

GUIDELINES FOR SUBJECT MODERATORS 2016-17

Overview

The external scrutiny of Access programmes at curriculum level is a requirement of all QAA-licensed Access Validating Agencies and forms part of Gateway Qualifications' Access Quality Assurance requirements, with which all Access providers must comply.

Gateway Qualifications has continued to streamline and improve the scope of feedback from the Subject Moderation process, seeking to develop a more responsive and developmental approach to quality assurance within centres.

These guidelines are designed to help you carry out your duties in your role as a Subject Moderator this year, for electronic, postal and on-site sampling. The guidance covers contacting Centres, requesting information, selection of a sample, reporting on a sample and providing feedback on the subject moderation process.

The recommendation of moderation format: electronic unit assessment review, postal and/or on-site moderation

Centre Moderators make the recommendation for the choice of subject specific units to be sampled in subject moderation, and the method by which the selected units will be scrutinised. This is done in collaboration with the Centre Coordinator, who provides the assessment schedule to ensure that students have completed the units selected by the time of the subject moderation or to highlight any skills and/or graded academic units which would benefit from an assessment review.

There are a number of factors which influence the selection of an electronic assessment review, and either postal or on-site moderation at an individual centre. The following table provides some guidance for Centre Moderators to help determine how the subject and unit selection should be reviewed.

Postal	On-site	Electronic Assessment review
New subject or unit. Select graded unit where possible	Established subject with continued positive moderation feedback. Vary unit selected where possible	New subject, unit or changed AUI. Ungraded or graded unit
New tutor	Established tutor with continued positive moderation feedback	N/A
IV issues at the centre or for specific subject/s	Robust IV identified within centre over the last two consecutive years	IV issues at the centre or for specific subject/s
Specific query regarding grading model or grade distribution identified in previous moderation reports	Logistical selection eg Art & Design moderation where work cannot be sent for postal moderation	Specific query regarding grading model or grade distribution identified in previous moderation reports. Check GD match to performance of tasks set
Tracking reveals high incidence of referred work in one or more subjects	Graded units which are completed and marked between 16 February and 20 March 2015	Tracking reveals high incidence of referred work in unit. Check validity and clarity of tasks set.
Introductory units- some of these may be ungraded		Introductory units- some of these may be ungraded. Check that these prepare students as required
Centre request for independent judgement	n/a	Centre request for independent judgement

Sample selection for subject moderation

The Centre Moderator identifies which subjects should be selected for moderation, based on the subject list provided in the 'Guidelines for External Moderation'¹. Specific samples will be identified for selection using the following:

- The centre's assessment schedule to ensure a balanced and complete sample of graded units may be moderated where possible, and assessments may be reviewed from identified units where work will not yet be available
- Feedback from previous centre/subject moderation reports, which may identify issues to be reviewed
- Identification of new units, subjects and tutors within the Access to HE course
- Any specific requests made by the centre coordinator to review a unit to support development of the curriculum and/or staff development
- A rotation of units moderated wherever possible to ensure that unit remains without moderation or an assessment review within the normal term of the centre moderator's connection with that centre.

¹ Guidelines for External Moderation V5 August 2016

Samples selected for postal moderation enable subject moderators to spend time reviewing the unit content, assessment methods and judgements made. It is particularly important that samples are sent for postal moderation in units where there have been specific concerns raised in previous moderation reports.

On-site moderation should be selected for samples which cannot be sent digitally or via postal means, such as Art and Design coursework. It may be appropriate to select on-site moderation in the following circumstances:

- The centre has a significant number of subjects within similar disciplines which have all been subject to previous positive subject moderation feedback.
- The on-site moderation would cover all of the moderation requirements (small centre) or require no more than two subject specialists (larger centre) where the remainder of the samples are to be sent for postal moderation
- Postal moderation deadlines would not permit sufficient time for graded units to be reviewed. On-site moderation may be used to review graded units which may be marked and available for moderation in March.
- There is a justified benefit to be gained by the centre in meeting subject specialist moderators at an on-site moderation.

