

Moderation and regression

Introduction

Moderation is the process of making sure assessments marked by schools and colleges, known as 'centres', are consistent, fair and in line with national standards. This applies to coursework and non-exam assessments (NEA) in qualifications such as GCSEs, A Levels and Cambridge Nationals.

We carry out moderation by reviewing a sample of the centre's marking and adjusting the marks where necessary to maintain comparability across different schools and colleges. This ensures students receive grades that accurately reflect their abilities.

This document explains how the moderation process works in detail.

The moderation process

Ofqual's General Conditions of Regulation require us to moderate any assessments internally marked by centres. The moderation process consists of a number of steps:

1. We train, standardise and quality assure our assessment specialists, known as 'moderators'.
2. Students carry out their assessments and centres mark the work and submit the marks to us.
3. We generate and request samples of candidate work, which centres submit to us.
4. Moderators look at work across the range of marks available.
5. Where required, we use a scaling calculation to adjust the centre marks so they're consistent for all assessments.
6. On results day, we provide feedback to centres on their marking.

Training our moderators

Evaluating student work involves human judgement and, during moderation, there can be differences of opinion between the original centre marker and the moderator. Individuals may have varying viewpoints on the clarity of the answers, or the level of skill and knowledge demonstrated.

Our teams of moderators undergo training and standardisation before every series. This training ensures that moderators have a clear understanding of how the marking criteria should be applied fairly and consistently and uses exemplar candidate material.

Our supervising moderators carry out quality assurance checks throughout the period of moderation to ensure all moderators meet the required standards.

Centre assessment and mark submission

Centres mark each piece of work according to the instructions and criteria provided in the specification for each unit or component.

Centres carry out internal standardisation to ensure marks awarded by different teachers are accurate and consistent across all candidates entered for the unit from that centre. If centres are working together in a consortium, they carry out internal standardisation of marking across the consortium. For further information on internal standardisation please see Section 6.2 of JCQ instructions for conducting non-examination assessments.

Before centres submit their centre marks to us, they need to inform students of their centre-assessed marks and provide enough time for them to appeal these marks.

Marks are then submitted electronically to us. Moderation cannot begin until we have received all the marks.

How does sampling work?

After centres submit their marks to us, we review the range of marks centres have submitted and request a random sample of evidence. Samples will include work from across the range of attainment of the candidates' work.

In line with inter-awarding body rules, the size of the sample we request depends on the number of candidates entered for the relevant unit/component:

Number of candidates for the unit/component at the centre	Total sample size requested
Up to 15	All candidates
16–100	15 candidates
101–200	20 candidates
More than 200	25 candidates

Centres provide this sample by digital upload, postal submission or it is made available to a visiting moderator. This sample is considered representative of the centre's application of the marking criteria across the cohort.

Moderating the sample

We use a staged approach when moderating the sample. Moderators first look at a small sample and if any marks for candidates within the sample are not in line with marking criteria, the moderator looks at further work. If the marking still shows evidence of being inconsistent, the moderator will look at a further sample.

Each internally assessed assessment has a 'tolerance' set. The tolerance is specific to each component. The tolerance set is deemed to be an acceptable variation in marks (either above or below) between the centre's marks and the moderator's marks. This allows some room for professional differences of opinion.

If a moderator's marking of the sampled candidates and a centre's marking of the sampled candidates are within this tolerance, the centre's marks are accepted for the whole cohort. If outside the tolerance, an adjustment aligns the centre's marking with the standard.

Adjusting marks

When an adjustment is necessary, we use a linear regression approach. Regression compares the centre marks and moderator marks to find a relationship between them.

A common scenario is where centre and moderator marks do not always agree but are within tolerance of each other and therefore not adjusted.

If the marks disagree and are outside the permitted tolerance, an adjustment will be required. The different possible scenarios are set out below.

Moderators may give marks that are higher than the centre's marks for some candidates, and lower for other candidates. To ensure there is fair adjustment to the whole cohort, we calculate an adjusted mark based on the overall trend and pattern of marking seen and not by looking at candidates individually.

Possible moderation outcomes:

- 1) There are no, or small (within tolerance) differences between the centre and the moderator marks. **In this scenario the centre marks are accepted for all candidates.**
- 2) Where differences between the centre and moderator marks are greater than tolerance, **the regression process is used to adjust the marks of the cohort appropriately.** This may be all or some of the cohort depending on where in the mark range the differences are noted.
- 3) Where differences between the centre and moderator marks are greater than tolerance, but the moderator has seen all the candidates in the centre, we will use **moderator marks**, and these will be awarded to the candidates.
- 4) Where the difference between the centre and moderator marks for a single candidate is extreme when compared to the overall trend and pattern of marking, we will treat that candidate as an **outlier** and give them the moderator mark. This is to avoid any unfair advantage or disadvantage to the rest of the cohort. In exceptional cases, we may treat two candidates in this way.
- 5) If the mark differences between the centre and moderator are so inconsistent that no reasonable adjustment can be calculated, then **further work or a remark is required.** This might mean asking the centre to remark their work with guidance from the moderator, or asking the centre to submit all the candidate evidence so it can be marked by the moderator and moderator marks awarded.
- 6) A combination of **manual scaling** and **outlier** as in 3 and 4 above.

In some cases, our regression system cannot suggest an appropriate scaling that aligns all final marks with moderator marks, because there are high levels of disagreement. These cases are reviewed by internal staff to determine the fairest outcome.

Marks are not altered unless necessary, and then only in a manner which treats all candidates and centres equitably.

Each series is treated independently; therefore, there is no guarantee that if a centre's marks are not changed in one series this will be the case in a future series.

What feedback on centre marking do we provide?

Moderator feedback on each internally assessed component is sent to centres on results day. These moderator reports cover centre administration, and feedback on the interpretation and application of the marking criteria. As our moderators do not take decisions on adjustments, they are unable to explicitly discuss these in your report, but they will highlight areas of generous or harsh marking and make suggestions for improvements.

What if you disagree with our adjustments?

There is a post-results review of moderation service that can be requested by a centre whose marks have been adjusted. This review will ensure that the assessment criteria were applied fairly and reliably, in line with the agreed standard, during the original moderation.

Further details can be found on the website [Reviews of moderation](#) page.