



This document contains guidance on the completion of the LASER External Moderator's Centre / Diploma Report and the Lead Centre Moderator Report

External Moderation Reporting

Guidance for Practitioners



Ken Duckett 2016-17

External Moderation Reporting: Guidance Notes.

Introduction:

For the academic year 2016-17 centres will receive feedback from External Moderators via two discrete documents. These notes relate to the completion of the **External Moderator's Diploma Report (formerly EMA1)**, which is undertaken at Diploma Level (although a single report may relate to more than one diploma at a centre) and the **Lead Centre Moderator's Report** which is undertaken at centre level. These guidance notes should be read in association with the ***worked example*** reports for 'Mugsborough College' (External Moderation Report) and 'Scumbag College' (Lead Centre Moderator's Report). Commentary in worked examples in relation to initial / interim visits is in **Burgundy / Rust** text and all entries relating to the final visit are noted in **Green** text. Reference is made to reporting reviewed in the following academic year in **Purple** text.

When and how to report (the devil is in the detail):

The introduction of the Lead Centre Moderator's Report has created a situation which, if not effectively managed, could lead to 'over reporting'. Therefore, to avoid undue demand on External Moderators please note the following guidance:

- ***In centres where there are several External Moderators*** completing individual External Moderator's Diploma Reports for the Diploma Titles under their scrutiny, each External Moderator's Diploma Report should be fully completed and passed to the Lead Centre Moderator (both at point of Initial / Interim Visit and Final Moderation). The Lead Centre Moderator will then complete the Lead Centre Moderator's Report as a summary of the individual External Moderation Reports across the scope of the year.
- ***In centres where there is only one External Moderator*** who scrutinizes all diploma titles the External Moderator's Diploma Report should be fully completed including Appendix One relating to scoring. In all instances Section A, Section B and Section E should be completed in terms of the Lead Centre Moderator's Report. Therefore, there is no need to complete any scoring and additional comments or narrative in relation to the centre in Section D and Section C as this would replicate the information presented in terms of the External Moderator's Diploma Report.

1. The External Moderator Diploma Report (formerly EMA 1)

Section One: Recommendations and Conditions:

There are **three** tables to record Recommendations and Conditions across the duration of the academic year.

The initial table looks at Recommendations and Conditions from the previous year and will simply be cut and pasted from the previous External Moderation Report. The EM will then need to assess the extent to which these have been achieved at their initial visit.

The second table records any Recommendations and Conditions set at the Initial Visit (if appropriate). Here a time scale should be set in terms of expected progress alongside who is accountable for working towards completion. The EM will then review progress as a part of their final visit.

The final table will record any Recommendations and Conditions set in relation to matters arising from the final moderation visit. These again should identify a schedule for completion where possible and who will be responsible for this process. This will then form the basis for review at the initial visit in the following academic year.

Please remember that when setting Recommendations that they relate to suggestions in terms of the improvement of practice for a centre. Conditions must be set in terms of any area where a centre

remains non-compliant with the QAA Regulatory Framework. If an area of non-compliance is identified it **must** lead to the setting of a condition. A Recommendation is not appropriate if non-compliance is identified.

*The Worked Example of an External Moderator's Diploma Report notes the information relating to the interim visit in **Burgundy / Rust** text and all entries relating to the final visit are noted in **Green** text. Reference is made to reporting reviewed in the following academic year in **Purple** text. It should be possible to see that the fictitious EM reviews the previous years' recommendations and conditions at the interim visit and also sets new ones. At the final visit they review the recommendations and conditions from the interim visit and also set new ones which will be subject to review at the first visit in the next academic year.*

Section Two: Organisation, Administration and Course Management:

The initial table relates to Recruitment / Achievement. At the initial visit the EM should record the numbers of students recruited onto the relevant diploma titles (see **burgundy / rust** text on worked example). At the final visit this information should be supplemented with data in terms of retention (students retained) and the number of those retained achieving an Access Diploma (see **green** text on worked example).

