



Assessment Guidance

Scope

This Guidance outlines how Metanoia's Assessment Policy should be carried out in practice and should be read alongside Metanoia's Assessment Policy. This guidance should be adhered to for all summative assessments at Metanoia

The only exception to this would be through a request from a Module Leader for an adaptation for a summative assessment that they manage.

This adaptation request must be:

- presented and justified to our governance system (including a communication plan to ensure all staff and students know this variation to practice guidance)
- presented in advance of the assessment period* for the summative assessment in question

If deemed acceptable, approval will be granted in writing from our governance system. It is the responsibility of the Module Leader to carry out the approved communication strategy for this.

For ease, this Guidance has the Assessment Policy embedded as a contained box at the start of each section.

* The 'assessment period' begins as soon as any information about an assessment is published to students taking that assessment. It ends once all students taking that assessment have had their marks ratified through our assessment board process.

Please read this Guidance in conjunction with our Academic Regulations which:

- detail how marks are processed following the five STAGES explained below
- detail procedures followed in the event that an assessment does not reach a pass mark
- signpost to systems in the event that you wish to make an academic appeal

STAGE 1: Assessment Briefs

An assessment brief is a formal document provided to students that outlines the requirements, criteria, and expectations for a specific assessment task. It serves as a guide to help students understand what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated. In conjunction with clear Assessment Briefs, assessment literacy should be embedded in the teaching and learning environment. Please see the appendices of this document^{13.44} for more guidance about this.

Principles

Our assessments briefs are transparent and clear. This increases shared language and expectations between staff and students around assessments. It also maximises the chance of success for individual students in each assessment.

Policy expectations

- All summative assessments must have a formal, written assessment brief
- Briefs must be clear, transparent, and accessible, outlining the requirements, criteria, and expectations of the task
- Assessment briefs must be reviewed annually based on staff and student feedback.
- All student queries regarding assessment briefs must be answered by the Module Leader to ensure consistent messaging
- Full assessment briefs must be published in the Module Handbook; in some circumstances the Assessment brief may include other virtual materials that cannot easily be added to the Module Handbook, in this case, this must be discussed and approved in advance with the Director of Education
- All Assessment briefs must be approved by the Director of Education before being presented to students

Guidance for practice

- Module Leaders are responsible for designing, setting up and managing the summative assessments on their module. This includes checking that submission boxes are live and correct at least one calendar month before an assessment deadline.
- Module Leaders also write assessment briefs, which must include:
 - Assessment title or clear instructions for student-devised titles (with approval process)
 - Type of assessment
 - Module name
 - Task description

- Learning outcomes assessed
- Marking criteria or rubric
- Word count
- Submission details (deadline, format, method)
- Return details (date and place they can access their grade and feedback, date of the assessment board in which their grade will be ratified)
- Referencing requirements
- Link to Metanoia's AI guidance
- Academic integrity reminders
- Link to Metanoia's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy
- Module Leaders should establish Q&A forums to address student queries about the brief
- All student queries regarding assessment briefs must be answered by the Module Leader to ensure consistent messaging

STAGE 2: Calibration

Calibration activities are those designed and implemented to maximise consistency in marker grades, creating robust internal consistency and validity of grades. Calibration activities predominantly take place before marking begins, but can also be take place during the marking process to support further alignment of grading outcomes.

Principles:

Calibration is a formative and collegiate process for all markers regardless of their prior experience and should be facilitated by the Module Leader of the assessed piece being marked. Our calibration activities are designed to impact alignment between markers for both the assessment piece being marked, and for the marking of assessed pieces in the future.

Policy expectations

- Calibration is a required step in the assessment process and must occur for all summative marking
- Calibration is to be facilitated by the Module Leader and involves all markers
- Calibration must be undertaken prior to marking and, during marking to ensure consistency
- All summative assessments are subject to our second marking process in which a minimum of 10% (or 4 scripts, whichever is greater) are reviewed
- All fail and borderline fail assessments must be second marked
- Blind second marking must be used for all research based and final year assessments (second marking is not routinely blind for all other summative assessments)
- Calibration activities and outcomes must be documented transparently

Guidance for practice

Calibration has three key aspects:

- Benchmarking
- Second marking
- Post-marking review

2.1 Benchmarking

Before marking can begin on a summative assessment task, a benchmarking meeting must take place between all markers. Due to our small cohorts, it is often the case that the Module Leader is also the Primary Marker for all submissions. In this instance, second or double

marking MUST be assigned to someone else on the team and they must engage in the benchmarking meeting.

