Anonymous Marking Policy

Anonymous Marking Policy: Introduction
The University is committed to implementing an Anonymous Marking Policy following a campaign by the Union of Students, which sought student and staff opinion of anonymous marking between August and December 2018. Academic Board received and approved the Anonymous Marking paper submitted by the Union of Students and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) at Academic Board in December 2018. This policy recognises the importance of a commitment to all students to deliver marking that is as fair and transparent as possible, and that anonymous marking is an important component of delivering this commitment. It also recognises that anonymous marking is a method employed to eliminate bias on the part of those marking assessed work, and works to protect them from accusations of bias and discrimination.

The University of Derby approach to Anonymous Marking must be implemented in line with the requirements of the Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2017-2020, and the Personal Academic Tutoring policy 2017-2020.

Additional contextual information is provided in a separate document: Anonymous Marking Policy and Electronic Marking Policy 2019: Context and Principles. In this the University of Derby approach to Anonymous Marking is defined:

‘Anonymity’ is the use of an identifier, which cannot be related to the student’s name without reference to central student records or other mechanism, in the assessment process. The Union of Students has defined this in its paper to Academic Board as follows: “all summative assessment where practicable should be marked via student number, not student name.”
University of Derby Anonymous Marking Policy 2019-2022

1. From September 2019 all assignments (including written examinations) submitted by undergraduate and taught Masters’ students for assessments that have a summative component must identify the candidate by the student’s registration number and not by name. Assessments with a summative component are those that count towards decisions regarding progression, including those involved with study abroad and other placement activities, or the conferment of an award (including classification where relevant).

2. In some circumstances the first marker may be able to identify the student who has submitted the work being assessed. However, the use of student numbers enables anonymity to extend to second marking and internal moderation processes, and must therefore still be applied.

3. In cases of late submission students must still submit assignments using their student number.

4. Exceptions will only occur based on a need to identify the student. These are any assignments where identification of the student is required, e.g. by PSRBs, or ethical approval applications, or assessment activities in real time. Students must be made fully aware that they need to submit with their name in these cases.

5. Work which is entirely formative need not be anonymised but can be if it is desirable, e.g. it enables anonymity of the summative submission.

6. Student names will be released only after completion of internal moderation, prior to the post-date. All members of staff must respect anonymity where it is employed and must not seek to identify any students prior to this point.

7. It is the responsibility of students to respect and enable anonymity in the assessment process where anonymous marking applies, and to actively engage in the preservation of the anonymity mechanisms provided to them.

8. Where possible all summative assignments must be submitted electronically through Turnitin, Blackboard or Pebblepad, which must be set up to enable anonymised marking to take place. This is the responsibility of the Module Leader (except in UDOL where this is managed centrally).

9. Confirmation of grades must be input into Gradebook by name rather than number to ensure accuracy of transfer of information.

10. Programme Committees are required to discuss and minute feedback on the implementation of Anonymous Marking and the student experience of this within their programme twice per year, at the first and final meeting, as a minimum.

11. Teaching and assessment strategies should not be changed solely because of the introduction of anonymous marking.

12. The introduction of anonymous marking does not require markers to return to a piece of work to provide additional feedback once the students’ identities are revealed.
13. In cases of suspected academic offence, de-anonymisation may take place earlier than at the point of internal moderation. Investigation of an academic offence must proceed as indicated in Academic Regulations: Part J Academic Offences without revealing the student’s identity until absolutely necessary.

14. When student names are revealed all work must be checked for academic offences that were not identifiable under the anonymous marking process (e.g. suspected use of essay mills). As in point 13 above, action must proceed according to Academic Regulations: Part J Academic Offences where any academic offence is now indicated.

Electronic marking (E-marking) policy

E-Marking Policy: Introduction

This policy must be implemented in conjunction with the Anonymous Marking Policy 2019-2022, and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2017-2020. Electronic submission and marking is a sector norm for documentary assignments, and using e-submission platforms enables a range of feedback methods to be employed. E-submission enables students to work at times and places that may be outside of the university working environment and means they do not have to travel to the university specifically to submit work. E-marking further ensures that students and staff are clear about date and time of submission, and of the return of work and feedback within expected deadlines to support student progress.

E-marking policy 2019-2022

1. E-marking refers to the methods whereby students’ work is digitally submitted, commented on or annotated. The policy applies to all credit-bearing assignments (summative assessments) where practicable, on all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from September 2019.

2. All coursework must be submitted electronically unless the file format or the design of the assessment task does not permit submission through an electronic system.

3. Examinations may be submitted electronically but this is not a requirement. In line with the Assessment and Feedback Strategy (section 5.3), feedback on examinations must be provided as with all other summatively-assessed work. This must be given electronically where exams have been submitted electronically, as with other e-marking practices.