The following sections require analysis in terms of organisation, administration and course management. In framing judgments about the organisation, administration and management of the diploma title(s) considered by the report please consider the following questions before responding in the comments boxes for the section provided below:

- 1) ***Is the advice and guidance offered by the centre successful in recruiting Access students appropriate to the target groups for Access?***
- 2) ***Is / Are the diploma title(s) operating in accordance with the definitive course documentation (e.g. Validation / Revalidation Documentation and Rules of Combination documents)?***
- 3) ***Is the Access to HE Diploma title(s) discussed adequately resourced in terms of support for university application; pastoral care and additional learning support when required?***
- 4) ***To what extent is the Centre responsive to student feedback in terms of the organisation and delivery of the programme?***
- 5) ***To what extent are the teaching and learning strategies adopted in terms of the delivery of the Access to HE Diploma title(s) appropriate to the needs of students in relation to progression?***
- 6) ***Does the centre keep appropriate records of student achievement kept in respect of student achievement in relation to the Access to HE Diploma title(s) discussed in this report?***

Your responses should be analytical, identifying and explaining areas of good practice and those in need of improvement. If the report deals with a number of diploma titles please identify where comments relate to specific diplomas if appropriate. However, we ask that you employ an **exception reporting style**. This means that you **only** report on areas where there is either identified 'good practice' or a need for improvement. Where a question is not addressed in your report it will be assumed that the centre is compliant with the relevant QAA Licensing Criteria in relation to the diploma title(s) covered.

Please record any recommendations of conditions made in respect of the Organisation, administration and management of the Access Diploma title(s) discussed in Section One of the External Moderation Report. Please also consider the questions above in terms of your judgment in relation to compliance.

Should you feel that there is a requirement for more developmental work in relation to Diploma content (as the units or even individual Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria) are not appropriate to the overall Diploma Title please record your concerns in the appropriate section and then record a recommendation or condition which includes the AVA in terms of working to develop the programme.

Section Three: Assessment Practice:

The first requirement of the report in terms of Assessment Practice relates to confirmation that the Diploma Title(s) are operating in compliance with the QAA Regulatory Framework. These are simple yes / no responses although they may be updated from the initial finding in the final report. It should be noted that as these areas relate specifically to the regulatory framework any area of non-compliance (i.e. a NO) **must relate to a Condition** to ensure that the Diploma is subsequently compliant. The EM is also asked to record his / her involvement in any remote issues, such as Representations, Referrals or Appeals and to confirm that s/he is;8 happy with centre compliance in relation to them.

The worked example of the External Moderator's Diploma Report provides an idea of how this table might look over the duration of an academic year.

The EM is then asked to analyse Assessment Practice across the scope of provision. In terms of the diploma title(s) to which this report relates please consider the following in relation to Assessment Practice before responding in the comments boxes for this section provided below:

- 1) ***To what extent are students able to be clear on the requirements of individual assessments / assignments?***
- 2) ***Do Assessment / Assignment Briefs clearly communicate to students the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria that they aim to assess?***
- 3) ***Does Assessment / Assignment Documentation clearly enable students to know the Grading Descriptor Components against which they are being assessed?***
- 4) ***Is the guidance given to students adequate to support them in being able to meet the requirements of assessment?***
- 5) ***To what extent do assessment decisions on work sampled represent accurate application of the Access to HE Diploma requirements both in terms of assessment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria and also the requirements of the QAA Grading Descriptors?***
- 6) ***To what extent does feedback contained within sampled work represent appropriate developmental guidance to allow students to reflect and improve on their performance in future assessed work?***
- 7) ***Is the centre compliant with the QAA Regulatory framework in relation to the following (where applicable)?***

Your responses should be analytical, identifying and explaining areas of good practice and those in need of improvement. If the report deals with a number of diploma titles please identify where comments relate to specific diplomas if appropriate. However, we ask that you employ an **exception reporting style**. This means that you only report on areas where there is either identified 'good practice' or a need for improvement. Where a question is not addressed in your report it will be assumed that the centre is compliant with the relevant QAA Licensing Criteria in relation to the diploma title(s) covered.

Please record any recommendations of conditions made in respect of assessment practice in relation to the Access Diploma title(s) discussed in Section One of the External Moderator's Diploma Report.

