Assessment, Marking and Moderation Policy

MLA College Assessment, Marking, and Moderation Policy
Sponsor: Academic Registrar
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Next review: October 2027

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Whilst consideration has been given to the design of this document to reduce the use of printer ink and paper, please consider the environment before printing and only do so if absolutely necessary.

Version	Date Approved	Author / Owner Approving Authority	Summary of Changes	Next Review Date
1.0	Oct 2021	Academic Registrar	Initial Release	Oct 2022
2.0	Oct 2022	Academic Registrar	No Changes	Oct 2023
3.0	Oct 2023	Director of professional services	Change in sponsor, section 3.2 inclusion of ACA Form.	Oct 2024
4.0	Oct 2024	Vice-Rector (Professional services)	Change in sponsor, format changes.	Oct 2025
5.0	Oct 2025	Vice-Rector (Professional services)	Content & Version control table inserted.	Oct 2026
5.1	July 2026	Academic Registrar	Updates made to reflect partnership with the OU	Oct 2026
6.0	Oct 2026	Academic Registrar	3.6.1 minimum sample inserted.	Oct 2027

Contents:

1. Scope
2. Assessment Design
3. Approval of Assessment
4. Marking
5. Internal Moderation
6. Subject External Examiner
7. Academic Offences
8. Appendix 1: MLA College Processes for Assessment, Marking & Moderation
9. Appendix 2: Flow chart of marking and moderations process
10. Appendix 3: Referral/Repeat Guidance Flow Chart
11. Appendix 4: Assessment Committee approval form
12. Appendix 5: Moderation of student work
13. Appendix 6: Academic Offence Proforma

1. Scope

1.1 This policy supports the objectives of the https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/assessmentAcademic Regulations and those of the College's validating partners (for example, the University of Plymouth and Open University) and applies to summative assessment on all taught provision at MLA College.

2. Assessment Design

2.1 **Design of Initial Assessments -** When designing assessments, the following principles should be applied:

- the nature and weighting of the assessment (and referral assessment) should align with that set out in the most recent version of the Module Record;
- the volume, timing and nature of assessments should be designed with the intention of enabling students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the relevant intended learning outcomes;
- all intended learning outcomes should be assessed;
- information should be provided to students at the beginning of each module and/or programme to clearly and explicitly detail what is expected of them;
- assessments should support student learning as well as measuring achievement;
- information on provisions for referral assessment should be made available to students at the beginning of each module;
- when setting assessments, consideration should be given to the need to eliminate opportunities for academic misconduct;
- guidelines on the use of assessment methods, criteria and feedback should be made available to all staff involved in the assessment and feedback process.

2.2 Resources to support staff in designing assessments can be found here.

2.3 **Assessment Design for Referrals -** Programme Managers will create referral assignments (in accordance with 2.1) to ensure that unique assessment questions are available for additional attempts at a module.

2.4 Students who have confirmed they will take a referral will be assessed by the Programme Services team to establish their engagement with previous cohorts and tutors to ensure a unique assessment is provided.

2.5 Referrals will exist in a bank of questions for each module which academics can choose from depending on requirements as set out above.

3. Approval of Assessments

3.1 **Internal Approval -** The internal approval process applies to the following tasks as appropriate for each programme:

- all Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative coursework and practical assessments;
- all Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative in-class tests;
- all Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 summative examinations;
- all referral assignments.

3.2 The MLA College Assessment Committee should ensure all summative assessments are formally approved before they are made available to students or forwarded to External Examiners if required (see section 3.5).

3.3 Authority to do this may be delegated to the Vice-Rector (Academic) to approve with Programme Managers as required. This is to ensure assessments set are appropriate to meet learning outcomes and are of a consistent standard.

3.4 The Assessment Committee (or other approved body/person) is responsible for checking and confirming that assessments:

- use the correct module title, code, and assessment weighting;
- are appropriate for the module and level;
- enable students to meet the learning outcomes;
- are complete and accurate in terms of instructions for students;
- use correct grammar and spelling;
- use an appropriate template;
- are accompanied by assessment criteria;
- are accompanied by Assessment Task Guidance;
- comply with MLA College policy on the re-use of assessment tasks (see section 3.10).

3.5 **External examiner scrutiny -** Following internal approval, the Subject External Examiner will be asked to scrutinise sample summative assessments (including those for referral assessments), assessment criteria, and marking schemes for each programme area within their remit. External Examiners should also confirm, at the Subject Assessment Panel, the appropriateness of all forms of assessment used in each programme area.

3.6 External Examiners will receive sample summative assessments, by programme area, prior to the start of each academic year.

3.6.1 The minimum sample for each component is normally:

• All fails

• 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the First (or Distinction) range to demonstrate the lowest and highest marks awarded in that classification band

• 10 pieces of work or 5% (whichever is the greater) from the remaining classification bands with a focus on work at borderlines

3.7 External Examiners, or Programme Managers on their behalf, will also complete the assessment committee approval form for the first assessment of each academic year.

3.8 **Assessment guidance -** All assessments (original and referral) should be accompanied by:

- clear instructions about the task/brief;
- confirmation of the learning outcomes to be assessed;
- assessment criteria and associated marking scheme;

- details of tutorial and/or other support.