4. It is expected that Independent Studies, dissertations and projects are submitted electronically unless the format does not permit this or where a hard copy is requested.

5. Where submissions are mixed in format, any component that can be submitted electronically must be.

6. Students must be provided with guidance on the process of electronic submission and marking in programme and module handbooks, including guidance on processes in the event of technical difficulty.

7. Module and course materials must inform students which assignments (or components of) are to be submitted electronically, and which are not.
8. Module materials must inform students of the format of submission, i.e. file formats and number of documents to submit.

9. All assignments submitted electronically must be identified by student number in line with the Anonymous Marking Policy. This must be enabled by the Module Leader (or centrally for UDOL). Students must submit their student number within the assignment document and in the Submission title field in Turnitin to enable support to be provided if required.

10. It is the student’s responsibility to submit their work on time to the correct e-submission point. In the event of technical difficulty, they must accurately follow the guidelines in the module handbook to ensure the submission is received without penalty.

11. All feedback should, where possible, be provided electronically. This is the case even where the work has not been submitted electronically. Feedback must consist of a highlighted rubric and additional feedback. The feedback format (written, video etc.) is the decision of the programme and module team.

12. The provisional grade and feedback must be returned to the student within 15 working days of the submission deadline in line with University expectations, following any second-marking and internal moderation¹. Where a 15 working day return is not possible, such as in the assessment of final year extended projects, independent studies and dissertations, this must be stated clearly in the module handbook with the date of return.

13. Where the work is submitted late the grade and feedback must be returned within fifteen working days of submission (or the number of days indicated in the module handbook).

14. Deadlines for electronic submission of assignments must be set to 23:59 local time on the date of submission. It is recognised that UDOL may make particular deadline times to support international students in different time locations. Assignment deadlines must not be set on dates where the University is closed.

15. Post-date deadlines for assessments submitted and marked electronically must fall on University working days and between the hours of 0900 and 1600 to ensure students have opportunities to access relevant support should they need it. Feedback must not be released outside of these hours on weekdays, during weekends, out of semester dates, or on dates when the university is closed.

¹ In the 2019-20 Academic Calendar some examinations will have a shorter marking period of a maximum of 10 working days.
Appendix 1: Anonymous Marking Policy 2019: Context and Principles

The University of Derby approach to Anonymous Marking

The Derby Union of Students context

The literature review submitted in support of the Union of Students’ and CELT paper on Anonymous Marking is comprehensive, and the perspective taken on this literature is appropriately engaged and critical. The literature will therefore not be explored again here. In summary, the Union of Students paper indicates that evidence about the actual impact of anonymity on student outcomes and fairness is conflicting; there is a little evidence that grades of some groups of students may be positively impacted by anonymous marking, but also evidence that there may be no impact on grades. It is important to recognise that the Union of Students is not requesting Anonymous Marking in order to effect changes to grades awarded, but to ensure that students have complete confidence in the application of grades to their work. The paper also recognises the potential for anonymous marking to depersonalise the assessment process, recognition of which is a critical issue in the development of this policy. Recent research by Pitt & Winstone (2018) indicates that while anonymous marking is not seen to have any positive or negative impact on the grades students receive, or lead to any differential in marking outcomes as compared with non-anonymous marking, it can negatively impact upon student relationships with their lecturers, and significantly, on their engagement with the feedback they have been given. The university is committed to enabling a highly personalised journey through any programme and recognises that this is vital for effective student progress, but appreciates that there are a number of ways in which anonymous marking can enable feedback that is objective and can contribute effectively to a holistic approach to assessment when used as part of a dialogic process in conjunction with formative and non-anonymous feedback. Anonymous feedback can require more work from the student to engage with, i.e. ‘proactive recipience’ (Winston et. al 2017) which is more effective than feedback that is received passively, as long as this engagement is facilitated, such as in Personal Academic Tutorials, which will be operating across all programmes from September 2019. There should be no detriment to the student feedback experience, even though it may be different under Anonymous Marking for some assessments.

The Union of Students paper indicates clearly that students do not collectively perceive bias in the marking of summative work. Rather, they seek to eliminate any opportunity for bias so that they are able to be fully confident that graded work has been marked purely on its merit. Students are also aware that anonymous marking can only be implemented where practicable, and that the nature of some assessments do not enable an anonymous marking approach.

