

# **POLICY ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MODERATION**

## **MODERATION: PURPOSES AND PRACTICES**

### *Principles*

- Moderation *of assessment tasks* is part of the assurance of standards – ensuring, and offering evidence that we have checked that, the tasks we set are of an appropriate standard and do test the learning objectives of a given module. Internal moderation of questions and exercises (by other academics within the institution) is desirable for all assessment; external moderation is also desirable as an ‘audit trail’ showing that the process has been carried out and as a check that the standards of one institution are credible to another.
- Moderation *of marking* serves the same purposes and also demonstrates that the marking process has been carried out rigorously, fairly and without personal bias. External examiners can handle only a small sample of work, but a larger sample should be processed internally.
- Where possible it is also desirable and useful (for audit purposes) that the marking process and the deliberations of examination boards have also been observed and declared to be fairly and legally conducted.
- The curriculum and design of programmes is moderated during the validation process, by the input of External Advisers and Quality Office (or equivalent). Substantial changes to modules or programme between Validations should receive similar consideration – again, to ensure that the changes do not move the programme away from comparability with programmes offered elsewhere.

### *Moderation of assessment tasks:*

The practice now laid down in the *General Academic Regulations* is that each year’s draft module assessment tasks shall be given for comment to another academic within the institution competent in the teaching of the subject matter, along with the learning objectives of the module, and a copy shall also be sent to the external examiner of the module. A written record of all comments shall be kept by an appropriate Faculty officer. The internal phase of this moderation

must take place before the tasks are advertised to students. If changes are made as a result of external moderation the students must be informed of them as soon as possible after they are agreed.

There may be cases where an external examiner is appointed after the start of a module's presentation in a given year, and it is not desirable to delay telling the students what their assessment is too long into the semester.

### ***Internal moderation of marking***

The internal moderation of marking – second-marking, check-marking of a sample – has two purposes: (a) to help maintain consistency of standards between modules, and (b) to make accidental or deliberate bias in favour of or against a candidate more difficult. It adds to the work of the staff, however, so it should not become so extensive as to double the marking load. It is suggested that a sample of about twenty scripts is appropriate: all of a very small module (up to about 25 students) or a sample of about twenty from a larger course. All assessment tasks counting for more than 10 per cent of the module score should be double- or check-marked in this way. The sample should contain two elements; (a) fails, distinctions (marks of 80+) and cases from either side of border-lines (to maintain standards), and (b) a random sample chosen by the second marker from the main run of marking, plus all scripts handed in late, to assure against bias in individual cases. The size of the random sample should be such as to make the total up to 18 (before late scripts) once all fails, all distinctions and one script nearest above and below each borderline (50, 60, 70, 80) has been included – but the random element of the sample should include at least five scripts even if this takes the total above twenty.

Because they count for a substantial proportion of the final marks, all final-year Projects should be second-marked. The most expeditious way of arranging this is for them to be marked by both the potential examiners for the oral defence, who will need to read them in any case for that reason.

### ***Selection of external examiners***

All modules at Level 4 or higher require an external examiner. Current policy is that all external examiners should be approved by someone outside the institution. A Register of staff inside Rwanda qualified to serve as external examiners has been compiled and is being held by the Vice

Rectors' Group; maintaining it will become one of the tasks of the National Council when this becomes active. Where an institution wishes to appoint someone not on the Register, from inside or outside the country, a copy of the person's c.v. should be lodged with and approved by the holders of the Register, giving teaching and examining experience, experience of acting as an external adviser in the validation of programmes or an inspector of programmes for government or a professional body, and a brief list of recent publications. (It seems a not unreasonable principle that those judging work at honours or masters level should have a current and relevant background in research or scholarly activity.)

Each programme should have two kinds of external examiners:

- i) Module examiners, who will comment on the marking standards of one or, preferably, several modules, and
- ii) A programme examiner, not necessarily familiar with the subject matter of the entire programme (though he or she will probably also be a module examiner), who assures the quality of the marking and deliberation process as a whole.

The programme examiner should always be someone employed within the country or close enough that he or she can attend the Examination Board. The duties of the role include receiving reports from all the module examiners, attending the examination Board, certifying that regulations have been applied fairly and rigorously, and commenting to the Programme Team on elements of staff/institutional practice or student performance that seem particularly meritorious or appear in need of improvement in the next run of the module (drawing on the module examiner reports as well as his or her own direct experience). The term of office as programme examiner should normally not be more than four years. They should not have worked or studied at the institution at which they are to examine for three years before appointment, they should not be related to anyone in the institution, and they should not have examined, supervised, employed or been employed or supervised by any member of the programme's academic staff during the past five years. It is suggested that they should normally be of senior lecturer grade or above.