Benchmarking for submitted versus live assessments will follow the same principles but will need to be carried out slightly differently.

2.1.1 Asynchronous, distance submissions

2.1.1.1 Prior to the benchmarking meeting:

- The Module Leader chooses 4 submissions that are across the bands
- All attendees of the upcoming Benchmarking meeting must then read and grade each piece (before the benchmarking meeting), keeping informal notes about how they have come to their grade
- New markers (especially those new to academia and/or Metanoia) should also be met 1:1 with the Module Leader prior to the benchmarking meeting to provide scaffolding and support

2.1.1.2 During the benchmarking meeting:

- Module Leader contextualises the assessment for all markers - describe module, module content, within module assignment support, teaching patterns etc.
- Module Leader contextualises the assessment further by sharing the assessment brief
- The four submissions looked at prior to the meeting are discussed to clarify and align thinking around:
 - Grades given: this must always be directly linked to the assessment rubric and criteria. This must include detailed conversations about what would indicate that a submission sits in x band rather than y band, and what makes a stronger x band versus an average x band or a weak x band
 - How much feedback should be given on the script (if there is one)
 - How to consistently use the feedback template for the module, including how to highlight any rubric being used
- These decisions are documented by the Module Leader on their 'Record of Calibration and Moderation'

2.1.2 Synchronous, live submissions

2.1.2.1 Prior to the benchmarking meeting:

- The Module Leader chooses 4 candidates that they predict will be across the bands
- The Module Leader timetables these candidates at the start of scheduled assessments
- The Module Leader schedules a Benchmarking meeting immediately after the 4 identified candidates have taken their assessments and been informally marked by all markers
- All attendees of the upcoming Benchmarking meeting must attend these assessments live (either remotely or in person)

- During the assessment of these identified candidates, all markers grade each piece simultaneously, keeping informal notes about how they have come to their grade
- New markers (especially those new to academia and/or Metanoia) should also be met 1:1 with the Module Leader prior to this activity to provide scaffolding and support

2.1.2.2 During the benchmarking meeting:

- Module Leader contextualises the assessment for all markers - describe module, module content, within module assignment support, teaching patterns etc.
- Module Leader contextualises the assessment further by sharing the assessment brief
- The four submissions looked at prior to the meeting are discussed to clarify and align thinking around:
 - Grades given: this must always be directly linked to the assessment rubric and criteria. This must include detailed conversations about what would indicate that a submission sits in x band rather than y band, and what makes a stronger x band versus an average x band or a weak x band
 - How much feedback should be given
 - How to consistently use the feedback template for the module, including how to highlight any rubric being used
- These decisions are documented by the Module Leader on their 'Record of Calibration and Moderation'

2.2 Second marking

Second marking refers to when a Second Marker marks a submission that has already been marked by the Primary Marker.

There are two types of second marking: blind and not blind. In second marking that is not blind, the Second Marker has full access to the marking and feedback that the Primary Marker has already created. In blind second marking the second marker sees the submission in raw form (with no notes, feedback, grade, rubric highlights from the First marker).

Where possible, second marking should be anonymous to support us to identify and learn from any discrepancies found between markers for specific groups. First marking is not anonymous (see section 3.3.3)

2.2.1 Defining the role of the Second Marker

Whether they are acting blind or not, the Second Marker is tasked with:

- Marking the work, deciding on a loose grade and making informal feedback notes to capture this thinking
- Sending or orally sharing these feedback comments with the Primary Marker
- Meeting the Primary Marker and agreeing on the feedback and grade
- In the event that the Primary and Secondary Marker cannot resolve either the grade or the feedback, they then consult with the Module Leader (if they are not the Primary or Secondary Marker) or the Head of Programme

2.2.2 Procedures for second marking

Second marking for synchronous, or live, assessment tasks can be carried out in one of two ways:

- Through sharing of recordings of the submission (in which case, the procedures in 2.2.2.1 should be followed);
- or through both markers being present during the live and synchronous submission in which case, the procedures of 2.2.2.2 should be followed