Unit Assessment Reviews should be requested for units which routinely fall outside the standard subject moderation period. Graded units which are delivered after March for September cohorts may not be sampled until Final Moderation, so it supports development at the centre to request a small, varying range each year from these units for assessment review. Skills units were all reviewed in 2016, so these should be sampled in rotation from 2017 onwards, with reviews of units where there have been changes to AUIs or changes to the unit used.

ACCESS SUBJECT MODERATION: ON-SITE PROCESS

CONTACTING CENTRES

If the Centre Moderator has recommended an on-site visit, Gateway Qualifications will provide you with the following information:

- The name of the Centre and course titles
- The specific sample details (units to be moderated)
- The contact details for the Access Coordinator
- The contact details of the Quality Manager at the Centre
- Reports from the Centre/Subject Moderators covering the previous academic year (where you do not already have these).

The next step is to contact the Access Coordinator to arrange a visit date. You could prepare ahead and request the background information to be sent to you in advance of your visit:

- A full list of all learners for all relevant Access courses using specified units, including tracking sheets to show the summary of results and grades achieved for all learners thus far (this could be the RAC provided by the AVA or other tracking document). You can select your sample from this list.

- The internal verification policy and process used for Access to Higher Education Diplomas.
- The internal verification sampling strategy completed for the cycle to show the rationale used for sampling.
- The internal verification sampling plan for the cycle showing the learners whose work has been sampled or is due to be sampled. If none of the students in your selected sample have had work IV'd, you should contact the centre to request a small number of additional samples from the IV list.
- The assessment schedule (to show which units will be completed by which dates).
- The results of internal standardisation of judgements and process i.e. meeting minutes and actions.
- A copy of the unit/s and AUI which are to be sampled
- Copies of the assessments which cover the units to be sampled

THE SAMPLE SELECTION

The purpose of on-site sampling is to check that curriculum content is covered and that academic standards are maintained; this places the focus onto the effectiveness of assessment practice, internal verification and standardisation. It is neither possible nor considered necessary to moderate every learner's work, especially as the Centre Moderator has selected subjects and units which meet the criteria as appropriate for on-site moderation (see P3).

Your judgement is achieved via sampling from the units which have been assessed and in many instances, internally verified. The IV sampling plan should be consulted to ascertain which of the samples has been, or is planned to be, subject to IV. You should ensure that there is some work available for you to review which has been through the IV process; this may mean that you request a small number of additional samples taken from the IV sampling plan if there are insufficient or no examples of this within the original sample list.

Units carrying significant credit value may also be selected within a sample.

MAKING THE VISIT

You will need to be clear about your choice of learners' work and return the list of learners marked with your selection to the Centre as soon as possible, ideally at least 20 working days before the date of the visit.

At the visit you will scrutinise the sample:

- To ensure that assessment judgements, including those for grading, are appropriate and consistent.
- To ensure that the conduct of assessment and the application of assessment regulations is thorough, rigorous and fair.
- To ensure that methods of assessment are comparable and applied effectively.

- To ensure that the minimum standards required for threshold achievement and performance are consistent with requirements for achievement of the relevant learning outcomes.
- To ensure that consistent standards are applied in assessment, so that equivalent student achievement and performance is reflected in consistent recommendations for credits and grades.
- To ensure that students awarded the Access to HE Diploma have successfully completed the required learning at the required standard, and their performance is reflected in grades awarded.
- To ensure that evidence is valid, authentic, current, sufficient and inclusive.
- To ensure that robust internal verification procedures are in place.

PRESENTATION OF SAMPLES AT THE VISIT:

You need to check that all supporting documentation is in place and ask for any gaps to be made good. Centres will be sent a checklist to help them prepare for an on-site moderation visit.

Supporting Documentation should include:

- The relevant unit specification and additional unit information. It is very useful to ask the centre coordinator to send this to you ahead of your visit.
- The grading assessment plan for the relevant unit(s)
- The assignment briefing sheet. Again, it is useful to ask the centre coordinator to send this to you ahead of your visit.
- The assignment feedback sheet completed by the tutor for each piece of assessed work.
- Students' assessed work.
- Records of internal verification procedures relating to the sample, including IV feedback and any outcomes /actions from the IV process. Where IV has resulted in actions such as reassessment or remarking, this should also be included in the sample.