3.9 For project and dissertation assessments information on Ethics and Risk Assessment should be provided to students in line with MLA College's Ethics Policy. This information should be made accessible to students.

3.10 **Approval of re-use of summative assessments -** The following applies to both first attempt and all subsequent summative assessment tasks:

- tasks which draw questions from "banks" are permitted, subject to approval, however the bank of questions should be extensive, and evolve to ensure students cannot predict questions;

- the Assessment Committee should be assured that no closed question has been used in any assessment in the previous 2-year period unless there is explicit agreement from the external examiner. However, a question which was approved as part of a "resit" which was never used (e.g., because no students undertook the referred assessment) may be included in the following year's assessments.

- Where the assessment is relevant to other components within the module, it may be reasonable to re-use the task within coursework (for example, a case study pertaining to a specific period that could not be achieved during the 'resit' period).

4. Marking

4.1 **Anonymous marking -** For distance learning modules where students are typically assigned a personal tutor whose role is to guide, support and mark student work, anonymous marking is not appropriate. Where appropriate to a programme delivery model, anonymous marking will be applied.

4.2 **Second and third marking of dissertations and final year projects -** Depending on delivery, undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and projects will normally be independently second marked. Second marking is not routinely used for other assessment tasks.

4.3 Second marking will normally be blind (i.e. the second marker will have no knowledge of the first marker's grade). The second marker marks (or may co-mark in the case of presentations) all work applying the same assessment criteria as the first marker. The outcome of this process will be either:

- confirmation of the first marker's judgement without need for a discussion between markers to resolve any differences;

- where first and second markers cannot agree, a third marker will normally be assigned. Third marking will normally be blind (i.e. the third marker will have no knowledge of the first and second marker's results);

- where a third marker is assigned, the 3rd marker's decision will normally be final;

- all first, second (and when relevant, third) marking should be evidenced on blind second marking forms, which are issued to the supervisory team per cohort.

5. Internal Moderation

5.1 **Requirements -** As a separate process from the marking of assessments, moderation involves a review of assessments within a module by an appropriate member of academic staff. It ensures that an assessment outcome is fair, valid and reliable, that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, and

that any differences in academic judgement between individual markers can be acknowledged and addressed. It ensures consistency in marking within cohorts and across time.

5.2 Moderation is required for all components of summative assessment, (except for dissertations and final year projects, which should be second marked – see section 4.2), irrespective of the level of the work or the credit weighting of the assessments.

5.3 Moderation should be completed before provisional marks are released to students and should be evidenced and recorded.

5.4 Moderation guidelines for Transnational Education (TNE) provision is detailed in section 5.8 below.

5.5 **Sampling -** Moderation is carried out on a sample of the component of assessment. The sample of moderated work will be used to make a decision about the marking of all work that has been submitted, therefore, it is important it complies with the minimum requirements for sampling set out below, or with an equivalent process approved by an External Examiner.

5.6 The minimum sample for each component is normally:

- all marginal fails;
- a sample of work from each classification band to be agreed with the Programme Manager.

5.7 The sample should normally be representative of all markers involved in marking the component. Discretion in sampling may be exercised where there are:

- modules with small numbers where for example all assessment can be included in the sample;
- modules with large numbers, where Programme Managers may wish to discuss the content of the sample with the External Examiner to confirm what they wish to receive;
- requirements imposed by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies.

5.8 **Moderation of Transnational Education (TNE) provision -** Where MLA College delivers programmes in person to learners based outside of the United Kingdom, this is defined as Transnational Education (TNE).

5.9 Due to the nature of TNE provision, MLA College may implement a second marking approach as an alternative to sampling for its programmes delivered in this way, however this would normally be approved prior to the commencement of the programme by College Academic Board. Should Programme Managers of TNE provision wish to amend their moderation process, a request should be submitted to Academic Board for approval prior to the commencement of the academic year in which the change will take effect.

5.10 In these instances, coursework submissions, exam/test papers, and practical assessments should normally be independently second marked. Second marking will normally be blind (i.e. the second marker will have no knowledge of the first marker's grade). The second marker marks (or may co-mark in the case of presentations) all work applying the same assessment criteria as the first marker.

5.11 The outcome of this process will be either confirmation of the first marker's judgement without need for a discussion between markers to resolve any differences, or where markers cannot agree, a third marker will be assigned. Third marking will normally be blind (i.e. the third marker will have no knowledge of the first and second marker's results).

5.12 Where a third marker does not agree with either the first or second marker, MLA College will defer moderation to the Vice-Rector (Academic) for the final outcome.

5.13 All first, second (and third, where relevant) marking should be evidenced on a moderation proforma (see Appendix 5).

6. Subject External Examiner

6.1 **Role -** External Examiners (EEs) are assigned to a specific set of modules and/or programmes, which is agreed on appointment. https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/students-and-family/governance/central-quality-office/external-examinersEEs comment on assessment processes, and on the standard, content and development of the modules within the subject. They are members of the Subject Assessment Panel which confirms or modifies module marks and ensures that the students are assessed in accordance with the assessment programme and the intended learning outcomes for the subject modules.