2.2.2.1 For asynchronous submissions (eg. essays, case reports, podcasts etc,..), or recorded live submissions:

- The Primary Marker gives the Second Marker access to a minimum of 10% (or 4 if this number is greater) of their submissions
- The Primary Marker gives the Second Marker access to all suspected fail or borderline fail submission
- If the Second Marker is acting blind, then the submissions are shared in their raw form, with no comments or indications from the Primary Marker
- If the Second Marker is not acting blind, then the submission is shared in the format that it is proposed it will be returned to the student, with full comments and feedback
- Before any work is released to students, the Primary Marker and the Second Marker must meet to discuss all shared submissions:
 - Agreeing on feedback and grades for each one
 - In the event that a grade cannot be agreed on, the submission is discussed with the Module Leader (if they are not the Primary or Secondary Marker) or the Head of Programme who have the final say on the grade
 - Reflecting on how aligned their grade and feedback was and what this may mean for their development and the development of the module and assessment brief

2.2.2.2 For synchronous live submissions (eg. presentations, professional conversations, group discussion etc,..) in which both markers are present:

- The Primary Marker and Second Marker both attend a minimum of 10% (or 4 if this number is greater) of the submissions
- The Primary Marker and Secondary Marker both make informal feedback notes during the submission
- Once the submission has finished and the student(s) has left the room, the Primary Marker and the Second Marker must meet to discuss these submissions:
 - Agreeing on feedback and grades for each one
 - In the event that a grade cannot be agreed on, the submission is discussed with the Module Leader (if they are not the Primary or Secondary Marker) or the Head of Programme who have the final say on the grade

- Reflecting on how aligned their grade and feedback was and what this may mean for their development and the development of the module and assessment brief

In all cases the Primary Marker is responsible for preparing, finalising and uploading feedback for students.

In all cases, it is normal practice for all live submissions to be recorded so we can carry out our calibration and moderation activity.

2.3 Challenges and alternatives

Some of our programmes offer choice of format over a year, or have oral assessments spread across the year. In these cases, calibration may be managed by using examples from previous module runs.

2.4 Extra guidance for VIVAs and Research projects

Unless PSRBs or MDX regulations dictate otherwise:

- All VIVAs are blind second marked by internal staff, in most cases by two examiners being present at the live assessment. There is no requirement for a third blind marker in this instance
- In the event that a boundary issue is identified between a marker and a student, all efforts should be made to use an alternative internal member of staff
- Process facilitators are only used for VIVAs when a PSRB requires this
- All dissertations are blind second marked by internal staff
- In most cases, the first marker of a research dissertation is the research supervisor, and the second marker is someone with limited knowledge of the interactions during the supervision process. Where this is not the case, this will be clearly explained in the Module Handbook

2.5 Post-marking review

Once the marking process has completed and the grades and feedback have been sent back to students, as quickly as possible, the full marking team should meet to:

- Reflect on the spread of marks – does it follow a bell curve? Is there another pattern? What might this indicate about the design, scaffolding or marking of this assessment?
- Reflect on the spread of marks for minority groups – have they been disadvantaged in any way through the design, scaffolding or marking of this assessment?
- Reflect on the assessment mode and design – how well does it align with the learning outcomes it aims to measure?
- Reflect on the inclusivity of the assessment – were all students equally able to be successful? Were any students disadvantaged by the design, scaffolding or marking of the assessment?

- Reflect on the assessment brief – how effective was it? Could it be improved for the next run of this assessment?
- Reflect on the module content that underpins the assessment – how well has it prepared the students to be as successful as possible in the assessment?

These decisions are documented by the Module Leader on their 'Record of Calibration and Moderation'

STAGE 3: Marking and Feedback

Marking refers to the process of evaluating a student's academic work. This includes essays, presentations, projects, professional conversations, research VIVAs or any other form of summative assessment. This will include either the assigning of a grade or a pass/fail result. The goal of marking is to assess how well a student has met the learning objectives of a course or module, at the academic level of that module.

Feedback (in the context of summative assessments) refers to all comments, discussions, rubric highlighting and formal feedback that a student receives as a result of the marking of a piece of summative assessment.

Principles:

We have Guidance that details expected approaches to marking at Metanoia. All students submitting to a particular summative assessment must be assessed using the same criteria and standards. In most cases this will be through a rubric that has been pre-approved through our governance systems.