Please also ensure that you consider the above questions in framing your judgments in relation to centre compliance. Please also note that the centre must be compliant with the LASER Examinations Policy which comes into force in the academic year 2016-17.

Section Four: Internal Moderation:

Analysis in relation to Internal Moderation should follow the following template. In relation to the diploma title(s) discussed in this report please consider the following questions in relation to Internal Verification and Moderation before responding in the relevant comments boxes below:

- 1) *Is there an effective Internal Moderation plan available for scrutiny?*
- 2) *What evidence is there to confirm that Assessment / Assignment Briefs are Internally Verified prior to being passed to students?*
- 3) *Is there an effective system to track Internally Moderated work?*
- 4) *Is the sampling frame employed in terms of the diploma title(s) appropriate in considering all students and teaching staff at least once and ensuring that all units taught are moderated?*
- 5) *Does the centre ensure that 10% of all assessed work is moderated?*
- 6) *Is there clear evidence of auditable feedback from the Internal Moderation system(s) employed in relation to the diploma title(s)*

Your responses should be analytical, identifying and explaining areas of good practice and those in need of improvement. If the report deals with a number of diploma titles please identify where comments relate to specific diplomas if appropriate. However, we ask that you employ an **exception reporting style**. This means that you only report on areas where there is either identified 'good practice' or a need for improvement. Where a question is not addressed in your report it will be assumed that the centre is compliant with the relevant QAA Licensing Criteria in relation to the diploma title(s) covered.

Please record any recommendations of conditions made in respect of assessment practice in relation to the Access Diploma title(s) discussed in Section One of the External Moderation Report. Please also give the above questions due consideration in framing judgments in relation to compliance.

Finally the EM is asked to confirm the sampling practices at both the initial and final visits and any aegrotat or extensions granted as a result of the Final Awards Boards.

Appendix One: Centre Scoring

The Appendix section of the External Moderator's Diploma report requires the External Moderator to provide a numerical score for the diploma title(s) that are being moderated. The scoring ranges from 5 (for exemplary practice) down to 1 (non-compliant and high risk) in relation to a series of questions relating to different areas of centre performance. These scores are part of on-going research into the impact of centre practices on grade performance. These scores were introduced as a discrete form in 2015-16 but have now been incorporated into the main body of the External Moderation form and will be shared with centres (to increase transparency). If you are the only moderator at the centre **DO** complete Appendix One (see introduction section above).

Next Steps:

When the External Moderator's Diploma form is complete (either in terms of the interim visit or the final visit) the EM should return it to Emma Milton (E.Milton@laser-awards.org.uk). The Lead Centre Moderator (where applicable) should also be copied in to enable them to gain immediate access to the External Moderation Report. This process should take place within three weeks of the initial visit. It is perfectly acceptable for EMs to share the contents of the External Moderation Report with the Access Co-ordinator for the programmes the form relates to, but this is an informal arrangement and we would ask that any EM doing this makes the Centre Co-ordinator aware that the contents of the form should be treated as a draft until the report has been finally approved by the AVA at the conclusion of the academic year (the AVA will then distribute to the Quality Assurance nominee for the centre). As noted the final moderation visit will lead to an updated and completed External

Moderation Report for the year and this should be completed within three weeks of the Final Moderation Visit / Preliminary Award Board. As previously stated, this can also be shared within the centre on the same terms as before but this must be subject to AVA approval before the document is declared as finalized.

2. The Lead Centre Moderator's Report:

Please ensure that you have read and understand the guidance contained in the introduction to this document relating to which sections of the Lead Centre Moderator's Report are utilized in relation to the centres you are responsible for. Please remember that at centres where there is only **ONE EXTERNAL MODERATOR** the Lead Centre Moderator's Report is only completed in terms of Section A, Section B, Section C (minus narrative / comment), Section D (minus narrative / comment) and Section E. Narrative / comment in these cases will be drawn from the External Moderation Report.