6.2 The EE has the right to see all elements and forms of subject assessment, including examination scripts, coursework, project reports, design work and dissertations for the areas for which they are responsible. External Examiners should not double mark or moderate individual students' work. If an EE believes that standards of marking overall, or within a particular classification, are inappropriate, they may propose that all marks in that category be revised following a review of an appropriate sample of students' work.

6.3 **Scrutiny of assessed work -** To satisfy MLA College and our validating partner requirements for external comment on assessment processes and the standard, content and development of modules, assessed work from all modules will be available for EEs to consider each term/year.

7. Academic Offences

7.1 MLA College Academic Offences policy ensures that the requirements of MLA College and its validating partner academic regulations, University Of Plymouth Academic Regulations and Procedures for Assessment Offences and Research Misconduct are adhered to.

Appendix 1: MLA College Processes for Assessment, Marking & Moderation

1 Setting Assessments

The following table should be used to schedule the timeline for Assessment Committee approval, External Examiner scrutiny, and Production Team deadlines for the completion of information on the Total Learning Platform (TLP) / Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) before each academic year:

Delivery Model	Deadline for Assignment Briefs	Approval (Assessment Committee / Delegated authority to HAO	External Examiner	Production Team Deadline	Comments
Distance Learning	6 weeks prior to start of AY first intake (e.g., Mid July for early Sept starts)	Vice-Rector (Academic) by end of July	Early August	3rd week in August	A sample of indicative assignment briefs and referral briefs for all intakes
Blended Learning	6 weeks prior to start of AY first intake (e.g., Mid July for early Sept starts)	Vice-Rector (Academic) by end of July	Early August	3rd week in August	Assignment Briefs and Referral Briefs
Campus based provision	6 weeks prior to start of AY first intake (e.g., November for overseas provision)	Assessment Committee – additional meeting for assessment approvals	Pre Xmas break or early January	N/A	Assignment Briefs/Exam Scripts and Referral Briefs/Re-sit Briefs

Programme Managers will ensure that:

- assessment approval forms (Appendix 4) are completed by External Examiners at the beginning of an academic year;
- approval of assessments takes place via the Assessments Committee or person with delegated authority;
- external Examiners receive sample summative assessments, by programme area, prior to the start of each academic year.
- approval of re-use of summative assessments takes place via the Assessments Committee or person with delegated authority.

2 Marking

- Marking is carried out by nominated academic.

- The marking period will be three weeks from submission deadline, with week four designated for moderation.

- All marking and moderation should be completed by the 28-day deadline.

- Tutors will transfer all marks to a Marks and Moderation (MM) database for use by MLA College Administration for University Subject Assessment Panel and Award Assessment Board.

- All first, second (and third, where relevant) marking should be evidenced on a moderation proforma (see Appendix 5).

- Where appropriate to a programme delivery model, anonymous marking may be applied.

3 Internal Moderation Checklist

- The sample size for internal moderation will be agreed with the Programme Manager.

- Academics will complete a moderation proforma for each module (see Appendix 5). The proforma should contain a summary of all moderation conversations of that module, and justification for any amendments to marks. The final proforma should be sent to MLA College Programme Services by the Programme Manager on completion.

- MLA College Programme Services will compile moderation data from the submitted proformas and update the MM database with any revised marks.

- Academics will identify a sample of coursework for External Examiner scrutiny and record this on the MM database.

- The Student Experience Team will add any additional details (e.g., extenuating circumstances (ECs), interruptions). MLA College Programme Services will use the subsequent MM list for University SAP/AAB, alongside up-to-date referral/repeat guidance.

4 Internal Moderation Process Guidance

In undertaking the process moderators should ask three broad questions:

1. Are the marks awarded justified by comments made on the assessment?
2. Has there been use of the full mark range?
3. Is there broad agreement that the marks awarded are justifiable?

The moderator may recommend:

- confirmation of all marks;
- raising or lowering of all marks;
- moving a boundary (e.g., put all high 2:2s into the 2:1 classification);
- making an adjustment to a particular class of marks (e.g., raise all First-class marks, lower all Third-class marks).

Where there are discrepancies evident in the case of multiple markers, adjustment to all marks awarded by a marker is permissible.

4.1 Agreeing marks

The moderator will often share the same view on the work they have seen and agree the marks should stand without adjustment. On occasions, some discussion is required, and marks should be agreed based on a negotiated outcome. In the rare cases where agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be brought to the attention of the relevant Programme Manager, who may decide on further action such as additional moderation or marking.

4.2 Recording the process and outcome

A moderation proforma should be completed for each component of assessment to ensure the consistent recording of the process (see Appendix 5).

Moderators should not make comments on individual pieces of assessment, but overall comments on the sample, the marking, and any recommended changes. All changes recommended should be recorded.

These records should be included as part of the sample compiled for Subject External Examiner scrutiny before an Award Assessment Board so that there is clear information on the marks awarded and the moderation process operated in order to be able to confirm the maintenance of academic standards.

5 Subject External Examiner

MLA College Programme Services collate and disseminate EE sample in collaboration with Programme Managers. Sample to include all moderation proformas for the term, and assessment approval forms from the beginning of the AY.