Policy expectations

- Marking must be fair, inclusive, transparent, reliable, valid, constructive, and uphold academic integrity
- All markers must use standardised marking criteria or rubrics
- Feedback to students must be honest, fair, compassionate, accessible and formative
- Use of technology in marking or feedback (e.g., Turnitin, Moodle, plagiarism checking, AI) must be transparent
- Student marks and feedback should be handled with appropriate privacy and professionalism

Guidance for practice

3.1 Marking

- All students submitting to a particular summative assessment must be assessed using the same criteria and standards. In most cases this will be rubric that has been pre-approved through our governance systems
- Marking should produce consistent results, with students assessed consistently against the marking criteria
- Grades should be given in the 0, 2, 5, 8 pattern to indicate, borderline, weak, solid, and strong for each grade bracket
- As described in section 2, robust calibration activities must be undertaken to ensure reliability
- **All live assessments must be recorded**, this enables calibration, moderation and transparency in the event of an appeal or a mark query

3.2 Feedback

- Feedback may be provided via:
 - Written summaries
 - Pre-recorded oral summaries
 - Inline annotations
 - Professional discussions between markers and students
- Feedback sheet templates (including the rubric and/or other assessment criteria) must be agreed and shared with students at the start of the assessment period* for that summative assessment
- All feedback (both inline and as a summary) should use the language of the rubric and assessment criteria for the piece. Where possible, links to the rubric should be explicitly included in each feedback comment (both inline and in summary)
- Feedback must help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement (feedforward comments)
- Feedback must be weighted towards strengths to ensure it is compassionate
- Feedforward comments should be limited to a maximum of three and should be broad enough that can easily be applied to a future piece of summative assessment. They should be linked solely to the specific context of the currently submitted work
- In most cases, feedback will be provided to a student after 20 working days. If this differs for a submission, this must be agreed in advance with the Director of Education and clearly documented in the Module Handbook.

* The 'assessment period' begins as soon as any information about an assessment is published to students taking that assessment. It ends once all students taking that assessment have had their marks ratified through our assessment board process.

3.3 Anonymous marking

At Metanoia, relational and dialogic approaches are embedded throughout our learning, assessment and feedback. We therefore predominantly use non-anonymous marking. In the event that anonymous marking is employed for a specific summative assessment, this must be made clear to the students in their handbook materials with a justification of why this approach is being employed for this specific summative assessment. We are confident that this approach, alongside our robust calibration methods (see section 2) will ensure reliability of grading whilst harnessing the documented benefits of non-anonymous marking (see appendix). Our calibration activities and paperwork include a direct reflection on the possible impact of non-anonymous marking on minority groups. This will enable us to identify any issues and review our practice guidance accordingly.

Where possible, second marking should be anonymous to further enable us to identify and learn from any discrepancies found between markers for specific groups.

STAGE 4: Moderation

Moderation is a quality assurance process that reviews and checks the consistency and fairness of the marking and the quality of the feedback. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that marking is consistent, accurate, and aligned with academic standards and module benchmarks. The focus is to check the outcomes of the marking process.

Moderation is carried out both internally (by colleagues within the institution) and externally (by an external examiner). Moderation takes place after marking has been completed and – wherever possible – before the grades are released.

Principles

To enable robust Quality Assurance, moderation (both internal and external) must follow clear processes. Insight gained during moderation should influence annual reviews at all three levels: the assessment (and associated management of it); the module; the programme.

Policy expectations

- All summative assessments must undergo moderation, both internally and externally
- Internal moderation must be conducted by a colleague uninvolved in initial marking
- External moderation must be conducted by an approved External Examiner
- Moderation outcomes must be documented transparently

Guidance for practice

4.1 Internal moderation

Internal moderation is a quality assurance process in which a colleague, not involved in the original marking, reviews a sample of assessed work (10% or 4, whichever is higher) to ensure consistency, fairness, and alignment with marking criteria. This involves checking the accuracy of marks awarded, the appropriateness and clarity of feedback given, and the application of assessment criteria across a representative spread of assignments. The moderator may recommend mark adjustments or further discussion with the original marker if discrepancies are identified. This process supports transparency, academic standards, and consistency across cohorts. The Internal Moderator records their analysis and recommendations on the 'Record of Calibration and Moderation'.

4.2 External moderation

External moderation is a quality assurance process involving an independent academic from another institution who reviews assessment practices and student work to ensure that academic standards are maintained and are comparable with those of similar programmes nationally.