Section A:

Please list all the diploma titles offered within the academic year at your centre and record who the External Moderator for each is. It may be helpful in any comments / narrative later in the document to refer to specific External Moderators or diploma titles by name and this information allows the relationship between diploma and EM to be clearly established. Please fill this section in even if you are the only EM at the centre as it still enables a record of all diploma titles covered by the report to be established.

Section B: *Subject Specialist Examination*

This section pertains specifically to activities relating to SSE work.

Question 1 asks the Lead Centre Moderator to confirm that the centre has complied with LASER's requests in terms of work for SSE blind marking and / or moderation. As the Lead Centre Moderator you will be copied into any requests the AVA makes in terms of Phase One, Two and Three of SSE work throughout the year.

As soon as is possible, please confirm with the Access Co-ordinator that any work requested has been provided. Requests for SSE work will be made in the Autumn term. Phase One will relate to blind marking and Phase Two will relate to general moderation. Phase Three will be specifically related to Independent Academic Study units. In theory, you may well be able to complete Question 1 prior to the initial visit.

Question 2 may be possible to complete in terms of **Phase One** at the Initial / Interim Visit. This will depend both on the centre providing work for blind marking and / or moderation promptly and also the timing of the visit. Subject Specialist Examiners are also practitioners and the demands of SSE work need to be integrated into their established workloads. If it is not possible to complete question at the initial visit it is perfectly acceptable to complete either after remote discussion with the centre or in terms of the final version of the report (completed post the Final Moderation Visit).

It will not be possible to complete feedback / discussion in terms of **Phase Two** at the Initial / Interim Visit and this should therefore be recorded prior to the final document being passed to LASER in the wake of the Final Moderation Visit / Preliminary Awards Board.

Phase Three SSE work will be reported on within the following year's Lead Centre Moderator's Report at the point of the next Initial / Interim Visit. This means that all Phase Three work will be pending and discussion will be recorded as part of the following year's reporting (therefore do not worry about this as it will be captured in the next reporting cycle).

SSE Feedback: Framing the Narrative

Feedback in relation to SSE work must be treated with professionalism and sensitivity. Lead Centre Moderators should be aware that the application of grading components to assessments is always subject to levels of 'subjectivity'.

Blind Marking (Phase One):

In recognizing the potential for subjectivity in relation to the allocation of Grading Descriptor Components as an aspect of determining the overall Unit Grades awarded, the AVA recommends that where the individual judgments in terms of an assessment vary by one grade boundary this should be treated as within tolerance (unless there is significant evidence to the contrary). This should be the case even if the differences in Grading Descriptor Component allocation result in a different overall 'grade' for the unit. Therefore, such judgments should not register undue concern.

SSEs are asked to pass judgment on the unit they are examining as well as the model of assessment employed and the supporting assessment documentation and this information is equally as important as the final grading judgment. In framing feedback for blind marking exercises it is worth discussing feedback in terms of the unit and assessment model prior to comparing SSE and Centre allocation of grades.

Where there remains significant differences between the SSE decision and that of the marker please attempt to sustain a dialogue with the centre (and the relevant Diploma External Moderator) to establish **their rationale for the grade awarded.** It may be helpful to employ form **SSE 3** to provide a comparison of SSE judgments and those of the centre. This could be used for both Blind Marking and Moderation exercises although it is more likely to be beneficial in terms of Blind Marked work. The worked example provides an idea of how this form might be used.

Consider in your judgment whether this is an acceptable response to the SSE comments. Should you (and the Diploma External Moderator) feel satisfied that the centre has defended its position appropriately please note this. However, where you feel that more work is required please discuss an action plan and record any recommendations / conditions (which will need to be included in the relevant individual External Moderation Report so it is imperative that relevant Diploma External Moderators are included in discussions). Actions resulting from this might be the re-examination of the unit, the adoption of a quality marked unit, changing the assessment model or documentation or undertaking further standardization work to ensure grading is applied appropriately.

Moderation (Phase Two and Three):

Moderation work undertaken by SSEs examines already graded work. Feedback in relation to this should also focus on the quality of the unit of assessment, the assessment model adopted, the assessment guidance and documentation and the actual marking and feedback provided to the student. Once again this should be handled sensitively and a dialogue established with the centre to reflect upon SSE feedback. Where necessary action planning should be recorded both as part of the Lead Centre Moderator's Report and also within the relevant individual Diploma External Moderator's Report.

