



Access to HE



PART OF **nocn** GROUP



# Guide to the Internal Moderation and Standardisation of the QAA Access to HE Diploma

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## 1. Internal moderation

### 1.1 Purpose of the guidance document

All One Awards recognised Access to HE providers must have clearly formulated procedures for the internal moderation of assessment practice. The purpose of this document is to give guidance on how each provider's IM practice can meet QAA and AVA requirements.

Internal Moderation is defined as:

'a process undertaken by a providing organisation in which assessment practices and decisions are regularly sampled and evaluated and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness'.

### 1.2 Intended Benefits

This guide will offer a range of benefits to assessors, internal moderators and students. It is intended to:

- provide comprehensive guidance on all aspects of internal moderation practice for those involved in its execution
- develop a common understanding of requirements and encourage good practice
- support a common approach to IM practice within and between providers
- provide guidance which can be used by providers to help establish their policies and procedures
- enable all involved in assessment and internal moderation to appreciate its value in ensuring fair assessment for students
- facilitate ongoing, observable improvement in assessment practice over time

### 1.3 Intended Audience

Providers of Access - tutors, assessors, internal moderators, diploma course leaders, Access co-ordinators and managers.

## 1.4 Mapping and website links to other documents

Throughout this guidance document reference is made to a number of other publications which include important information in relation to the internal moderation of the Access to HE Diploma. Please find below links to the documents on the One Awards Website:

- [One Awards Access to HE Guide to the Assessment and Grading of the Access to HE Diploma](#)
- [QAA Grading Scheme Handbook – Sections A – E](#)
- [Internal moderation of a diploma assessment plan – Form IM1](#)
- [Internal moderation of a unit assessment plan – Form IM2](#)
- [Internal moderation of an assignment brief - Form IM3](#)
- [Internal moderation of student work - Form IM4](#)

## 1.5 Internal Moderation Strategy

Each provider must appoint suitably qualified and experienced internal moderators who are able to undertake the internal moderation of each of the following.

Internal moderation consists of 4 separate parts:

1. IM of diploma assessment plans
2. IM of unit assessment plans
3. IM of assignment briefs
4. IM of students' assessed work

Internal moderators can only moderate plans, briefs and students' work that have been generated or assessed by other assessors. They cannot moderate their own assessment plans, briefs or work of their own students.

The provider must ensure that all staff involved in Access assessment know who the internal moderators are.

## 1.6 Internal moderation of the diploma assessment plan.

Once diploma assessment plans (AP1s) have been developed they must be reviewed by the internal moderator. This is to ensure:

- planned delivery of diplomas meets the required rules of combination and the unit specifications are those indicated in the approval document
- planned assessments for each diploma are distributed across the delivery period to ensure a reasonable spread of hand in dates for students and assessors
- equity of assessment across units
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been chosen

Any weaknesses in the plan must be clearly identified and action plans generated and discussed with assessors, for example for one diploma there may be too many hand in dates within a 2 week period. Appropriate changes are then implemented and signed off by the internal moderator. **Use form IM1 – IM of diploma assessment plans form.**

## 1.7 Internal moderation of the unit assessment plan

Once unit assessment plans (AP2s) have been developed they must be reviewed by the internal moderator. This is to ensure:

- the unit's assessment strategy is appropriate for the development of the students' learning
- all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit are covered by the assessment plan
- for graded units, the grade descriptors attached to the individual units are the only ones included in the plan
- appropriate grade descriptor components have been chosen
- equity of assessment across the unit
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been chosen

Any weaknesses in the plan must be clearly identified and action plans generated and discussed with assessors, for example for one unit there may be too many assignments. Appropriate changes are then implemented and signed off by the internal moderator.

***Use form IM2 – IM of unit assessment plans form***

## 1.8 Internal moderation of assignment briefs

Once unit assessment plans (AP2s) have been agreed assessors can submit their developed assignment briefs (AP3s) for internal moderation.

The internal moderator will check that each brief contains:

- correct unit title and code
- the learning outcomes and assessment criteria covered by the assignment
- valid assessment methods and tasks to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- assessment tasks that are fit for purpose for the level of the unit
- sufficient information for students to understand the assessment tasks they are being asked to undertake
- word counts or range (clearly explained) if appropriate
- referencing and bibliography requirements if appropriate
- draft guidance if drafts are allowed for the assignment (See One Awards Drafts Policy)
- dates for circulation to students and deadlines for submission

## For Graded Units

- accurate information about the grade descriptors for the assignment
- choices of grade descriptor components which are suitable for the nature of the assessment tasks and that the same components are used for merit and distinction grades
- sufficient information for students as to how Pass, Merit and Distinction grades can be achieved
- **numerical marking is not used** at any point (providers were informed of this change of policy in March 2017 and was effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017)

Internal moderators complete a record for each assignment brief identifying any actions required, for example, if assessment tasks do not cover all learning outcomes and assessment criteria identified for that assignment. Appropriate changes are then implemented and signed off by the internal moderator. On completion of any required changes the internal moderator will sign off the action plans.

