UNIVERSITY
of York

Changes to Guide to Assessment, Standards, Feedback and Marking 2019/20

Professor Mike Bentley, Chair of SCA

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Substantive additions and amendments

1. Updated criteria for first-class degrees with distinction
This will replace the guidance in U3.6 of the Guide to Assessment:

A.   Principles

The decision to award first class degrees with distinction is based only and always on:

- The final award mark, as recorded in the student record system, rounded to the nearest integer.
- Individual module marks, rounded to the nearest integer, as recorded in the student record system.

B.   Governance and decision making

- Board of Studies decides on criteria and publishes them.
- Board of Examiners applies criteria once module marks have been finalised.
- External examiners are asked to confirm that the Board of Studies published criteria have been used in the awards and approve that the process followed is rigorous and fair.
- SCA approves the decision on behalf of Senate having sight of the module marks, the award mark and the published criteria.

C.   Criteria

Compulsory criterion:
A minimum final award mark specified by the Board of Studies. The expectation is that this minimum should be set at around 80% but must be at least 75%.

Optional criteria*
a.   A module mark of at least 70 in a specified minimum number of credits (counting only modules contributing to the final award mark).
b.   For a bachelor degree, no more than 30 credits with a module mark below 65. For an integrated masters degree, no more than 40 credits with a module mark below 65. Only modules contributing to the final award mark should be considered.
c.   A specified minimum mark in the ISM.

*Departments may include one or more of these options, or none at all, in addition to the compulsory criterion.

No other criteria will be permitted.

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2. Appendix R - Stepped marking guidance

Principles of stepped marking at the University of York

Stepped marking is an optional approach to marking used by a number of departments at the University of York and across the sector. The following guidance should be considered by departments using the approach in line with principles of assessment: equity, openness, clarity and consistency (14.1).

Stepped Marking - definition, reasoning and principles of use

Stepped marking (also known as fixed point marking, platform marking, notch marking, categorical marking) is a clear and transparent marking process which restricts the number of marks available in each class band to an agreed scale (e.g. low/medium/high). This is a process best suited to essay-based assessments and is not generally applied to closed item marking such as multiple-choice tests. The process works by ascribing agreed marks or 'steps' within each grade band, most commonly -2/-5/-8 (i.e. 52/55/58) . At the higher and lower end of the marking scale, the 'steps' may be more steep, for example 5/15/30, or 80/85/90/95, where marks are less commonly awarded (see below for an example).

When marking assessments to the full-scale, a piece of work could be marked on any number between 0-100 in line with the marking criteria. Evidence and comments from external examiners suggest staff in particular departments mark to increasingly restricted areas of the marking scale. Evidence from this and other institutions suggests that this approach leads to better achievement of learning outcomes by enabling: clear differentiation for markers and students concerning the standard of written work; improved consistency and equity in marking processes; and better use of the full scale of marks (0-100). It also helps to ensure that colleagues who teach and/or mark on the same programme have a shared understanding of the standards expected of students (14.2.2). These all lead to easier, quicker and more consensual marking and moderation, and greater transparency in marks and marking for students.

Degrees at UK universities are traditionally awarded in classes which are determined by the marks given to students for their work. For example, Undergraduate work is classed in the following manner:

- First-class Honours   70-100
- Upper second-class Honours   60-69
- Lower second-class Honours   50-59
- Third-class Honours   40-49
- Fail   0-39*

Stepped marking therefore restricts the scale to a number of steps within each classification and provides more distinct criteria for each step.

This example - for postgraduate programmes - is from The Department of Education:

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Grading: All module assessment tasks that contribute towards progression and award are graded on the university mark scale (0-100) as follows. Marking criteria in full can be found in the PG Handbook:

Pass			Merit			Distinction								
50-59			60-69			70-79			80-89			90-100		
Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
52	55	58	62	65	68	72	75	78	82	85	88	92	95	100

Outright Fail												Marginal Fail		
0-9			10-19			20-29			30-39			40-49		
Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
0	5	8	12	15	18	22	25	28	32	35	38	42	45	48

High: Assignment that meets and, in some aspects, exceeds the required standards, but does not meet the standards of a higher band.

