performances are judged against the Component-specific Marking Criteria.**
- 4.4** If the assignment is second-marked (for assessment components worth 40% or more of the overall grade for the module), both first and second markers must use the same Component-specific Marking Criteria when appraising student responses.
- 4.5** Marking criteria are grouped in bands. Student responses to the task must meet all* criteria in a particular band in order to be awarded a mark within that band. For performances which just meet all the criteria, the lowest mark in the band should be awarded. Higher marks should be awarded depending on the extent to which the student performance exceeds the minimum criteria.
- * In cases where it is unclear whether the performance should be at the lower end of one band or the higher end of the one below, markers should use their judgment to determine the appropriate band, referring to programme staff if need be.
- 4.6** Marking criteria are pitched at FHEQ Level 7 with the exception of the lowest band. The lowest band represents a failed performance and is reserved for student performances which do not meet the requirements for Level 7 but which nonetheless deserve credit for the effort and evidence they demonstrate. It is highly unlikely that a mark of zero would be awarded, except in the case of non-submissions or submissions which are illegible or completely unintelligible for the purposes of marking.
- 4.7** *Discussing feedback and marks:* When students have queries about their feedback, these are dealt with by the first marker. No other marker shall get involved in the discussion of feedback. The first marker must not discuss where or if markers agreed or disagreed on marks and/or feedback during the marking process (i.e. before moderation and approval of final marks and feedback). Students shall only ever receive their final, agreed mark and feedback.

5 Procedure for developing and applying Component-specific Marking Criteria

5.1 The Module Leader or an appropriate nominated deputy drafts a first version of the marking criteria. These are drafted in accordance with the appropriate pro forma containing the grade bands for the component in question.

5.1.1 Due reference should be made to the validated Assessment Specifications and Assessment Brief so that the target ILOs are fully represented in the marking criteria.

5.1.2 Due reference to the FHEQ should be made in order to ensure that the target level is being met in all passing bands.

5.1.3 Where a component will be marked by a team of markers (e.g. a dissertation), the Module Leader or their deputy shares the draft version with the markers in order for their specialist input and to begin to develop the necessary shared understanding of the criteria. In such cases, the Module Leader or their deputy and the markers devise another mutually acceptable draft together.

5.2 The Module Leader or their deputy shares the first draft of the marking criteria with the Head of Department and Programme Leader in order for them to check them for consistency and coherency.

5.2.1 The Programme Leader reviews the criteria with a view to checking that the ILOs and target FHEQ level are properly referenced, as well as the gradation from the highest to the lowest bands.

5.2.2 The marking criteria for different components assessing similar skills at the same FHEQ level should be compared to ensure broad consistency across marking criteria for the programme.

5.3 The Module Leader or their deputy and the Programme Leader consult to revise the marking criteria (including markers in the case of a component marked by a team) to arrive at a mutually acceptable final draft.

5.4 The first time a set of Component-specific Marking Criteria is developed, programme staff may decide that an external scrutineer should be appointed to ensure appropriate oversight of the process for developing the criteria. The external scrutineer must possess requisite experience of the target standard, and of assessing at that level, but does not need to be a subject expert. In such cases, the Programme Leader liaises with the external scrutineer, who provides critical commentary on the appropriacy and effectiveness of the marking criteria.

5.5 The Programme Leader reviews the scrutineer's comments, sharing that with the Module Leader or their deputy. The final version of the marking criteria is produced and then approved jointly by programme staff and the Module Leader or their deputy.

5.6 The approved marking criteria are shared with all markers for the component and published on the VLE for students' information. Marking criteria are published at the beginning of term; in cases where the assessment requirements necessitate it, they may be published later, but in any case should be available at least four weeks before final submission. Students should be notified of the marking criteria and reminded that they are not a checklist or a 'roadmap for success'. Rather, they provide a

description of the gradation of the standards of the programme to help them understand those with regard to the modules and components in question.

