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Assessment Instructions Policy

The purpose of this document is to provide instructions for Lecturers and the Administration Team on the marking and moderation processes at STC for NCC qualifications.

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1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to provide instructions on the marking and moderation processes at STC Higher Education (STC) for NCC Education (NCC) qualifications.

The centralised marking and moderation activity by NCC provides outcomes that meet the standards and conditions laid down by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England. It ensures assessment validity and reliability.

2. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARKING

The following sections provide instructions for markers, including specific information and requirements on examination papers and assignments.

The markers at STC are requested to follow the instructions specified below.

2.1 General guidelines for markers

Markers are to:

- Always use a different coloured pen to the candidate (normally red).
- All assignment samples must have a copy of STC marking scheme template, with the marking breakdown for every sub-section of a question included and attached to the assignment.
- Provide a total mark for each question.
- Provide brief comments where appropriate to justify marks awarded.
- Tick every page of the script (to indicate every page has been checked and marked).
- Ensure that each student includes a signed copy of the 'Statement and Confirmation of Own Work' in every assignment.
- Ensure that when half marks are awarded in any part of a task the total mark recorded for a task is rounded up to a whole mark.
- Ensure that marks are awarded in accordance with the marking scheme supplied by NCC. The Grade Descriptors (available for all QCF units) provided in the Qualification Specification for Level 4, Level 5 and Level 7 qualifications should be used to make academic judgments at borderlines between grades.
- Fill in the appropriate sections on the front of the Assignment:
 - record the marks per section
 - record a total mark for the assignment
 - record the Turnitin percentage
 - record short comments where needed
 - ensure the marks recorded on the front are the same as those recorded on each assignment.
- Complete the *Candidate Misconduct – Centre Declaration Form* for every unit that is marked. The form must state whether any misconduct was noted or whether all work was fine (see *Academic Misconduct Policy for this form*).

2.2 Plagiarism / Collusion / Poor Academic Practice

Please see *STC Academic Misconduct Policy* and “*What is Academic Misconduct – Tutors*” handout for further information on what can be classed as academic misconduct and the penalties that should be applied in each instance.

2.2.1 What happens if plagiarism, collusion or academic malpractice is discovered?

- STC administration team will download all assignments through Turnitin and share a copy of each with the marker through Myschool.
- If a marker uncovers plagiarism or other academic malpractice in an assignment, he/she shall follow the guidance indicated by NCC (covered by STC Academic Misconduct Policy) and apply the correspondent penalties. The marker must complete the Candidate Misconduct – Centre Declaration Form, explaining what has been discovered, candidate name and ID for all candidates involved and the mark deductions that have taken place.
- Cheating during an examination needs to be recorded by the Invigilator in the Invigilator’s report. This report and the examination script must always be submitted with the work for marking for global examinations.
- Large volumes of pictures of text are not acceptable in assignment submissions for standalone modules at Level 7 as this prevents the work from being run through anti- plagiarism software. Any assignment containing large volumes of pictures of text may either be awarded ‘0’ by NCC for this submission or may be sent back to the STC for the candidate to amend and re-submit.
- If plagiarism is discovered STC will apply NCC academic misconduct penalties and submit the case for NCC review. If plagiarism is discovered by NCC during marking or moderation NCC will conduct an investigation into the matter. Should it be found that misconduct has occurred appropriate penalties will be applied to the marks by NCC.

3. MODERATION: THE PURPOSE OF MODERATION

- NCC needs to moderate work through a process which is external to STC, to ensure the standard of achievement of candidates is comparable to the standards of other NCC Centre in that unit, and other units at that level.
- Moderation also ensures consistency in the grading of the award to ensure that candidates are receiving fair treatment.
- NCC uses moderation to monitor and report on assessment arrangements of NCC qualifications.
- Moderation can be used as an ongoing source of critical advice or positive feedback for STC in order to support the continuous improvement of teaching and personal development.
- It also ensures, where necessary, that assessment is valid by providing relevant feedback.
- NCC External moderators confirm how and whether consistent standards are achieved across all Centre.

3.1 How to choose a sample for moderation

STC Administration Team, under the guidance and supervision of the Administration and Academic Manager, identifies the samples to be submitted for moderation.

The number of samples submitted for moderation is based on the size of the cohort and is listed below for reference. There must always be a minimum of 6 samples per unit, unless there were fewer than 6 candidates who took assessment.

Total number of candidates in cohort (per individual marker)	Number of samples to be submitted (per individual marker)
1-6	All
7-41	6
42-55	7
56-71	8
72-89	9
90-109	10
110-131	11
132-155	12
156+	Square root of total candidates*

When there is more than one member of staff involved in the marking of a particular unit, **a sample from each marker** must be provided. The above guidance on the number of scripts to be sent for moderation, applies per individual marker.

STC will inspect their candidates' marks and identify which assignments are to be sent for moderation. The sample must be chosen based on the criteria below:

- The sample with the highest mark
- The sample with the lowest mark
- Samples close to each grade boundary where possible, i.e. a candidate with a clear referral grade; a candidate with 39 and a candidate with 41; a candidate with 59 and a candidate with 61 etc.
- Any candidates awarded '0's for their submission
- If there are no candidates with marks near the grade boundaries, then a good spread of marks should be presented across all grades

STC must keep copies of the work that has been submitted to NCC for moderation.