Mid: Assignment that meets most of the standards well.

Low: Assignment that meets the minimum standards for the given band.

Considerations:

- **Size of steps**: One key consideration is the number of steps which may be included in each band. For example, the department could opt for two (high;low) or three steps (high; medium; low). A feature of stepped marking is that a department can 'customise' the scale according to its particular requirements or identified need. For example, departments may elect to incorporate -3 rather -2 (i.e. 53/63/73) into its marking scale in order to place work clearly up into the particular band and encourage range and difference in its marking.

- **Name of steps at upper end of the marking scheme:** Due to the large range of marks between 70-100, it must be divided into several bands. While some departments choose to differentiate these by naming each band (for example Outstanding - 70/75/80 & Extraordinary - 88/95/100), however this can be negatively perceived by students as creating a new higher degree/award classification. This should be carefully considered.

- **Borderline marks:** Stepped marking may lead to more students falling in the borderline of classifications. Departments should explain the calculation of borderline marks for degree classification clearly to avoid unnecessary complaints from students, monitor the impact of stepped marking on borderline module marks and by adjusting the steps at the division of certain bands (i.e. opting for 60/63/65/68) if necessary.

- **Marking Criteria:** In addition to the stepped marking scale, departments should always make accompanying criteria available to students.

- **Grade inflation:** While the intention is that stepped marking encourages the full use of the marking criteria, staff must be aware that grade inflation may result if the scale is not used appropriately. Ideally, the use of stepped marking should result in a better spread of marks across a cohort rather than a higher overall mean.

- Introduction and implementation of Stepped Marking

  - Stepped marking **must** be carefully considered by the Board of Examiners and discussed with External Examiners before implementation.
  - Departments are **advised** to consult with departments who have already implemented Stepped Marking and/or SCA for guidance.
  - Departments **must** inform students of the Stepped Marking Scale and reasoning for its usage in the Departmental Handbook.
  - Departments are **advised** to also explain this approach to students in a face-to-face session which details assessment practices on their programme.
  - Departments are **advised** to closely monitor the impact of stepped marking to identify any associated issues (such as grade inflation).

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Related changes to relevant sections of the Guide to Assessment

14.2.2 Assessment design
Departments should spend significant effort agreeing on ways in which learning will be assessed and the criteria which will be used for each form of assessment. Agreement should be reached on such areas as core criteria, level criteria, **marking approach** and marking procedures for different assessment formats. This process should be repeated regularly in order to review whether criteria are fit for purpose, to embed understanding of the criteria into practise and to educate new staff.

14.3.1 Balancing the impact of marks, the fairness of marking and the efficiency of marking
Departments should be aware that the methods used to ensure fairness and adherence to standards in marking will depend partly on the risk of error due to the nature of the assessment task (e.g. how complex the task is, how much interpretation is required of the marker, and how much evidence is available for later moderation) and the potential consequences of error. The higher the risk and potential consequence of error, the greater should be the degree of scrutiny. For examples of balancing the impact of marks and the fairness of marking to decide on a marking approach, please see Appendix D **and Appendix R (also add in reference to double marking/moderated marking)**

14.4.1 Ensuring equity and consistency in marking
Departments should consider and agree on a consistent approach to and procedures for marking different assessments. How the approach and procedures work should be clearly stated in Programme Handbooks and communicated to students to ensure equity and consistency. In particular, all work contributing to progression decisions or a final award must be marked using **an approach** and procedure which has in-built monitoring capabilities.

Marking approach

Approaches may include:
1. **Full scale marking with associated criteria (0-100)**
2. **Stepped marking (see Appendix R)**
3. **Answer key marking**

Marking procedures

Such procedures might include:
- standardised marking in which acceptable answers are discussed and agreed by markers before marking commences;
- moderated marking in which markers are monitored by an appointed moderator;
- second marking in which first markers mark papers and these are checked by second markers;
- blind double marking in which two markers both mark the assessed work independently then come together to agree on the final mark;
- joint marking in which two markers, working at the same me, mark live assessments.