ADVICE FOR MODERATORS

The Centre should provide you with:

- Samples as requested with supporting documentation as described above
- A suitable room where you can use a laptop where necessary and have internet or phone access should you wish to contact the AVA.
- All samples clearly presented, easy to read and easy to moderate.
- All samples checked and collated prior to your visit.
- Work presented without plastic pockets so that it is easy to access.

Where you feel that arrangements have prevented you from carrying out your duties you

may ask Gateway Qualifications for permission to make an additional visit.

It may be the case with some units that some/all of the learning outcomes are not assessed discretely, but in integrated assessments. In these cases assessed work from a different curriculum area will be accepted, as long as the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the particular unit can be clearly referenced and shown on the assignment briefs.

Samples are needed by Gateway Qualifications for subject standardisation. Where you see examples useful for this purpose please identify them and ask the Centre to send anonymised versions to Gateway Qualifications.

REPORTING: ON SITE SAMPLES

If you have time at the end of the visit, you may wish to summarise your findings and convey these to the Access Coordinator. You're not obliged to stay behind and hold a meeting to feedback to the team, as your report will convey the information to be shared.

You should complete the Subject Moderation Report Form (ASM1) and return it to the AVA within 10 working days of the visit.

After the appropriate checks have been made, reports will be made available to the Access Coordinator and Quality Manager at each Centre as well as the Access Centre Moderator (ACM). Action points and examples of good practice will be noted. The ACM will follow up and track Subject Moderation actions. All moderation reports are scrutinised by the Access Quality Manager and an overarching report is compiled for the AVA.

ACCESS SUBJECT MODERATION: POSTAL PROCESS

OVERVIEW

If the Centre Moderator has recommended samples should be reviewed by postal moderation, Gateway Qualifications will provide you with the following information:

- The name of the Centre/s and course titles from which you will be sent samples. These samples are usually by post but may be sent electronically in some cases.
- The specific sample details (units to be moderated)

Schedule of activity

Postal samples are sent to the AVA by **10th February 2017** by each Access centre required to do so by the Centre Moderator.

Samples are then checked, sorted and sent to the Access Subject Moderators.

Subject Moderators submit a Subject Moderation Report (ASM1) to Gateway Qualifications covering each of the samples sent by **30th March 2017**.

Gateway Qualifications forwards copies of the report to the Access Coordinator and Quality Manager at each Centre as well as the Access Centre Moderator (ACM), and action points noted. The ACM will follow up and track Subject Moderation actions. All Subject Moderation

reports are scrutinised by the Access Quality Manager and an overarching report compiled, together with individual feedback to a sample of Subject Moderators

ADMINISTRATION

Subject Moderators usually receive 'off-site' samples through the post, but occasionally centres may submit electronic samples for moderation. You will be advised if the centre intends to submit an electronic sample. Each individual sample from a centre should be accompanied by a Provider Checklist, which identifies what documentation has been submitted for the Subject Moderator.

If you have not received the sample you were expecting from a centre by 20th February 2017, or if there is incomplete documentation in samples you have received, please contact Gateway Qualifications.

Centres are given the following guidance in the preparation of a postal sample:

- All samples should be clearly presented, easy to read and easy to moderate.
- All samples must be checked and collated prior to sending to the AVA.
- Centres should aim to undertake an internal standardisation meeting to check through the samples to make sure that everything is complete, prior to sending.
- Please do not use plastic wallets as this adds time to the task for the Administrator and Subject Moderators.
- Please send photocopies only. The assignments and feedback sheets must not be originals as they are retained by the AVA. Please ensure that photocopies are legible. *If a centre sends you original documents, please keep these safe and inform Gateway Qualifications immediately.*
- It is important for you to keep your own copy of the samples and documents sent. This will help you when you go through the Subject Moderator's Report and can be used for staff training and development.

