

LFA Procedure 5.5

Internal Verification/Moderation and External Examining

1. Introduction

The verification, marking and moderation processes are described in this procedure. They have been produced in line with guidance in the UK Quality Code.

Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks should be clearly articulated and consistently operated. Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately, reflecting the shared understanding of the markers, and an approach which enables comparability across academic subjects.

Moderation focuses on the marks awarded to the full set of assessed work for a task, module or course, in the context of the academic standards for the award. It is therefore separate from the question of how differences in marks between two or more markers are resolved and is not about making changes to an individual student's marks. Staff need to be clear how moderation will be conducted, for example, through sampling assessed work, reviewing all the marks awarded, and providing opportunities for discussion between moderators to develop shared understandings. They need also to be clear about what action might be taken where significant differences in marks awarded are identified.

At present, London Film Academy (LFA) delivers several courses that lead to a qualification awarded by a university, its Diploma programme has been developed with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Subject Benchmark Statements and the UK Quality Code (and the academic infrastructure in general). However, LFA's appointment and use of external examiners and the framing of this procedure has been influenced by universities with which LFA is currently collaborating on progression/articulation agreements.

2. Internal verification

2.1 What is internal verification?

- Internal verification is a system of quality checks made by someone in LFA to ensure that assignments have been written correctly and that assessment decisions are accurate
- It is a recorded discussion between two or more professionals to ensure accuracy, fairness, consistency and quality of assessment. It does not involve the student.

2.2 How does it work?

- All the assignment briefs or assessment tools used in every module must be checked
- A sample of assessment decisions made for every module must be checked
- The process must be planned and documented.

2.3 When is it done?

- Every assignment brief must be internally verified before it is given to students
- A sample of assessment decisions should be internally verified before the work is returned to students.



2.4 Who is responsible?

- The internal verification process for each course is planned and monitored by the respective Course Leaders
- The Head of Academic Governance (HoAG) internally verifies all assignment briefs
- Any colleague who has sufficient subject knowledge can internally verify assignments and assessment decisions: this will be determined by the Course Leader in consultation with the HoAG
- The HoAG will ensure that internal verification and assessment records are kept for a period of six months beyond the final Assessment Board meeting.

Internal verification (IV) is applied to all elements of credit rated assessments, i.e. all assessment that counts towards a student's award. This includes the involvement by an academic (the 'internal verifier') other than the module/course leader (first marker). This internal verifier will typically have a 'reasonable' knowledge of the subject at the level in question. Internal verification includes consideration of the design of a proposed assessment (i.e. coursework assignments, draft examination papers and marking schemes). Specific consideration is given to use of IT (assessment should use the technology rather than the technology driving the assessment) and the process checks the following:

- Does assessment reflect the intended learning outcomes of the module?
- Does assessment promote and encourage learning?
- Is assessment characterised by fairness and clarity?

Internal verification of assessed work considers:

- whether the marking fair, rigorous and whether it reflects the intended learning outcomes of the module
- general performance by students: what did they do well and what did they do not so well?

Comments cover samples of all types of work that count towards credit, i.e. all examinations and all coursework assignments. The output will be an agreed set of marks to be submitted to the Assessment Board for consideration by the board and the external examiners. Feedback provided by the second marker (IV) to the first marker is typically included as an input to annual module monitoring.

A variety of approaches are adopted in terms of:

- approach, ranging from second marking, either open or blind, through to review and comment
- extent of work considered, ranging from all work for all students, through to sampling.

The Academic Board approves and monitors the approaches to be used.

2.5 First marking

First marking involves judging submitted assignments against the criteria in the assignment brief.

2.6 Second marking

Second marking may be necessary when the internal verifier establishes an inaccurate or inconsistent award made by the first marker. It may be necessary to consult with external examiners at this point, but external examiners should not be expected to act as second or third markers: their role is to moderate the process.



2.7 Internal moderation of marking

Internal moderation involves the review of all marks and comments on assignment tasks to ensure that marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied during first marking. Internal moderation is carried out by the Course Team. It is not necessary for them to be experts in the topic being assessed, although they should be familiar with the content.

Moderation can begin before all of the work for a cohort has been assessed, provided that a reasonable sample is available which represents a range of marks and, if appropriate, markers. The moderator must review marks of all of work across all grade bands. The moderator may make a recommendation regarding second marking in relation to the whole cohort if they feel that assessment criteria have not been fairly, accurately and consistently applied.

It is not appropriate for the moderator to recommend changes to individual marks as they may not have the relevant subject expertise and they have not seen work by the whole cohort. If agreement cannot be reached through normal academic discussion, then the matter may need to be resolved at the Academic Board.

2.8 External moderation

External moderation requires the review of a sample of marked submitted work by the appointed external examiner for the programme or subject. This is normally a complete set of work for each of an agreed selection of students from a given cohort. Usually, the selection of students should provide the external examiner with a sample from across the marks range. External examiners should agree the nature and size of the sample in discussion with the Course Leader. External examiners are not involved in the determination of marks for individual students. The purpose of this external moderation is to provide the Course Team with an external, independent overview of their marking processes and the fairness and effectiveness of these processes.