In line with recommendations and requirements from the Office for Students (OfS), we use appointed External Examiners to carry out our external moderation. We follow the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) principles throughout the process of recruitment and moderation ([External Examining Principles](#))

The External Examiner reviews a sample of submissions across grade boundaries, ensuring coverage of at least 10% or 4 if this is greater. They consider the appropriateness of marking and feedback, and evaluate the fairness and consistency of assessment outcomes, paying close attention to minority groups. The External Examiner confirms to the Module Leader that these activities have taken place, and the Module Leader then records this on the 'Record of Calibration and Moderation'. Ideally this part of the External Examiner activity should happen before grades are released to students. **It must happen before the Module Board where the moderated summative assessment is due to be ratified.**

External Examiners also review assessment design and scaffolding, marking criteria and calibration activities, including alignment to national activities and standards in these areas. They then provide a written report with observations and recommendations, contributing to the continuous improvement of academic standards and practices. This written report should be submitted to the Quality Assurance Manager on the timeline communicated from them following the procedures in our External Examiner Policy.

It is essential that where assessments are live, a sample of them are recorded and shared with the External Examiner to enable them to carry out their duties.

4.3 Managing concerns raised during moderation

In most cases, robust calibration and adherence to this guidance will mean that concerns raised during moderation will be minimal. In this case, this information feeds into our normal annual monitoring systems to develop provision in the next run of the module. In the event that a serious concern is raised during moderation, this must be discussed with the Director of Education and, in rare cases, may result in a review of all grades.

STAGE 5: Grade and Feedback release to students

Policy expectations

- Mark and feedback release dates (and mechanisms) must be published to students at the same time as submission dates
- In most cases, release dates are exactly 20 working days after submission dates
- In most cases, release times are 3pm
- Release dates must be approved by an Associate Director of Education at the same time as submission dates are approved

6. Appendices:

1. Embedding of Assessment Literacy in teaching and learning episodes, tasks and materials (to be taken to the Autumn 2025 Education Committee for review and sign off)
2. Record of Calibration and Moderation template (to be taken to the Autumn 2025 Education Committee for review and sign off)
3. Feedback form templates (to be taken to the Autumn 2025 Education Committee for review and sign off)
4. Overview of research related to anonymous marking
5. Defining boundary issues and assessment (to be taken to the Autumn 2025 Education Committee for review and sign off)
6. Glossary of terms (to be taken to the Autumn 2025 Education Committee for review and sign off)

APPENDIX 4: Overview of research related to anonymous marking

- No significant difference for any groups of anonymous or non-anonymous marking (Hinton & Higson, 2017; Pitt & Winstone, 2018)
- Student perceptions that non-anonymous marking has a greater impact on their learning and supports stronger relationships with their lecturers (Pitt & Winstone, 2018)

Anonymous marking is common in Higher Education as it is perceived to reduce attainment gaps for minority groups. However, research is increasingly questioning this assumption. For example, in a retrospective case study of all students at a UK university, Hinton and Higson (2017) reviewed the grade outcomes of all summative assessments taken by 31,710 students who completed their degree during the period in which the university moved from non-anonymous marking to anonymous marking. Their analysis also checked for interactions with group factors such as ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background. They found no significant difference between anonymous and non-anonymous marking outcomes (for any groups), or any difference between in person, oral assessments and distance, written assessments. They conclude by stating that there is not enough evidence to either support or dispute the benefits of anonymous marking on minority group outcomes.

In a study of 442 students taking a year of study at a UK university, with a mixture of anonymous and non-anonymous marking across the year, Pitt and Winstone (2018) also found no differences in outcomes for different groups with either anonymous or non-anonymous marking. Crucially though, they did identify differences in students' perceptions of these two approaches. There was no significant difference in student perception of fairness for either approach, however students were statistically significantly more likely to perceive non-anonymous marking as having a greater impact on their learning and development and of having a greater impact on the relationships that they hold with their lecturers (Pitt & Winstone, 2018).

References:

Hinton, D.P. and Higson, H. (2017). A large-scale examination of the effectiveness of anonymous marking in reducing group performance differences in higher education assessment, *PLOS One*, 12(8), e0182711. [Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0182711>; Accessed 15.6.25]

Pitt, E. and Winstone, N. (2018). The impact of anonymous marking on students' perceptions of fairness, feedback and relationships with lecturers, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43:7, pp.1183-1193.