6 Academic Offences

Academic Offences are generally identified, for formal assessment purposes, following marking. The following process will apply:

1. Once marking and moderation processes have been completed, any Academic Offences must be considered by the Programme Manager/Module Leader.

2. Academic Offences should be noted on the relevant Marks spreadsheet and communicated to the Head of Programme Services at the end of the marking and moderation period.

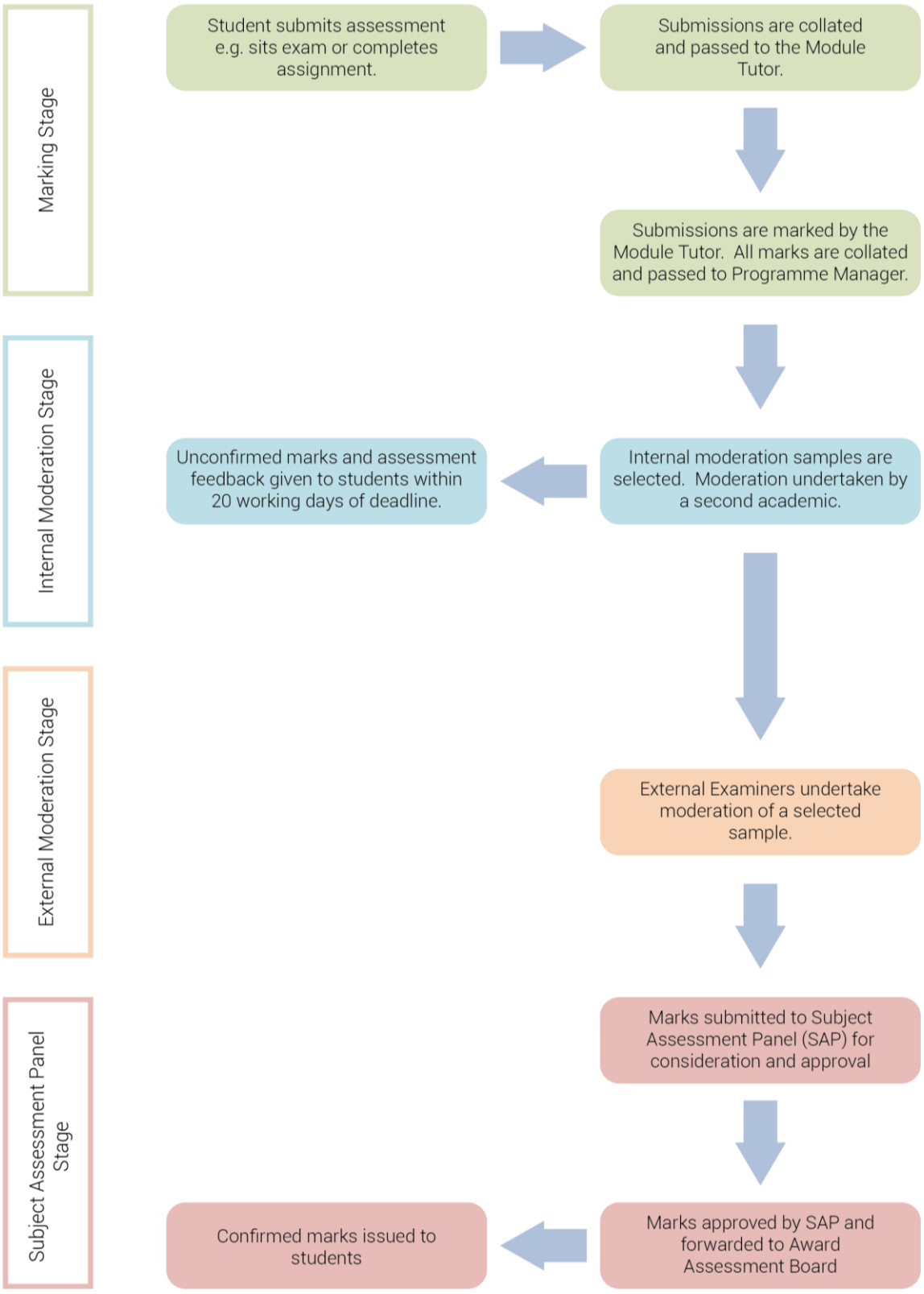
3. If the Academic Offence needs to be escalated to the validation partner of MLA College, the relevant pro forma must be completed, along with supporting evidence (Turnitin reports in isolation are not considered sufficient evidence to support the reporting of an Academic Offence) within 2 weeks from the end of the marking and moderation period. – an example of the form for students studying on University of Plymouth validated programmes can be found in Appendix 6.

4. All Academic Offences should be submitted, with supporting evidence to the Head of Programme Services for uploading to the validating partner's Sharepoint.

