



ASSESSMENT POLICIES

Applicable to students in all Stages/years of programmes

Supplementary information can also be found in [Plagiarism: Notes of Guidance for Markers](#) and [Invigilation Procedures for Examinations](#). Information on [Assessing the Work of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties](#) is also available.

Further information for candidates can be found in the [University's Examination and Class Test Regulations for Candidates](#).

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1 MARKING POLICY

Assessments and Marking Schemes

- 1 Schools should ensure that Programme and Module Specifications (including assessment weightings) are available to students at the beginning of each Stage of the programme.
- 2 Examination and coursework questions should appropriately reflect the Level of the credit to be assessed, and are expected to differ according to Level, either in the assessment question set, or in the mark scheme to be used.
- 3 Changes to assessment which have a retrospective effect on current students must not be introduced without full consultation with all students affected.

Moderation and Anonymous Marking

- 4 All formal written examination scripts administered by Student and Academic Services are to be marked anonymously.
- 5 A minimum of 20% of final year/Master's written examination scripts will be moderated.
- 6 A minimum of 20% of final year/Master's coursework which contributes a significant percentage of marks to the overall module mark (i.e. 30% or more), or which assess a crucial aspect of the module, will be moderated.
- 7 All substantial final year projects (i.e. projects carrying 20 credits or more) and Master's dissertations will be blind double-marked.
- 8 Arithmetic checking of examination marks should always occur to ensure that marks from all questions are included in the total entered on the marksheet or student record.

2 DEFINITIONS OF MARKING PRACTICES

All markers should have access to mark schemes and model answers where appropriate.

Blind double-marking

Blind double-marking is the marking of an assessment by two separate markers, in which the second marker cannot see the comments or mark given by the first marker. The two markers are responsible for marking the work of all candidates in the group independently and the final mark is normally obtained from an average of the two marks. If there is a large discrepancy between the two marks (e.g. 6% or more) either the two markers will discuss and agree the final mark or a relevant member of staff (e.g. Programme Director or module leader) will mediate a discussion between the two markers to agree a final mark. If no agreement can be reached a third internal marker will normally mark the work. The third marker should then act as mediator between the two first markers to agree a mark. If the third marker is unable to facilitate such an agreement, the third marker will be responsible for awarding a mark anywhere within the range of marks of the first and second marker.

This type of marking should be used for dissertations and major undergraduate projects.

Informed double-marking

Two markers are responsible for marking the work of all candidates consecutively. The second marker sees the marks and comments of the first marker. If there is a large discrepancy between the two marks (e.g. 6% or more) either the two markers will discuss and agree the final mark or a relevant member of staff (e.g. Programme Director or module leader) will mediate a discussion between the two markers to agree a final mark. If no agreement can be reached a third internal marker will normally mark the work. The third marker should then act as mediator between the two first markers to agree a mark. If the third marker is unable to facilitate such an agreement, the third marker will be responsible for awarding a mark anywhere within the range of marks of the first and second marker. This type of marking may result in adjustments to individual marks.

Informed double-marking may be used where the specialist nature of the subject matter means that blind double-marking would not be practicable or where there are teams of markers marking a batch of assessments.

Moderation

Moderation is the name given to procedures for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of academic assessment. It usually involves a person 'new' to the item being moderated. That may be a person external to the University or a member of staff who has not been directly involved in the process to be moderated.

Assessment processes which are moderated at Aston include the preparation of examination papers and marking (e.g. of examination scripts, essays, oral presentations etc).

Moderation: Arithmetic checking

A check is made that all questions have been marked and that the recording and addition of marks adding to the total mark is correct. This is separate from marking of the work and may be done by someone who is not a member of academic staff.

This type of check is particularly important when examination papers include multiple choice questions, short answer questions or require more than three longer questions to be answered.

Moderation: Sampling

A defined sample of work is marked by a member of staff who is not the main marker (or member of a team of markers) in order to confirm (or not) the mark awarded by the first marker.

The aim of this type of moderation is to highlight any potential marking problems. For example marks may be found to be too low or too high either overall or in a particular band (e.g. 30 – 40%). In the case of a marking team the marking of one member may be found to be out of line with the others.

If the moderation process identifies concerns about the marking standards of the sample or has identified a systematic error in marking or marks processing, this should be communicated to the module leader and/or Programme Director, as appropriate. The module leader or the Programme Director, as appropriate, will then review the work, consider the concerns raised, discuss the issue with the marker(s), if appropriate, and respond to the moderator(s) to indicate what action they intend to take, if any.

Issues identified by this type of moderation may be dealt with by adjusting the marks for the cohort or a relevant section of the cohort or (in extreme cases) by the moderator taking on the role of informed second marker and marking all work in the cohort. Agreed marks are then reached for all candidates following the process outlined under 'Informed double-marking'.

Where the proposed action may adjust marks without full second marking of the whole cohort, this must occur in a systematic and considered way so that all affected work is treated equally and not just the moderated sample.

A report of moderation should be made available to the Module Board. Evidence of moderation e.g. checks on sections of the question paper made by the moderator should be provided. Adjustments resulting from moderation must be considered and confirmed at a Module Board.