***Use form IM3 - IM of Assignment Brief***

When assignment briefs have been through this complete process they are ready for circulation to students.

## 1.9 Internal moderation of students' assessed work

### 1.9.1 Planning

A plan for the internal moderation of students' assessed work must be developed indicating what will happen, when it will happen and who will be involved. It is important that this is developed in conjunction with the overall assessment strategy for the Diploma.

The internal moderation of students' assessed work will ensure that assessment is fair and equitable for all students and that the standard of students' work is consistent and sufficient for the award of credit. It will also ensure that assessment and grading decisions made by assessors are reliable and a true reflection of the students' performance.

As it is not usually possible, or necessary to internally moderate the work of every student for every unit, a sampling plan must be developed by the internal moderator.

To ensure quality, the sampling strategy must take into account the following factors when determining its size and the work to be included.

- **all** assessors' work
- **all** units delivered (including work at all levels)
- methods of assessment
- different cohorts of students (e.g. day and evening delivery)
- delivery at different sites
- every student
- new assessors
- resubmissions
- borderline achievement
- unusual grade profiles
- range of grades awarded
- assessors requesting guidance or reassurance
- number of staff changes during delivery
- special arrangements for assessment
- feedback from previous internal moderation activities
- feedback from external moderators
- schedule for delivery of units

The internal moderator may need to modify the plan during the programme, in response to any of the factors identified above. An example may be if there were a large number of resubmissions required for a particular assessment or unit.

To assist the course delivery team the internal moderator may be involved in decisions about extension requests, resubmissions, student representations, referrals and cases of academic misconduct.

## 1.9.2 Sampling the assessed work

Once the sampling strategy has been developed, the internal moderator will require for each sample the following:

- the assignment brief (AP3)
- students' complete assessment material for the assignment
- feedback from the assessor (AP4)
- indicative grades (for graded units)
- tracking of grade indicators (grade profiles for units)
- both pieces of work (for resubmissions) and documentation outlining the nature of the resubmission requested
- drafts if they have been allowed and submitted

The internal moderator will consider the evidence and make judgements about:

- achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the correct level
- indicative grades awarded (for graded units)
- recording of achievement
- the types of feedback given to the students which could include:
  - annotation
  - written feedback
  - tutor observation record
  - video/audio recording of feedback
- the quality of feedback given to the students, on form AP4, which could include:
  - clarity of explanation about the relevance of the work
  - suitability of language used
  - relationship to assessment criteria
  - relationship to grade descriptor components (for graded units)
  - guidance on future development of work

The internal moderator will complete an IM feedback sheet which must include advice and feedback to the assessor. This should be clear, accurate, supportive and developmental. IM feedback should not be a simple agreement or second marking.

**Use form IM4 - IM of assessment feedback**

## 1.10 Changes to assessment decisions

This should only occur following discussion between the internal moderator and the assessor. If the decision is taken to alter assessment decisions or indicative grades, the feedback sheet for the student should be clearly updated and signed. The relevant tracking records should also be updated so there can be no confusion about the final decision taken.

The internal moderator will identify on the IM of assessment feedback form (IM4) any actions to be taken by the assessor. A date will be set for actions to be completed and the internal moderator will follow up progress and sign off the action plan when completed.

Should a student make a representation about a grading decision, the internal moderator will be involved.

## 1.11 Findings from the internal moderation processes

All findings from these moderation processes can be used to influence the continuing development of the programme and promotion of good and improving assessment practices. These findings could be a focus for:

- agenda items at team meetings
- professional development events and sharing of good practice
- self and team assessment/evaluation
- standardisation activities

## 1.12 End of Course Checking

Internal moderators should:

- monitor progress against previous action points
- ensure assessment records are complete and accurate
- ensure evidence of achievement is appropriate, standardised and mapped to the assessment criteria
- check that the electronic Recommendation for the Award of Credit form (eRAC) is complete and accurate, ensuring the rules of combination for the Diploma have been met
- record internal moderation activities and findings, list action points and report to tutors/assessors and external moderators
- ensure that all preparations are in order for the Final Awards Board

## 2. Standardisation activities

### 2.1 Purpose

All One Awards recognised Access to HE providers must undertake clearly formulated standardisation activities to assure the quality of assessment and grading practice across all Diplomas. The purpose of this document is to give providers guidance on what activities are required and how they can be planned and implemented.