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For guidance regarding which procedure is suitable for different types of assessment, please see Appendices D and E.

14.4.4 Marking to the Full Range
Departments should pay particular attention to ensuring that their marking procedures and practice support the use of the full range of marks by markers. It is important that this matter is given due consideration as a limited mark allocation in a module can have a significant effect on a student's final degree classification. For further guidance, see Appendix O **and Appendix R**

~~Appendix O - divide broad marking bands (1st/2:1/2:2/ 3rd/Fail) into sub-bands with clear descriptors;~~

Add to the glossary (Appendix B):

- **Full scale marking -** Marking using the full scale of marks 0-100 (as opposed to Stepped marking)
- **Stepped marking -** Stepped marking (also known as fixed point marking, platform marking, notch marking, categorical marking) is a clear and transparent marking process which restricts the number of marks available in each class band to an agreed scale (e.g. low/medium/high) - see Appendix R.

Significant additions, amendments, corrections and clarifications

3. 12.9 Viva voce examinations in taught programmes - Moved to section 13

The current guidance on Viva Voce exams in taught programmes is currently included in section 1*2 Group Projects.* It is proposed a new section 13 be created with guidance for Viva voces and oral examination. The former section 13 on VLEs becomes section 14.

4. 9.4 Requirements for assessment - Hard copy submission clarification

Addition of final bullet point to align hard copy submission with electronic submission

9.4 Requirements for assessment
Staff and students should be clear about:
- the standards criteria and/or weightings which will be used to assess the essays;
- the reference format which will be expected (this should be specified in the published
- criteria and consistently applied across markers);
- any other formatting requirements that are particular to the department or the assessment;
- when the work must be submitted, how extensions can be arranged, how submission will take place and what the penales are for late submission;
- **if at least one submission is made before the deadline and another is made afterwards, then the last version before the deadline is the one accepted.**

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5. 4.7.1 Deadlines for assessed work and lateness penalties - Friday Bank Holidays

Current Text: Departments must not set Friday deadlines for the submission of assessed work**.**

Replacement Text: Departments must not set Friday deadlines for the submission of assessed work (the same principle applies to the Thursday prior to a Friday bank holiday, e.g. Easter Bank Holiday weekend).

6. Section U.4 10 d

Following sentence removed:

The Centre for Global Programmes will continue to provide course evaluation forms for students to collect additional information whilst they are abroad and will advise students to keep evidence (e.g. papers and test marks) during their studies abroad.

Replaced with:

The Centre for Global Programmes encourage students to check with their department at York to find out what, if any, supplementary evidence may be required. For example; rankings in class, tutor reports, assessment sheets, exam papers or test marking sheets.

7. P3 Assessment rules for Masters that consist of 240 or more academic credits - correction

Text removed:

Reassessment in Masters of 240 Credits or more

Where a student has failed modules and the award requirements cannot be met by application of the compensation criteria, s/he is entitled to reassessment in a maximum of 40 credits-worth of failed modules provided that they have failed no more than 40 credits.

Replaced with:

Reassessment in Masters of 240 Credits or more

Where a student has failed modules and the award requirements cannot be met by application of the compensation criteria, s/he is entitled to reassessment in a maximum of 40 credits-worth of failed modules provided that they have failed no more than 60 credits with no more than 40 credits-worth of outright fail (i.e. module marks less than 40). - **with footnote:** *Module marks of 0-39 and fails on pass/fail modules are 'outright fails'. Module marks of 40-49 are potentially compensatable (see Second P2.5).*

8.   U2.4.4 Reassessment in integrated masters programmes - correction

New Text in bold: In stages 3 and 4, where a student has met the required stage average for progression or award, reassessment opportunities will be limited **to a maximum of 40 credits-worth**

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of failed modules provided that they have failed no more than 40 credits except in the case of a marginal failure of an ISM worth more than 40 credits in Stage 4. For stage 3, where a student has not achieved the stage average for progression on the integrated master's programme, reassessment opportunities will only be provided for award of a bachelor's degree.