Choosing a sample

Samples of work for moderation are selected so as to test the security of standards across the full marking range and where the candidate has failed. At least 20% of final year examinations and coursework should be sampled. All first markers (e.g. if a team of markers is involved) should be sampled. A sample should contain at least one exemplar of work closest to each side of the boundaries of mark bands (e.g. pass/fail, 2.1/2.2, Merit/Distinction), and all fail marks. A sample may additionally include a few scripts from the centre of mark bands for benchmarking purposes. This pattern is normally repeated for each marker sampled. All fail marks should be included in the sample, with particular attention to marks which may be condoned.

Rounding of marks

Rounding of marks means changing fractional marks to the nearest whole number. The University's student records system displays marks to two decimal places, and stores marks to a greater number of decimal places. A module mark of 39.50 for 40% pass Level 4, 5 and 6 mark schemes, and 49.50 for a 50% pass Level 7 mark scheme, will be counted in the student records system as a pass and the credits will be awarded on the examination board report. Rounding of marks is therefore unnecessary and should not normally occur, except where averaging of marks for examination scripts with more than one answer results in a fractional mark for the assessment as a whole. On such occasions the actual number should be recorded to two decimal places. Undergraduate Module Boards may choose to moderate module marks of 39 to either 38 or 40, based on academic judgement of whether all learning outcomes have been achieved. Postgraduate Module Boards may choose to moderate module marks of 49 to either 48 or 50, based on academic judgement of whether all learning outcomes have been achieved.

3 GENERIC MARKING SCALES

Suitable for [Undergraduate programmes](#) (and qualifying Stages of an integrated Master's programmes) - Levels 4, 5 and 6.

DESCRIPTION: Work within the mark ranges below demonstrates the following characteristics:	MARK RANGE
Unique or insightful work, which is either of publishable quality in a reputable journal or attains the professional standards expected for the discipline, or; work which displays a critical awareness of the principles and practices of the discipline. Thorough comprehension of the assessment's requirements, fully realises learning outcomes for the assessment and develops them far beyond normal expectations.	100 – 80%
Displays an individual perspective which is supported by reasoning or evidence. Insightful, logical and articulate, demonstrates a comprehensive coverage of subject matter, engagement with scholarship and research, very good analytical/creative ability. Surpasses the intended learning outcomes.	70 – 79%
Sound and well thought out, organised, secure knowledge of subject, appropriate use of critical references, realises the intended learning outcomes broadly, well expressed, good analytical/creative skills.	60 – 69%
Displays adequate use of critical method but may be poorly argued. Adequate or routine knowledge of subject. Evidence is referred to but there may be inconsistencies in the way it is used. Clear evidence that learning outcomes are being achieved.	50 – 59%
Competent but largely descriptive in approach. Displays understanding of subject with some limitations e.g. an element may be missed. Evidence that learning outcomes are being achieved.	40 – 49%
Evidence that some learning outcomes have been achieved or most learning outcomes achieved partially. Although work may include brief signs of comprehension, it contains basic misunderstandings or misinterpretations, demonstrates limited ability to meet the requirements of the assessment.	30 – 39%
Brief, irrelevant, confused, incomplete. Does not come close to meeting the required learning outcomes.	29% and below

The objective of the marking scales is to establish a University-wide reference point which does not conflict with any guidance currently used in Schools. There is no

intention to replace existing School marking scales, or to require that each School develops additional School-specific scales in addition to these. Each School should determine how best to use these marking scales in the context of its own programmes.

4 LATE SUBMISSION OF WORK AND PENALTIES

- This policy applies to all assessments detailed in Module Specifications for which there is a formal deadline. In the case of assignments that are submitted in more than one format, the date of submission recorded for lateness penalty purposes will be that of the last piece of work submitted.
- The late submission of group work will be subject to the same lateness penalties as those for an individual piece of work.
- Students may submit work up to 5 working days after the formal assessment deadline, but the work will be subject to a penalty. (NB: 'working days' excludes submission at weekends and on Bank Holidays or University closed days, when School offices are not open to receive submissions, but it does not preclude submission during vacations. The 5-working day submission window will therefore continue to run after the last day of a term.)
- The penalty will be based on a proportion of the awarded mark.
- The late submission penalty will be 10% of the awarded mark for each working day that the piece of work was submitted after the formal deadline (see Example 1 below).
- There will be a penalty collar at first attempt (or any uncapped attempt), in that the final mark for the component of assessment after penalty has been imposed will not fall below the pass mark for that component. If the awarded mark for the component was already below the pass mark, prior to late submission penalty, the awarded mark will stand as the final mark. (See Example 2 below).
- Work submitted after the 5 working day deadline will be accepted by the School office but will be recorded with a mark of zero (0-PN). Such work will require evidence of exceptional circumstances which meet the regulations before an academic mark for it will be considered at the module board.
- Work submitted more than 5 days late may be passed to markers in order for students to receive feedback on it, at the discretion of the School. Where this practice is adopted the mark formally recorded will be zero (0-PN).
- Any exceptions to the late submission policy at module level will be subject to approval by the relevant School's Learning & Teaching Committee and will be clearly stated in the appropriate Student Handbook. Exemptions to cover a whole programme should be approved by [Regulation Sub-Committee](#).
- The penalty collar will not apply to second or third attempts, for which a mark capped at the pass mark is formally recorded. Any lateness penalties due will be applied to the mark awarded and may result in a mark that falls below pass level (see [Example 3](#) below).
- Late penalties are considered to be discrete from other penalties, and the late penalty collar does not prevent a fail mark resulting in cases where another penalty is also applicable. Late penalties should therefore be levied before any other penalty.