- 5.7** Student performances are marked against the Component-specific Marking Criteria. For components with more than one marker, all markers must share the same understanding of the marking criteria. It is the responsibility of all markers to work together to achieve this in good time; markers should meet to ensure standardisation or parity in marking approaches.
- 5.8** We operate a policy of full open second marking for all assessed work with the exception of the Field Research Report (see below), meaning that second markers review all assessments, and the second marker is informed of the first marker's marks and feedback before commencing and can take these into account. **Only the first marker may make any entry in the feedback form/Turnitin – this applies to the mark (out of 100) and any qualitative discursive feedback and/or comments.** The second marker assigns their own marks for each student performance, which may agree with the first marker's in some or all cases, or not. The two markers' marks are subsequently reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment – we use the term 'moderation' to refer to this process.
- 5.8.1** The Field Research Report is double marked. This means that each of the two markers assigns a mark independently without recourse to either's marks or feedback on the work. The two marks are subsequently shared and then reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment.
- 5.9** Following second-marking, first and second markers must confer to agree or reconcile their independently awarded marks and feedback. This is called 'moderation of marks'.
- 5.9.1** Final marks must **not** be decided as an arithmetic average unless the mark thus calculated ultimately reflects the joint final judgment of both first and second markers about the performance in question and is reflected in the jointly agreed feedback.
- 5.9.2** If the second marker believes that the feedback given by the first marker needs to be amended and/or augmented, then such matters should be raised in moderation discussions; it will be the first marker's responsibility to amend or augment the feedback as agreed. **Only the first marker may make any entry in the feedback form/Turnitin – this applies to the mark (out of 100) and any qualitative discursive feedback and/or comments.**
- 5.9.3** Being able to interpret feedback is key to a student's understanding of their performance and how they might need or aspire to develop in future. Where students perceive dissonance between their feedback and marks, markers should be able to clarify for them how the two correlate: such discussions demonstrate the robustness and fairness of how we help students to prepare for and grow from assessment activities.
- 5.9.4** Before confirming to the Academic Administrator that feedback and marks have been moderated, the first marker must check that the mark field and any comments are those agreed between both first and second markers.
- 5.10** *Discussing feedback and marks:* When students have queries about their feedback, these are dealt with by the first marker. No other marker shall get involved in the discussion of feedback. The first marker must not discuss where or if markers agreed or disagreed on marks and/or feedback during the marking process (i.e. before moderation and approval of final marks and feedback). Students shall only ever receive their final, agreed mark and feedback.

- 5.11** A third marker may be brought in where a first and second marker are unable to agree on a final mark. The first and second markers must make all reasonable attempts to reconcile the marks to avoid the need to appoint a third marker. Where appointed, the third marker's role is to contribute to resolving the moderation discussion with reference to the marking criteria; as such, they will be given access to the student work in question and the first and second markers' marks and feedback. Where all reasonable attempts to resolve the moderation discussion fail, the third marker will have the discretion to award a final mark and provide feedback on the work in question. The final mark must **not** be decided as an arithmetic average between the first and second markers' mark or between those and a notional mark proposed by the third marker.
- 5.12** A record of the final decision must be recorded in writing and conveyed to the Academic Administrator.
- 5.13** Third markers must possess a PhD in the specific subject area that the assessment in question relates to and be an experienced marker of not less than five years' experience within UK higher education at the Master's level (Level 7). The third marker must declare any conflict of interest. Where internal to the IIS, the third marker must not have any direct line-management connection or personal relationship between themselves and either the first or second marker; they may be external to the IIS.
- 5.14** Third marking to reconcile disagreements between first and second markers must not be carried out by the External Examiner; third-marked work will be brought to the attention of the External Examiner.
- 5.15** If during the course of preparing for, marking, moderating and reporting marks and feedback on student work a procedural irregularity or error is suspected or discovered, this must be brought to the Programme Leader's attention immediately, who must subsequently inform the Head of Department as soon as possible. In cases where this would create a conflict of interest for either the Programme Leader or Head of Department, then the DGS Special Projects Manager should deputise. The Academic Management Committee will make a decision concerning how to proceed and seek confirmation of this course of action from an external member of the appropriate Programme Board in session. A record of this decision must be made.

6 Document control

Document to be reviewed annually and updated (as necessary) for the new academic year.

Version	Role / Activity	Person(s) responsible	Date
Version 1	Evaluation and review	AMC	July 2018
	Amendments as necessary	GPISH Prog. Leader	July 2018
Version 2	Approval	AMC	August 2018
	Evaluation and review	Head of Dept and teaching staff	November 2018
	Amendments as necessary	GPISH Prog. Leader and Head of Dept	November 2018
Version 3	Approval	AMC	November 2018