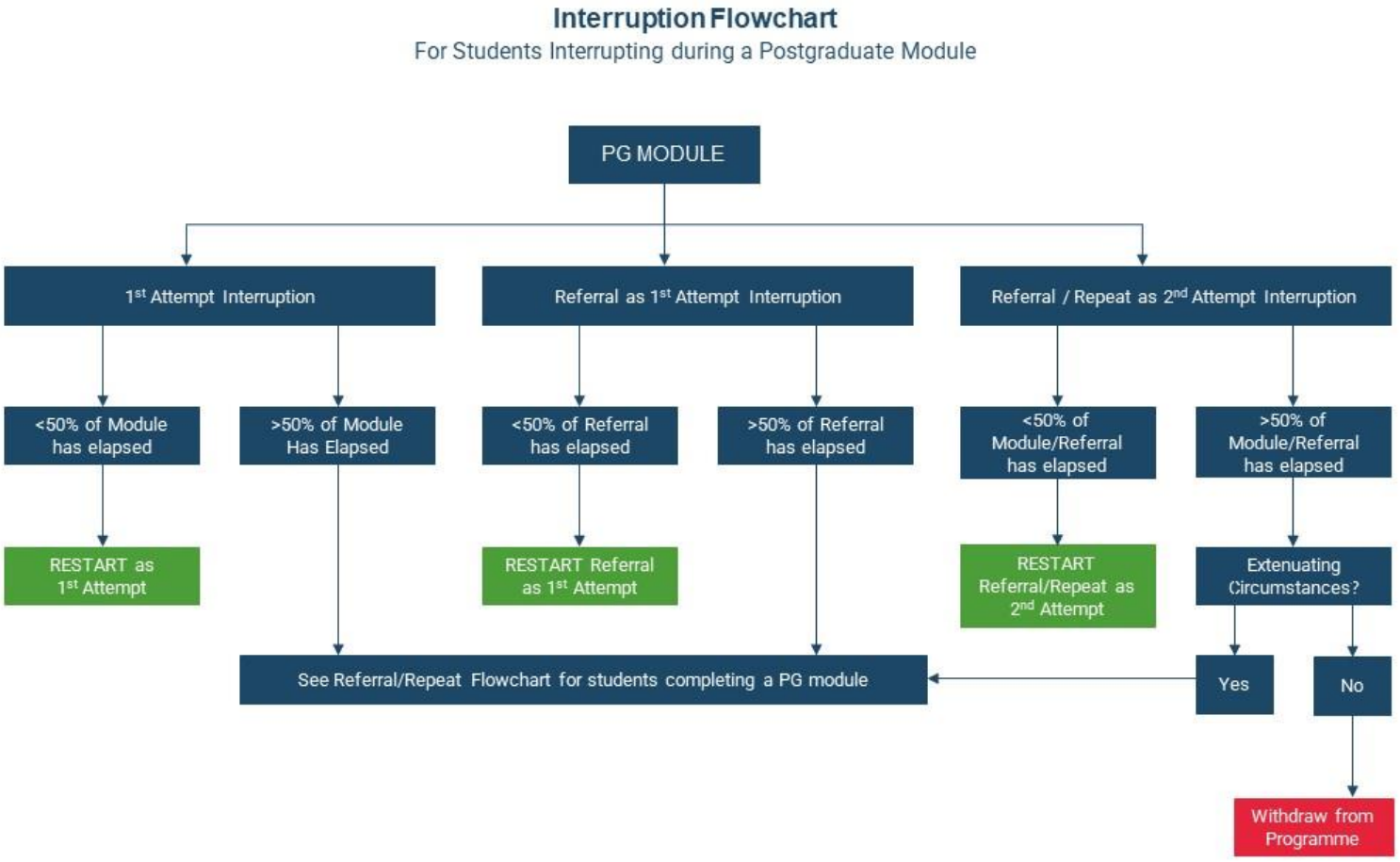
5. Where an academic offence is notified to a validating partner, for example the University of Plymouth, the student will be notified of the process and what happens next by them.

Appendix 2: Flow chart of marking and moderations process

Indicative Programme Assessment Schedule, Assessment Flowchart and Hand in Process