Key Concepts to reflect in feedback:

- Quality of the unit of assessment
- Quality of the assessment model employed to assess Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria
- Quality of assessment documentation / guidance
- Quality of grading decision undertaken
- Quality of feedback to students (in terms of moderation work undertaken)

Key Possible Outcomes of Dialogue:

- Review of Unit used or adoption of Quality Marked alternative
- Review of assessment model of assessment documentation / guidance employed
- Centre to be subject to further support and standardization exercises in relation to a specific issue
- Centre to access free assessment and grading training.

As noted feedback and action planning in relation to SSE activities will end up crossing into the next academic year. This should not be a concern as centres need to have time to appropriately reflect on and respond to SSE judgments. The Lead Centre Moderator's role is to act as a critical friend to ensure that centres reflect on their practice to ensure that assessment and grading is based upon a

clear and standardized framework across all providers. It would be utterly counter to justice if centres were adopting different criteria in the award of grades across centres. However, some centre staff have often been used to working almost in isolation as the sole assessor to their units and it may take time and require gentle diplomacy to encourage them of the need to standardize against AVA benchmarks.

Section C: Summary of Initial / Interim Reports

The numerical marks, feedback on recommendations and conditions, and compliance statements alongside the comments in terms of discussion and narrative **should only be completed** by Lead Centre Moderators **if the centre has more than one External Moderator**. If the Lead Centre Moderator is the only Moderator for the Centre then this information will be accessed via the External Moderator's Diploma Report. If the Lead Centre Moderator leads a team of External Moderators then the scoring, comments and narrative (alongside compliance statements) will represent a judgment which reflects a composite of all reporting. When awarding / scoring the numerical marks questions please try to allocate a score which reflects the feedback and scoring provided by External Moderator's Diploma Reports across the scope of the centre's provision. Here weakness in certain areas in terms of certain diplomas might or might not reduce an overall score. For example, isolated incidents of incorrect use of numerical marking in relation to a single unit whilst always leading to a condition may not be deemed to justify a non-compliance score (<3) in relation to the whole centre's provision. However, where this occurs in relation to a significant minority of units in more than one diploma it certainly should reduce the overall score allocated.

The worked example provides guidance on the sorts of things that might be reflected upon in terms of this section.

Section D: Final Moderation Reports

The numerical marks, feedback on recommendations and conditions, and compliance statements alongside the comments in terms of discussion and narrative **should only be completed** by Lead Centre Moderators **if the centre has more than one External Moderator**. If the Lead Centre Moderator is the only Moderator for the Centre then this information will be accessed via the External Moderation Report. If the Lead Centre Moderator leads a team of External Moderators then the scoring, comments and narrative (alongside compliance statements) will represent a judgment which reflects a composite of all reporting. Please note the guidance above in terms of the allocation of scoring at centre level.

The worked example provides guidance on the sorts of things that might be reflected upon in terms of this section.

Section E: Conduct of End of Year Processes

This section provides an opportunity for the Lead Centre Moderator to reflect on the management of the Final Moderation Visit and Preliminary Awards Board(s). Consider the availability of work and the engagement of the centre with moderation and PAB processes.

The worked example provides guidance on the sorts of things that might be reflected upon in terms of this section.

Conclusions:

The new reporting templates reflect both an increasing focus on ensuring compliance in respect of the QAA Regulatory Framework and the need to ensure that work sampled via the SSE process is adequately fed back to centres to ensure a real dialogue and critical reflection on practice.

For more details in relation to all moderation processes and also guidance in terms of the SSE processes and documentation please refer to the Access Moderation Handbook (available from the LASER website). If you have any questions relating to general External Moderation issues, External Moderation Reports or the Lead Centre Moderator's role and report, please do not hesitate to contact Ken Duckett (Access Quality Manager) by e-mailing K.Duckett@laser-awards.org.uk or by phoning 07900.265802.