3.2 Assessments samples submission

The submission process of assignments for marking from STC to NCC is by eSubmission only.

Before the deadline stated on the NCC annual activity schedules, STC is to share a folder with all assignments for moderation plus the Mark Submission Forms (MSF).

To aid the moderation process, the sample for each unit should be submitted as follows:

- If candidates submit printed 'hard copy' work this must be scanned as a separate PDF for each candidate, for each unit. For example: *John Smith_00123456_SCS Assignment A*.

- It is the responsibility of STC to ensure that all scans submitted for moderation are complete and readable. Incomplete, unreadable or single page files will not be accepted for moderation.
- Heavy Samples may be compressed/zipped.
- STC must not use time-bounded file-hosting services to submit the samples.
- For the modules *Databases*, *Developing and Designing a Website* and *Developing Objected Oriented Programs* (all modules of the Diploma in Computing UK L4, MQF L5) a compressed file of the saved documents for each candidate should be submitted. All supporting documentation, used while working on the assignment, must be submitted.

3.3 Mark Submission Forms (MSF)

When completing NCC MSF, the STC administration team has to:

- Make sure all candidates who were absent are marked as 'A' on the MSF. A marker's name should not be added if a candidate is absent.
- The primary marker's name must be included for all components. The original marks must be inputted correctly in the original marks section.
- If a candidate's name is missing from any part of the MSF, STC is to contact NCC Centre Support immediately.
- If a candidate chooses to re-sit only one component, comments should be added to the 'Marker's name' cell and the candidate should be marked as 'A' for this component on the MSF.
- STC must email all completed MSFs to their Centre Support Executive by the NCC's advertised deadline.

STC Centre Coordinator is required to email all completed MSFs, by the NCC's advertised deadline, to the following emails according to the level of study:

Level 3 - level3moderation@nccedu.com

Level 4 and 5 - assessments@nccedu.com

Level 7 - level7assessments@nccedu.com

¹(STC does not offer NCC level 7 qualifications, only standalone modules)

NCC Centre Support Executive for STC must be kept on all emails exchange for this purpose.

3.4 Audio Samples: DELS and AELS Speaking Tests

All English Language Speaking Tests must be recorded by STC and the selected samples sent to NCC as part of the moderation sample.

The required format for submission of audio recordings is as follows.

1. All recordings should be submitted in MP3 format.
2. Each individual candidate's Speaking Test should be recorded as a separate file.
3. The full duration of each Speaking Test must be recorded.
4. A sound check should be carried out at the beginning of each session to ensure adequate sound quality.

¹ STC does not offer NCC level 7 qualifications, only standalone modules

5. The examiner should begin each test by speaking the candidate's NCC reference number and name (as registered with NCC).
6. The filename for each MP3 file should include the NCC candidate ID number and the candidate's name (as registered with NCC).

NCC will not moderate English Language examinations unless recordings are submitted. It is the responsibility of STC to ensure that all recordings submitted for moderation meet the specifications outlined above. To ensure higher sound quality, we strongly recommend that both the candidate and the examiner are provided with a separate microphone for the examination. Incomplete or inaudible recordings will not be accepted by NCC for moderation.

3.5 Document Types accepted

The following document types are accepted by NCC for submission:

- Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) or Adobe PDF (.pdf)
- ZIP files (.zip) or RAR files if more than one document is being submitted.

Documents submitted in any other format may not be accepted by NCC for marking.

All images, graphs, code or other non-text portions of assignments should be embedded in the document. Appendices cannot be submitted as separate documents.

4. MODERATION REPORTS

NCC moderators will produce unit feedback for each centre that will form the basis of a Centre Moderation Report (CMR). This will comment on:

- the standard of marking in the centre
- reasons for scaling, by how much and which candidates are affected
- any follow-up action for the centre.

NCC needs to provide a moderation report for each unit where a result has been published.

4.1 Scaling and Remarking

The NCC moderator will review the marked work with reference to the question and marking scheme. They will make judgements about the standard of the marking.

The NCC moderator will review samples from STC. The NCC moderator is empowered to make decisions to adjust the marks of the full cohort based on the marking observed in the sample. Marks may be lowered (where marking is observed to be lenient) or raised (where marking is observed to be strict). The changes to the marks may be additive (a fixed value is added to or subtracted from the mark awarded) or multiplicative (the mark is multiplied by a factor, less than one to reduce the marks, greater than one to increase the marks). All decisions made by the NCC moderator are subject to approval or revision by NCC.

If the sample does not show a consistent marking pattern, scaling cannot be applied. In this case, STC will be asked by NCC to provide a larger sample of work. If this happens candidates' results may be delayed. NCC will inform STC on which candidates' work is required. If STC cannot provide the additional sample or there is a significant delay in providing the additional items, candidates' results may be delayed until the next assessment cycle release date.

If the NCC moderator proposes a scaling of 25% or more (regardless of whether this is +25% or -25%), STC will be asked to provide additional samples. NCC will tell STC which candidates' work is required.

5. KEEPING CANDIDATES WORK

STC must follow NCFHE guidelines on the number of years for which a candidate work must be kept in a safe and protected environment.

NCC will keep all assessed work submitted for moderation for a period of one year.