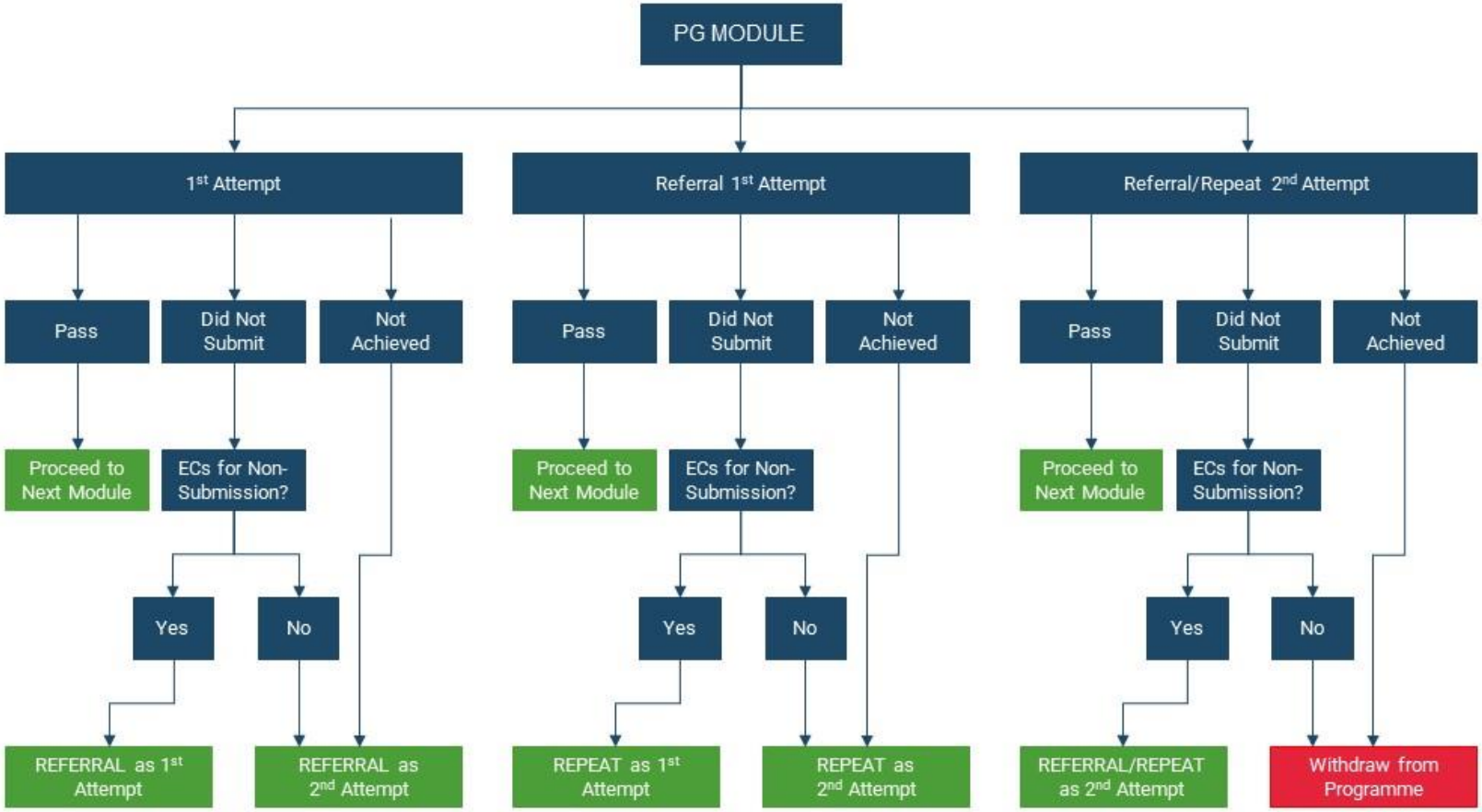


Appendix 3: Referral/Repeat Guidance Flow Chart (as applicable to our validation partnership with the Open University)