9. P4.3 Merits on Master's degrees

P4.3 Masters To be recommended to Senate for the award of a Master's degree with merit a student must achieve the following at first attempt:
> i. a rounded credit weighted mean of at least 60 over all modules, and
> ii. a rounded credit weighted mean of at least 60 in the Independent Study Module(s) taken, and
> iii. no more than 20 credits of failed modules with no ~~module marks below 40~~ **outright fails***

*Add footnote: *Module marks of 0-39 and fails on pass/fail modules are 'outright fails'. Module marks of 40-49 are potentially compensatable (see Second P2.5).*

10. 14.11 Deadline for releasing results and feedback - correction

Correction to reflect four week feedback rule:

The maximum turnaround me for summative feedback and marks to students is ~~six weeks~~ **four weeks**. Where students are required to resit assessments, they must be given adequate me to prepare. Undergraduate students must be given at least 5 weeks between the notification of the need to resit and the resit itself. For Postgraduates, this period must be at least 3 weeks.

11. Clarification of Foundation Year and Foundations Degree rules.

Renumbering of sections:

U2.2 Compensation
- U2.2.1 Compensation in foundation years (stage 0)
- U2.2.2 Compensation in foundation degrees
  - a. Stage 1
  - b. Stage 2
- U2.2.3 Compensation in a University Certificate
- U2.2.4 Compensation in Bachelors Programmes
- U2.2.5 Compensation in integrated masters programmes

U2.4 Reassessment
- U2.4.1 Reassessment in foundation years (stage 0)
- U2.4.2 Reassessment in foundation degrees (stages 1,2,3)
- U2.4.3 Reassessment in a University Certificate of Lifelong Learning
- U2.4.4 Reassessment in Bachelors Programmes

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- U2.4.5 Reassessment in integrated masters programmes

12. Clarification of marginal fail, reassessment and resubmission of ISMs & Appendix N

The Academic Quality Team highlighted the need for information from Appendix N - Independent study modules (ISM): 'marginal fail' to be in section 10.6.

10.6 Reassessment and resubmission

Reassessment through resubmission on Independent Study Modules is allowed under certain circumstances. For students on taught postgraduate courses or those on Integrated Masters Programmes (where the ISM is worth more than 40 credits), reassessment is only possible where the ISM receives a marginally failing **mark of between 40 and 49.** In these cases, the credit value of the reassessment exceeds the normal reassessment limits. **The student will then have an opportunity to make amendments (as specified in Appendix N) which would enable a passing threshold to be reached. The overall ISM module mark after resubmission will be capped at 50.** Students on Integrated Masters Programmes with ISMs worth up to or exactly 40 credits may be reassessed on ISMs, if the volume of reassessment is available to them within the normal reassessment and compensation rules. In each case, consideration should be given to what is realistically possible in terms of revising a substandard dissertation/project within a limited me frame.

13. Modification to guidance on External Examiners

- 18 The following guidelines have been formulated on the basis of the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education~~: Chapter B7.~~ **, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise (Nov, 2018)."**

- 18.4.6.d.iii …inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body ~~(QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7, 2011). Guidance for External Examiners on QAA's concerns scheme is available at [*broken link*].~~ **…inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body (QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise). Guidance for External Examiners on QAA's concerns scheme is available at https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint**

- 18.4.6 Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement [broken link] – replace link with https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources

- Glossary – Broken link replaced - https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks

14. 4.1 Assessment requirements

Change of document: This applies equally to collaborative programmes. See UK Quality Code for Higher Education ~~Chapter B6: Indicator 11.~~ Advice and Guidance: Assessment (Nov, 2018).

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Inclusion of updated Academic Misconduct Policy & Exceptional Circumstances Policy

It also proposed that the numbering for these be amended so that Academic Misconduct is numbered from AM1 and the Exceptional Circumstances Policy is numbered from EC1. **The changes to these policies are included in a separate briefing note.**