RECOMMENDED ORDER FOR EACH SET OF SAMPLES

Each set of samples should follow this order and documents must be referenced to correspond with the Access to HE Subject Moderation Checklist:

A checklist for each set of subject samples must be completed and will function as a contents list for the Subject Moderator. This should provide accurate information about the contents of the sample, with notes for the Moderator if the sample is unusual in any way e.g. if it is smaller or larger than expected, reasons if there are gaps in the sample.

A. A full list of learners including tracking sheets to show the summary of results and grades achieved for all learners in the group (for comparison and to ensure that a representative sample has been selected).

B. The relevant unit specification and additional unit information (AUI).

C. The assignment briefing sheet. Please ensure that this clearly identifies which Access programme, course or pathway the learner is on.

D. Assignment feedback sheet completed by the tutor for each piece of assessed work. Please ensure that this clearly identifies the assessment criteria which have been met, the level achieved, indicative grade, feedback to learners etc.

E. If the assessed work does not cover the whole unit, provide clear information about how the rest of the unit is to be assessed in a Grading Assessment Plan.

The Grading Assessment Plan should specify which Grade Descriptors and which individual Grading Components of the descriptors will be used in each assignment used for the unit.

It should also provide information for the student on the performance expected to gain a Merit or Distinction. This information may be included in the revised assignment brief for the unit or this may be a separate guidance sheet.

For more information please refer to Gateway Qualifications Access to HE Diploma: Guidance on Grading.

F. Students' assessed work.

G. Internal Verification policy document/guidelines policy and procedure for the Access to Higher Education Diploma. Centres only need to provide one copy of this information – the AVA will copy this and send to all Subject Moderators.

H. Records of internal verification procedures relating to the sample, including IV feedback and any outcomes /actions from the IV process. Where IV has resulted in actions such as reassessment or remarking, this should also be included in the sample.

Please note in your report feedback where centres can improve in the administration of the subject moderation sample. For further information on guidance given to centres, please see Gateway Qualifications' Provider Guidelines for Subject Moderation²

ACCESS SUBJECT MODERATION: ELECTRONIC ASSESSMENT REVIEW

OVERVIEW

If the Centre Moderator has recommended a review of assessments from ungraded or graded units, this activity will be undertaken electronically and Gateway Qualifications will provide you with the following information:

- The name of the Centre/s and unit titles from which you will be sent assignments, AUJ and unit details.
- A SA-U or SA-G form (ungraded or graded units). The centre will complete Section A, which gives an overview of how the assessments work to cover the unit's ACs.

² Gateway Qualifications Provider Guidelines for Subject Moderation (Postal) v4 August 2014

Schedule of activity

Centres may send ungraded and/or graded units for assessment review at any point during the year. Normally centres would expect to send selected ungraded unit assessments in September- October, and graded unit assessments from January onwards. The recommended process for centres is that they make the most of the feedback and send their materials in good time so that any updates can be accommodated before handing assignments out to students.

ADMINISTRATION

Centres will be asked to file all electronic materials in a unit folder, so keeping assessments, AUI, unit details and feedback form together.

You will need to complete Section B of the form to comment on the validity, authenticity, currency, reliability and sufficiency of the assignments set. Wherever possible, make constructive comment about how students may be supported to achieve the unit in a less onerous/more varied/less complex manner, and make suggestions where tutors may make assessment easier for themselves and students.

If there is an urgent issue with the assignment, in that it fails to produce evidence to meet the unit's criteria or it would be impossible for some students to achieve because of the nature of the task, you must highlight this as an urgent action to address before the student is given the assignment. You should not highlight recommendations as urgent actions.

Please return the entire completed form for the unit assessment review to Gateway Qualifications (do not cut off Section A). You do not need to return the other electronic materials.

REPORTING ON THE SAMPLING

At the end of the year in the Subject Moderation Standardisation meeting, you will be asked to contribute to the evaluation and review of the subject moderation sampling strategy. Please prepare for this by thinking about what worked and what could be improved in subject moderation.