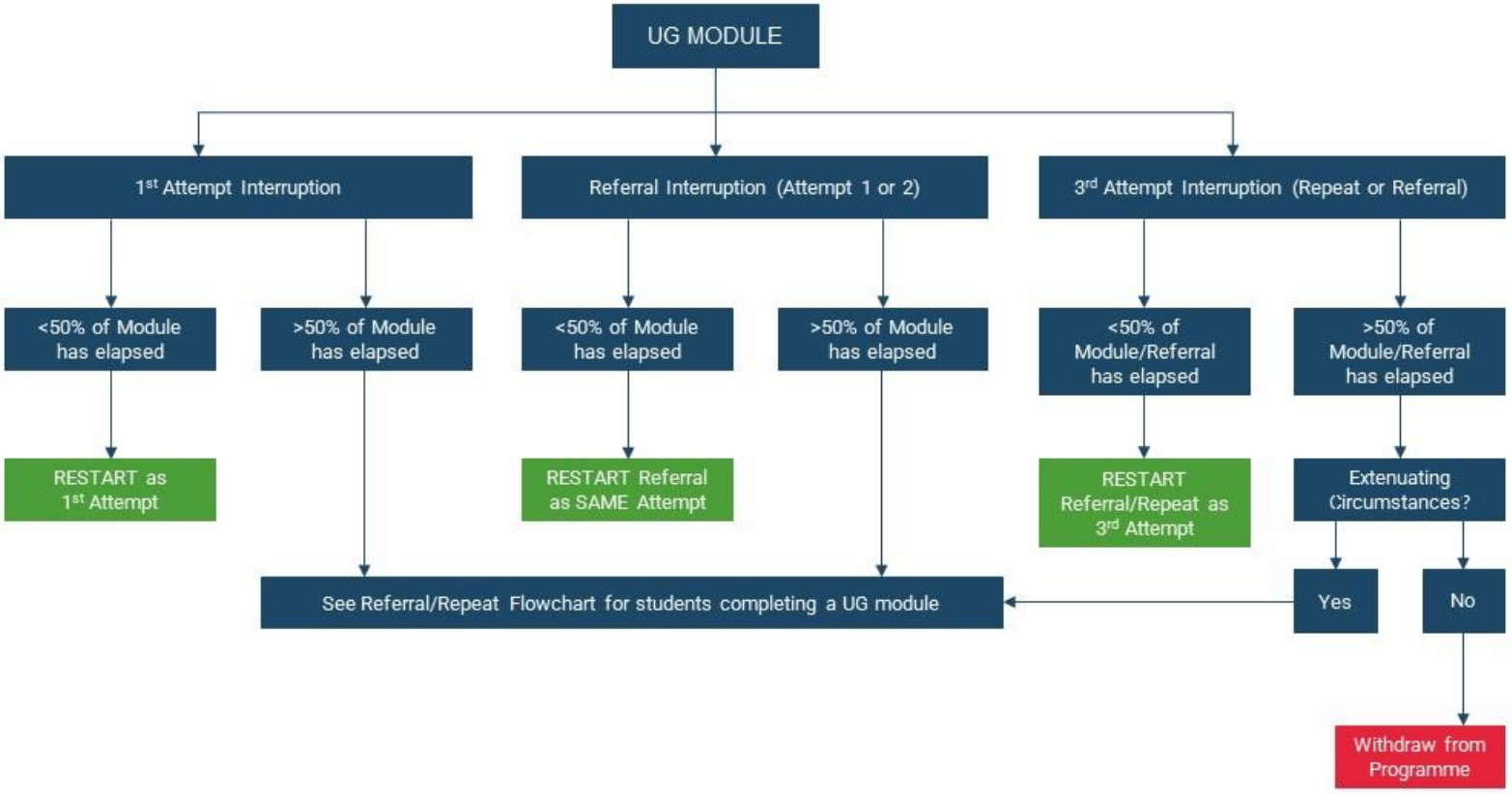
Referral/Repeat Flowchart

For Students Completing a Postgraduate Module



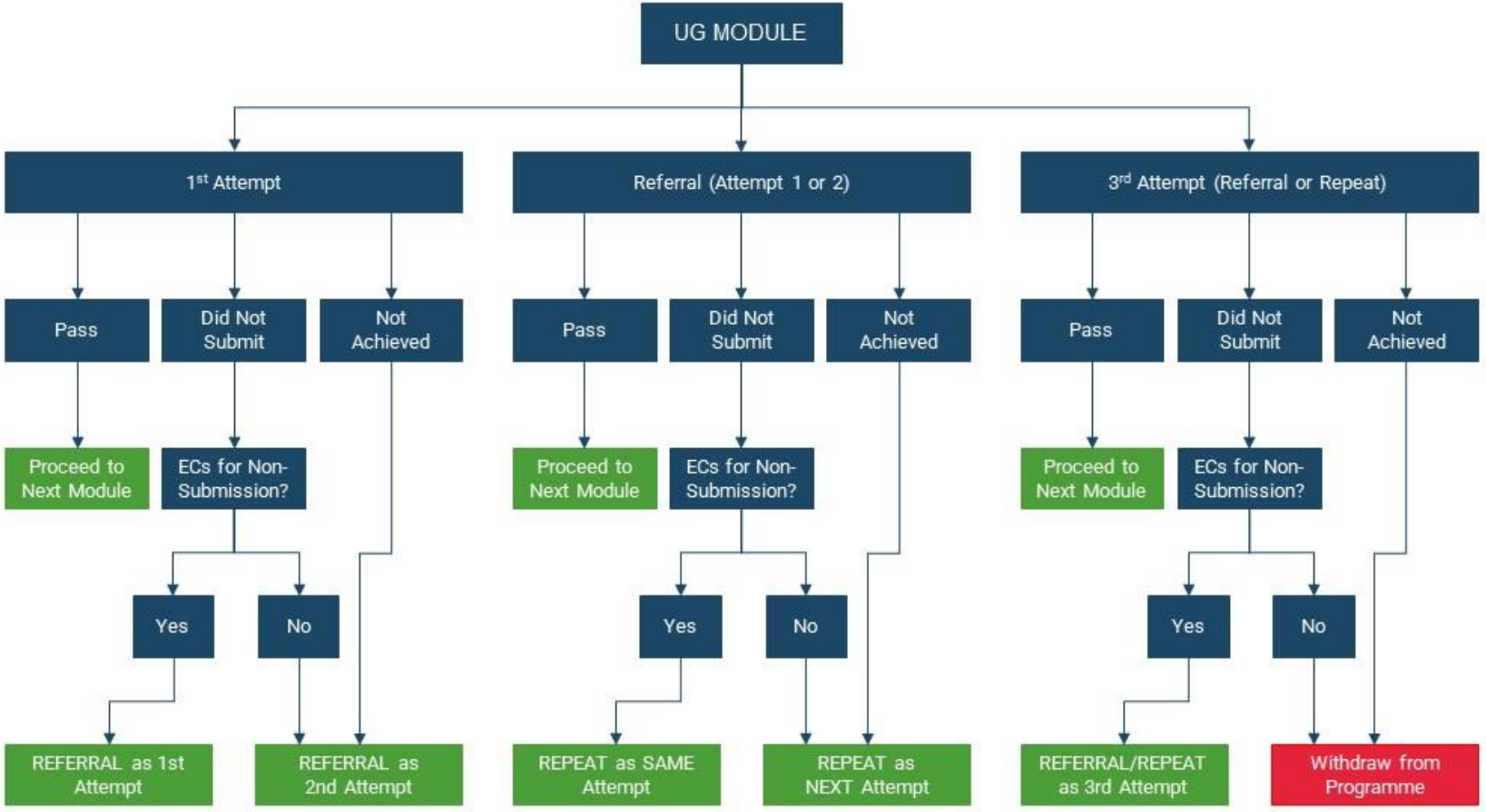
Interruption Flowchart

For Students Interrupting during an Undergraduate Module



Referral/Repeat Flowchart

For Students Completing an Undergraduate Module



Appendix 4: Assessment Committee approval form

Name of reviewer(s):	**Date:**
Module Code:	
Programme Leader:	**Type of assessment:**
Year of study:	**Programmes to which the module contributes:**