Worked examples:

Example 1 – Work submitted 3 days late

A piece submitted 3 days late and awarded a mark of 60 incurs a penalty of $(10\% \times 60 =) 6$ marks per day of lateness. If the pass mark for this component of assessment is 40, the mark recorded after penalty will therefore be $(60 - 18 =) 42$.

Example 2 – The penalty collar

a. A piece submitted 3 days late and awarded a mark of 60 incurs a penalty of $(10\% \times 60 =) 6$ marks per day of lateness:

- where the pass mark for the component is 40, the mark recorded after penalty will be 42.
- where the pass mark for the component is 50, the full deduction of 18 marks would result in a fail mark, so the mark actually recorded after penalty will be 50.

b. For a piece submitted 4 days late and awarded a mark of 60, a full deduction would cause a fail whether the pass mark is 40 or 50, so:

- where the pass mark for the component is 40, a final mark of 40 will be recorded.
- where the pass mark for the component is 50, a final mark of 50 will be recorded.

c. A piece accepted within the 5 working day submission window and awarded a mark of 35 is a fail whether the pass mark is 40 or 50. A final mark of 35 will be recorded.

Example 3 – Work submitted as a second or third attempt

A referred or repeat assessment is submitted one day late and given an academic mark of 50:

- where the pass mark is 40, the lateness results in a penalised mark of 45, but a final (passing) mark of 40 will be recorded.
- where the pass mark for the component is 50, a final (failing) mark of 45 will be recorded.

Example 4 – Late penalties and other penalties in combination

For example:

- a group of 3 students submits a group assignment 5 days late (where the pass mark is 40);
- the mark for the group assignment is 80 so the mark is reduced to 40 due to late submission;
- one member of the group should have their mark reduced by half because of a formal penalty from an Academic Offences Officer so their mark would be further reduced to 20.

Similarly:

- a group of 3 students submits a group assignment 5 days late (where the pass mark is 40);
- the mark for the group assignment is 70, but levying the full penalty would result in a fail mark of 35, so the mark after late submission penalty is recorded at 40;
- one member of the group should have their mark reduced by half because of a formal penalty from an Academic Offences Officer so their mark would be further reduced to 20.

5 RECYCLING OF ASSESSMENT CONTENT

1. Previously submitted and marked assessments will form part of credit already awarded. Students are not allowed to achieve further credit for a piece of work that has already had credit awarded for it. Where a student uses a piece of work that has already been assessed, either in whole or in part, for another separate assessment, this is deemed poor practice and is referred to at Aston University as 'recycling material'.
2. Where a student submits a piece of work that contains suspected recycled material the piece of work will initially be marked without penalty. When it is demonstrated that there has been recycling of material, marks will then be deducted from the initial marking in relation to the amount of recycled material the piece of work contains. For example: if the piece of work contains 10% recycled material, the assessment mark will be reduced by 10% of the initial mark, if the piece of work contains 25% recycled material, the assessment will be reduced by 25% and so on. Any proposed deduction will only be made subject to the approval of the appropriate Academic Offences Officer.
3. The only allowed exceptions in relation to recycling are:
 - a. When students have been requested to submit a partial draft or research proposal/plan at an earlier point in a module which will then be used to directly inform the final piece of work for that same module or a subsequent related module.
 - b. When students are resubmitting a previously failed piece of work for reassessment.
4. Deductions imposed for the recycling of assessment material are not subject to a penalty collar, and therefore may lead to an initial pass mark becoming a fail mark following the appropriate deductions being made. In cases where a deduction results in a condonable fail mark, the [Board of Examiners](#) will subsequently exercise its discretion as to whether the mark should be condoned (assuming it is the only assessment for the module). In the event of an assessment being submitted late and containing recycled material, the late penalty will be applied first, followed by the deduction for recycled content, calculated on the basis of the initial mark.

Worked examples:

Example 1 – Work submitted with 25% recycled content

A piece of work is submitted and given an initial mark of 60, but 25% of the material is then identified as recycled assessment content from previous work. The mark of 60 is therefore reduced by 25% of 60, and a final mark of 45 is recorded.

Example 2 – Work submitted 2 days late with 25% recycled content

A piece of work is submitted and given an initial mark of 60, but the work was submitted 2 days late and 25% of the material is identified as recycled assessment content from previous work:

- The initial mark of 60 is reduced by 10% of the mark for each day the assessment is late: $(10\% \times 60 \times 2) = 12$, giving an interim mark of $(60 - 12) = 48$.
- The recycling deduction is then applied, based on the original mark, in this case $(25\% \times 60) = 15$, giving a final recorded mark of $48 - 15 = 33$