Standardisation activities can be defined as:

‘Those activities which collectively ensure the consistency of overall assessment practice and achievement decisions’.

### 2.2 Intended Benefits

This guidance will offer a range of benefits to all provider staff concerned with Access and subsequently to students. Standardisation of processes and systems ensure:

- providers can confirm that all assessors apply the same rigorous methods, and that assessment judgements are in line with QAA requirements and are properly tracked and recorded
- assessors and internal moderators can confirm that grades awarded are fair and equitable and that the proper processes have been followed
- Access to HE Diplomas are awarded to students in a fair, consistent and transparent way
- facilitation of the sharing of good practice and development of ideas for ongoing improvement

### 2.3 Intended audience

Providers of Access: tutors, assessors, internal moderators, Diploma course leaders, Access coordinators and managers.

### 2.4 The scope of standardisation

The internal moderator and others will carry out a number of activities linked to standardisation of practice. These activities focus upon the standardisation of systems, processes and record keeping practices. Many of these are also addressed via the robust internal moderation practices identified in Section 1.

The standardisation activities that this guidance document is focussing on relate to specific standardisation events designed to improve quality and consistency of assessment decisions over time.

Individual provider standardisation events are part of a process which includes regional and national standardisation. These events are designed to imbed and consolidate the commitment to ongoing comprehensive improvement in assessment practice and fairness and equity for students.

## 2.5 Planning a standardisation event

It is recommended that these events are held at least twice each academic year. An identified individual should be responsible for planning and convening the events.

Participants should include all assessors and internal moderators who are involved, or will be involved, in the planning and delivery of Access Diplomas.

The intention for the events should be to address all units and all assessments over a period of time year on year. In order to do this it is recommended that each event focuses on a particular theme. This may be related to:

- assessment plans
- assignment briefs
- assessment judgements at different levels if level two units are delivered
- distinction grades
- borderline assessment judgements
- assessor feedback ( particularly in a specified area e.g. grade descriptors or the developmental nature of feedback)
- differential achievement – Pass, Merit, Distinction
- sufficiency of evidence
- innovative assessment methods
- resubmissions

The theme chosen will direct the choice of samples of students' assessed work that will be required for the event.

## 2.6 The standardisation event

The following documents would be required for the event:

- samples of work selected with associated documentation, copied or otherwise available for all participants. There may be occasions when these would be made anonymous and sometimes it may be beneficial to work on one or a small number of samples, particularly when standardising assessment judgements across a number of assessors
- participants' feedback form
- event feedback form, for summary and conclusions

A typical agenda for a standardisation event would include:

1. Attendance
2. Apologies for absence
3. Review of summaries from previous events
4. Aims of the event and clarification of the theme chosen for the event
5. Samples chosen for standardisation
6. Consideration of samples by all participants and completion of participants' feedback forms
7. Discussion arising from work on samples
8. Summary of key findings and conclusions, including examples of good practice as well as areas for further development for inclusion in the final report.

Reports are maintained to provide a year on year profile of the developing work and are used to inform all aspects of assessment practice.

The provider needs to develop a strategy for the beneficial use of these reports.

For example to:

- influence planning of standardisation events
- review on-going progress at each standardisation event
- influence the choice of staff development activities
- feed into self-assessment reports and grade profile analysis
- provide evidence for meeting QAA regulations

The ultimate benefit is the on-going improvement of assessment experience and fairness and equity for students.

## 2.7 One Awards (AVA) standardisation activities

One Awards hold a range of events throughout the year for tutors and moderators in all diploma subject areas delivered by more than one provider. The events facilitate the sharing of good practice and provide networking opportunities for provider representatives. Providers are informed of the dates of these events in September each year.

Providers are asked to participate in these events by:

- Contributing samples of evidence (as required)
- Participation by any individuals for whom the event is relevant

**Participation in AVA standardisation is a mandatory requirement for providers offering the Access to HE Diploma. Each provider must have representation at each event which is relevant to the Access courses being delivered, or take part using the resources on-line. There is a £100 charge per Diploma subject area for non-participation.**

# Guide to the Internal Moderation and Standardisation of the QAA Access to HE Diploma



All standardisation event reports and resources are made available on the One Awards website and circulated to relevant provider contacts.

## 2.8 National standardisation

One Awards is part of a group of AVAs taking part in a national standardisation project involving QAA. The group meet four times a year to agree and undertake national standardisation activities. Feedback from national standardisation events is made available for all providers following the events.

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