3. External examining

The external examining process is described below. LFA has taken due consideration of the [QAA UK Quality Code](#) advice and guidance on *expectations and practice for external expertise*, the guiding principles of which are:

- external examiners are external experts providing impartial and independent scrutiny
- external examiners comment on academic standards, student achievement and assessment processes
- there are processes for nomination, approval and engagement of external examiners
- copies of external examiner reports are provided to students and staff
- external examiners are given sufficient evidence and training
- there are mechanisms in place to provide a response to input from external examiners

3.1 What is external examining?

External examining is a system of checks made by someone independent of and external to LFA, to ensure quality and standards are being maintained



3.2 What does external examination look at?

- Samples of student work
- Assessment records for the student work sampled
- Module assignment briefs
- Internal verification records for the assignment briefs
- Internal verification records for student work.

In addition, during the external examining visit, arrangements will be made for the external to meet the relevant academic and administrative staff and also a selection of students. The discussions will cover:

- the management and delivery of the programmes
- familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure
- minutes and action points from previous external examiner visits, Assessment Boards and any quality assurance events.
- centre facilities and resources
- student comments
- student performance
- academic standards
- the assessment process
- student support
- record keeping.

QAA considers that external examining arrangements are a key area of academic quality assurance and a critical factor in determining the outcome of Institutional review. The role of the external examiner should be fully comprehensible to stakeholders, students, the media and the general public.

4. External examining Terms of Reference

External examiners are responsible to the Academic Board, which will determine decides fees and other emoluments to be paid to external examiners.

4.1 Appointment criteria

External examiners are individuals drawn from academia and also from industry, business and the professions. External examiners are expected to demonstrate:

- competence and experience in the subject matter
- academic/professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification examined
- experience of setting examinations and running assessment procedures
- sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of colleagues
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students in the course to be examined
- fluency in English
- compliance with the criteria set out by professional and accrediting bodies.



4.2 Appointments

External examiner appointments will be made under recommendation from experts within the field. Where a course is externally validated, the appointment of examiners will follow the rules laid down by that institution.

4.3 Terms of office

An external examiner's appointment will normally be for at least four years and at most six years, with an option to renew for one further term to ensure continuity. If there is a renewal, a second external examiner shall be appointed to ensure objectivity.

An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances, but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment. External examiners should normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

4.3 Preliminary arrangements

Upon appointment, each external examiner will receive a letter of invitation from LFA, providing details of the term of office and annual fees and giving brief information on the scheme, together with LFA's regulations and full details of the relevant syllabus and methods of assessment. Newly appointed external examiners will be inducted by an LFA representative to ensure that they understand and can fulfil their responsibilities.

4.4 Methods of assessment

External examiners are expected to participate in discussions regarding any amendments to the methods of assessment in use.

4.5 Review of academic provision

External examiners are expected to review academic and/or industry provision as appropriate to assist with future development of the scheme(s) of study concerned.

4.6 Preparation of examination papers / assignment briefs

Draft examination papers and other major assessment components must be approved by the external examiner, who may require alterations to be made.

4.7 Coursework assessment

Coursework, portfolios, show-reels, exam scripts, etc, shall be made available for scrutiny by the external examiner.



4.8 Moderating

External examiners shall ensure that academic standards are maintained, are appropriate and comparable and the processes are sound and fairly conducted. External examiners are expected to scrutinise sufficient evidence to indicate the basis on which marks have been awarded, which should include agreed sampling examination scripts/coursework.

External examiners shall scrutinise all, or an agreed proportion of, candidates' written work, which shall normally include a sample of work from all levels of performance. Where external examiners are reviewing an agreed proportion only, they should normally see work assessed internally as borderline pass cases or failures. Many external examiners wish to see scripts from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range. The guiding principle is that external examiners should have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. They should inspect a sufficient amount of the work of the candidates to enable them to arrive at a judgement that can be applied to the examination as a whole.

4.9 Unfair practice

An external examiner who, either in the course of the examining process or subsequently, considers that a candidate has engaged in an unfair examination/assessment practice shall immediately report the circumstances in writing to the Academic Board.

4.10 Constitution of Assessment Boards

LFA Assessment Board(s) to consider results and make recommendations on candidates pursuing schemes leading to the award of an LFA qualification. See [LFA Procedure 1.2 - Board and Committees: Terms of Reference](#).

4.11 Reports

External examiners are required by LFA to submit written reports both annually and at the end of their period of office. External examiners' comments on the examining process are invited, including observations on the structure and content of the scheme of study and its teaching. Reports on work examined should be returned to the Academic Board. Copies of reports will be made available to tutors and students on request.

5. Forms used by internal verifiers and external examiners

The following documents are used as part of the process:

- Module report form (completed by Course Leader)
- External examiner moderation of assignment briefs
- Internal verification of assessment decisions
- Internal verification of assignment briefs
- External examiner report