As suggested above, the programme examiner might also be used to comment on proposed substantial modifications to the learning outcomes or module content of programmes, between formal Validations.

Three models appear acceptable for the selection and practice of module examiners:

- i) They could be staff working in Rwanda, drawn from or added to the Register of Approved External Examiners, who could either collect or be sent scripts to moderate or come to the institution to read them.
- ii) If money is available (e.g. within donor packages or pedagogic grants) it may be possible to use people from abroad in the same way, paying for scripts to be couriered to them or for them to attend the institution to read scripts and make their report. It may also be possible to use consultants or researchers visiting for other purposes in this way, *ad hoc*.
- iii) Otherwise, people from abroad will have to be consulted and report mostly by email. It may be desirable for students to submit a soft copy of their assignments in so that these can be attached to emails, in addition to the hard copy, and it may be necessary to scan in examination scripts. If this is not possible or practicable, funds will need to be found to copy scripts and courier them to the examiner.

Module examiners should probably be appointed for three years, extended by mutual agreement for a further three. They should not have worked or studied at the institution at which they are to examine for two years before appointment, they should not be related to anyone in the institution, they should not have examined, supervised, employed or been employed or supervised by any member of the programme staff during the past three years, and they should not be in close scholarly or research collaboration with anyone teaching on the modules they are examining. They should normally be of at least senior lecturer grade

It is not necessary to appoint a separate module examiner for every module. Examination teams should be picked so that a relatively small number of people cover all topic areas, at least in terms of general familiarity with them.

After grades have been adjusted as a result of internal moderation, module external examiners should receive a sample of two scripts from around each borderline and all failed scripts and distinctions. They may advise on the fairness or otherwise of the individual failed and 'distinction' scripts but may only comment on the general standard of the remainder, unless it is their feeling that the entire module needs to be remarked. In this case the Dean of Faculty (or the Vice Rector Academic if the Dean works on the programme) should determine whether to accept the module external examiners' advice that the addition of a constant to all or part of the range would be sufficient to meet his or her objections, to ask the module external examiner or programme examiner to remark the scripts, or to appoint a fresh internal marking team. In the last of these cases, a fresh sample of scripts should be sent to the module examiner after remarking.

Module external examiners might also be used to comment on proposed substantial modifications to the learning outcomes or the weight or method of assessment of modules, between formal Validations.

**Finally**, there should be clear procedures on what happens to 'close the loop' of external examining by reporting back. The following, current policy at KIE at the time of writing, is offered as an example of good practice:

**Institute procedure for the receipt of External Examiners' reports**

- i. The Directorate of Academic Quality will be responsible for forwarding reports to:
  - (a) The Head(s) of Department for action
  - (b) The Programme leader(s) for information
- ii. The reports received by the Head of Department will be accompanied by a pro-forma (Annex C) within which the Head of Department or nominee will note any issues, the actions required and any actions taken. The Departmental Response to External Examiner/s Form should be returned to the Directorate of Academic Quality, following discussion within the department.
- iii. When an external examiner has made suggestions that require a response, departments should correspond with the external examiner to check that s/he is satisfied with that response.
- iv. The Directorate of Academic Quality will forward the reports and correspondence to the Vice-Rector (Academic) as Chair of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee with a note of any issues arising.
- v. The reports and all correspondence with external examiners will be logged by the Directorate of Academic Quality. External examiner reports and departmental responses

should be appended to Annual Programme Review reports prepared by departments and sent to their Faculty Academic Quality Committee (*FAQC*) Chair. The Directorate of Academic Quality will provide *FAQCs* with a list of expected and received reports for each year.

- vi. If the Directorate of Academic Quality does not receive the Departmental Response Form as part of the Annual Programme Review papers it notifies the relevant *FAQC* Chair(s) so that the matter will enter the normal annual *FAQC* procedures with reporting lines to the Dean of Faculty.

The Directorate of Academic Quality will prepare an annual report highlighting themes arising from the Institutes' external examiner reports. This report will be received and discussed at a Plenary Meeting of the *FQAT* Chairs and subsequently by the Academic Policy and Planning Committee chaired by the Vice-Rector (Academic), who will address any Institute-wide issues.