The paper also indicates that anonymous marking should be implemented at all stages in the assessment process, not just at the point of the first marker. This is an important principle and will be critical in ensuring that student confidence is supported where a summative assessment cannot be marked anonymously at first marker point, but can retain anonymity at the point of any second marking, and at internal moderation. Therefore it is not possible to implement a system whereby summative work is graded anonymously but receives feedback based on knowledge of the student after the grade has been decided. This would compromise the anonymity within the further processes of assessment at which anonymity must also be preserved.
The University of Derby context

The University of Derby’s Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2017-2020 indicates expectation of outstanding practice across the university in assessment and feedback. Such practice is critical to ensure that students’ learning experiences and degree outcomes are the best they can be. The university positions itself deliberately as an ‘applied university’, thereby indicating that the student experience at all levels is focused on learning for application to real-world contexts. Assessment practices should therefore be authentic, research-informed, dialogic, and personalised to enable students to engage effectively and meaningfully with their learning experiences.

This approach to assessment means that in practice staff are frequently engaged with individual students in the development of their work for assessment. This is in line with workplace, industry and disciplinary environments, simulating and enabling authentic, discipline-specific and often innovative learning and assessment experiences. In this way, assessment practices at the University of Derby can be regarded as a continuous cycle of assessment and feedback for progression from the beginning of the student journey to the very end. This is enabled in particular through Personal Academic Tutorials, which are regular opportunities for dialogue about the individual student learning journey across their programme of choice and supporting each student through a personalised learning journey. Such an approach is at the heart of the learning and teaching experience at the University of Derby, and ensures that students are given supported opportunities to engage with their feedback and to take actions in relation to that feedback so as to support ongoing progress.

It is however necessary to make the distinction between work that is graded and work that is not (i.e. the difference between formative and summative assessment) so that students are fully aware of when a grade is being awarded for a piece of work, i.e. the point at which work is submitted for summative assessment. Summative assessment should be used both for assessment of learning (summative purposes – awarding a grade that counts towards the final degree outcome) and assessment for learning (feeding forward into future work whether at the university or beyond). Summative assessment may be the outcome of work that has already had tutor input and feedback during the development process. It must however be recognised that at a given point, this work is submitted for grading. This is the work that will, where practicable, be assessed according to the principles of anonymous marking outlined in the policy below.

It should be emphasised that anonymous marking as a principle should not compromise the nature of assessment practices in any discipline.

This policy therefore seeks to:

• Implement anonymous marking as requested by the Union of Students on behalf of the University of Derby student population;
• Enable anonymous assessment as an integral element of an ongoing cycle of assessment and feedback
Key Principles

i. ‘Anonymity’ is the use of an identifier, which cannot be related to the student’s name without reference to central student records or other mechanism, in the assessment process. The Union of Students has defined this in its paper to Academic Board as follows: “all summative assessment where practicable should be marked via student number, not student name.” (Wilson, 2018: 2).

ii. Anonymous marking is a process that extends beyond the first marking of a piece of work. Bias and unconscious bias can operate at every stage in the assessment process, so it is therefore imperative that anonymity is preserved until internal moderation is complete. This is not to dismiss the value of personalised feedback, which is very important for students, enabling them to see and understand their progress in relation to previous feedback, and to use it to feedforward. This should be enabled through Personal Academic Tutorials, in line with the dialogic approach to enabling students to engage with their feedback articulated in the Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2017-2020. It can also be enabled through making space for students to engage actively with their feedback as part of formal teaching and learning sessions.

iii. Definitions of formative and summative assessment. The Union of Students paper indicates that it expects anonymity to apply to all summative assessments where practicable. It is therefore critical to be clear about which assessments this concerns. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on Assessment (2018) defines formative and summative assessment as follows (page 1):

**Formative assessment:** Assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.

**Summative assessment:** Used to indicate the extent of a learner’s success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award.

While this distinction may appear to detract from an approach that is rooted in a cycle of continuous feedback and development, it is critical that students are fully aware of the implications for them and their degree outcomes of work that is summatively assessed. Formative assessment is recognised as the lynchpin on which effective summative assessment rests.

While summative feedback can and should be used to feedforward, any summative assessment work must be assessed as a conclusive judgment of the quality of the piece of work submitted. Factors extraneous to the assessment such as personal circumstances or participation in class must not be subjectively transposed onto an assessment of the quality of the work a student has submitted. Positive bias is as damaging to academic integrity as negative bias. For this reason, anonymity must be preserved through the entire process of assessment where it is deployed.
Ipsative assessment, which is a measurement of progress against a person’s own prior performance rather than against someone else’s or a normative scale, is the responsibility of the student. This is facilitated in Personal Academic Tutorials and through the Peer-Assisted Learning scheme.

iv. Exceptions to the policy
   a. Exceptions will only occur due to the requirements of PSRBs and other external bodies. These exceptions will occur when the student must, for the purposes of the assessment towards professional standards or accreditation, be identified.

While it is recognised that there may be times where the first marker knows the identity of the students in relation to their assessed work, the work should still be submitted by student number. In the case of linked assignments, where possible students should be required to upload the earlier pieces and the feedback and grade given, along with the new piece, as part of the later submission.

References

