Assessment Policy and Procedures (Common Awards)

The Common Awards scheme operates a two-tier structure for Boards of Examiners:

- TEI Boards of Examiners: As a TEI (Theological Education Institution) participating in the Common Awards scheme, the Federation operates its own Board of Examiners, in line with guidance issued by Durham. The CTF Exam Board is organised, administered and chaired by the Federation. Meetings of the Board take place within two seasons: summer and winter. All the TEI Boards of Examiners report into the overarching Durham University Board of Examiners.

- DU Board of Examiners: The overarching Durham University Board of Examiners meets twice per year: once in September, and again in December. The Durham Board is responsible for confirming awards and classification.

This structure – and the related processes – are designed to provide consistency for the consideration of marks and progression, and for the classification of degrees and the confirmation of all awards. It aims to ensure that the University is able to fulfil its obligations as the awarding body, in accordance with the agreed validation contract. It also aims to ensure comparability across the Common Awards programmes as a whole.

Assessment setting

The CA Oversight Group is responsible for the setting, scrutiny and approval of examination papers and other assessment. In setting assessment Examiners will need to consider the specified learning outcomes of the module and programme as set out in the programme and module specifications.

The marking model for each assessment type is set down in the Common Awards website and the Federation ensures that all assessments are marked and moderated in accordance with these criteria. The detailed marking rubrics, approved by Durham University, are integrated into the online submission procedure through Turnitin, which helps ensure that the marking criteria and models are adhered to consistently.

Marking, plagiarism and feedback

The Common Awards website provides guidance on marking, covering the protection of the identity of candidates, marking and moderation, and use of a mark proforma. The Federation has developed its procedures and processes in light of this guidance. Most of the assignments set for summative assessment in the Federation's delivery of the Common Awards scheme take the form of coursework, rather than written examination.

Marking criteria are available for all forms and types of assessment. They are highlighted to staff in marking and moderation training sessions and the marking rubrics are designed in reference to the criteria. The Common Awards website also outlines the regulations and permitted variations for over-length work, late submissions, illegible scripts etc.

The Federation is responsible for setting word count limits for each piece of summative assessment in line with the agreed ranges specified in the module outlines.

As far as possible the Federation is committed to anonymous marking, and ensures students' anonymity by using participant numbers rather than names. Acceptable exceptions to this policy include practical examinations (e.g. oral presentations and group projects).

It is important that candidates see anonymous marking as only one of the methods by which the integrity and fairness of the examination process are protected; other methods include moderation, the recommendation that oral examinations be conducted by no less than two examiners acting together, the application of common marking criteria and the role of External Examiners.

Where a student has been permitted personalised examination provision, a coversheet is attached to the coursework explaining to the examiner that the student has a specific learning disability and asking for this to be taken into account when marking for sentence structures and spelling.

The Federation has the responsibility to ensure that marks arising from each examination period are recorded and submitted to the Durham Common Awards team in a secure fashion, in the requested format, and by the agreed deadline.

Students are required to confirm with each piece of work submitted for assessment that the assessment they are submitting is their own work.

Examiners who identify a case of suspected plagiarism in assessed work or suspects any other form of cheating should refer the matter to the Moderator, and then to the Chair of the Exam Board. No mark should be assigned to the work and consideration of the student's results should be held in abeyance until the matter has been resolved. Minor cases of plagiarism (e.g. evidence of poor academic practice) can be considered under the expedited examination procedure. For more information see Durham's Assessment Misconduct procedure on the [Common Awards website](#).

The Federation's policy is that feedback is provided to students in a timely manner, normally no longer than three weeks from the date of submission of coursework.

First-marking

Marking may be carried out by core staff (i.e. those appointed to permanent full-time or part-time contracts), or associate teachers (i.e. those appointed to take responsibility for the whole or part of an individual module), but not by visiting teachers (i.e. those with no module-level responsibility but who give 'guest lectures' or are placement supervisors).

First marking is conducted online via Hedwig which is integrated with Turnitin. All first-markers are issued with instructions and most have also received 2 hours of training on plagiarism detection and the overall marking procedure.

All assignments must be marked by the first marker and moderated within four working weeks of the date of submission. Marks will be released to students by Bounds House approximately four working weeks after the original date of submission, unless the first marker requests additional marking time, or if there is a delay in the marking of extensions, which may be released later. The mark will be provisional until it is confirmed by the exam board.

Moderation

In line with the Durham assessment policy, the CTF will moderate a sample of **at least** 6 scripts, or 10% of the module (whichever is larger).

Moderation must be carried out by core staff.

Selection of pieces for moderation
The following scripts will be chosen for moderation:
- the scripts with the top and bottom marks
- all failures
- all marks falling on the border of a class
- any other scripts which the First Marker has flagged for further scrutiny.

Modules with more than one First Marker
In cases where the first marking has been divided up between two or more First Markers, at least 10% of the scripts marked by each First Marker will be moderated. If each First Marker has marked 10 essays or fewer, the sample size will be 1 in 5 per First Marker.

So, for example, if there are 24 essays marked by 4 First Markers (6 essays each), the Moderator will moderate 2 essays from each First marker, which amounts to 8 essays for the module as a whole. Another example: If there are 20 essays marked by 4 First Markers (5 essays each), the Moderator will moderate 2 essays from each first marker.

Adjustment of marks
If the moderator identifies a possible problem with the first marking, the whole batch of scripts must be reviewed. This may entail double-marking of all work, but may require only a review of all answers to one question, or all marks within a particular range. Further information about moderating may be found here: Common Awards - Double Marking and Moderation .

Independent Learning Projects and Dissertations

Independent Learning Projects and dissertations are first-marked by the Supervisor and second-marked, rather than moderated, by another member of staff with knowledge of the field in question.