Checklist		
Are the module code, title and assessment weighting(s) accurate?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Is the assessment appropriate for the module and level?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Does the assessment enable students to meet the learning outcomes?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Are instructions for students complete and accurate?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Are there any typos or grammatical inaccuracies requiring correction?	Yes	No
Comments:		
Is the task accompanied by: • clear instructions about the task/brief • confirmation of the learning outcomes to be assessed • assessment criteria and associated marking scheme • outline solution • details of tutorial and/or other support	Yes	No
Comments:		
Where relevant, is the assessment on the appropriate template?	Yes	No
Comments:		
If an examination paper, are any questions the same as on any examination paper in the previous two years (unless an unused referral paper)?	Yes	No
Comments:		
If a coursework task, is this the same as any other task set for this module in the previous two years (unless an unused referral task)?		
Comments:		
External Examiner approval (to be noted by the Assessment Committee/delegated nominee) **Y/N**		

Appendix 5: Moderation of student work

This document provides evidence that internal moderation has taken place in line with the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B7: External Examining and ensures alignment with the validating institution's academic regulations for assessment. The moderation of student work ensures: the use of agreed marking criteria; comparability and equity of standards; consistency and fairness of marking.

Module title		Full module code		
Level & Credit		Total number of tasks		
Programme Manager		Internal moderator		
	Assessment component: give assessment title and KIS category e.g. Coursework Practical Test	Weighting %	Moderation completed (yes or no)	Is external moderation required? (yes or no)
1				
2				
Internal moderator's comments				
Appropriate assessment criteria and marking rubric have been used				
The student work has been marked consistently				
The marks awarded are appropriate for the task and level				
The sample size is appropriate				
The nature and level of feedback to students is appropriate				
Additional comments (addressing sample size; process; levels awarded; feedback given to students; student achievement; any inconsistencies):				
Date:				
Programme Manager's response to moderator's comments and any actions taken:				
External Examiner's comments relating to the moderation process (if applicable):				
I can confirm I have seen a representative sample of the assessed work and agreed upon the marker and moderators' comments, and actions taken. (External examiner's name) ……			Date:	

Appendix 6: Academic Offence Proforma

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Academic Registry Academic Offence Partner Proforma

<table>
<tr><td>Student UoP ID Number</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Student Name</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Module Code</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Module Title</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Module Credit Value</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>FHEQ Level 3/4/5/6/7</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Name of the assignment in question</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Detail of assignment weightings (eg: module is assessed by 50% coursework, 50% exam, assignment in question is worth 60% of coursework element)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Confirm Type of allegation</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Alleged offence (tick each that applies)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Plagiarism</td><td></td><td>Fabrication</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Collusion</td><td></td><td>False declaration(s)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Contract cheating</td><td></td><td>Persuading others</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Self-plagiarism</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Other (describe):</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Written statement for the grounds for the allegation (including any specific guidance / instructions given to the student for practical / in class test assessments)</td><td>Main Handbook
Handbook on the use of ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) in assessment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Information given to students about academic offences and referencing (please reference the source and copy and paste text from source so that clear what students were provided with)</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Please complete this **in full** and upload to SharePoint as part of the evidence base to support an allegation of an Academic Offence, along with:

- a marked up copy of the student's work and a copy of all original source (s) from which the work is allegedly derived.

- In cases where there are multiple sources all identified sources must be provided. Only copies of original sources can be taken forward to the Academic Offence panel for consideration.

- In the case of collusion, copies of the work of all students involved in the allegation must be provided with the sections which appear to have been worked on together clearly marked up on each. When sharing this with each student as part of the evidence supplied with the initial letter, please ensure the work is appropriately anonymised.

Further information including full definitions on Academic Offences can be found here:

- https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/15/15710/Academic_Regulations_Section_D_-_Assessment_2022-23-Oct.pdf

Non-Regional and International Partner Process for Academic and Examination Offences

- https://liveplymouthac.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/u5/General%20documents/Non-Regional%20and%20International%20Partner%20Process%20for%20AOs%202022-23.docx?d=wc9e02b701afa446ea6518a50a73505af&csf=1&web=1

Regional Partner Process for Academic and Examination Offences

- https://liveplymouthac.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/u5/General%20documents/Regional%20Partner%20Process%20for%20AOs%202022-23.docx?d=w5bb22db1b01247a1be69e0d2362f5192&csf=1&web=1

For further guidance, please contact approgrames@plymouth.ac.uk