

Guidance on Moderated Marking

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This document provides draft guidance, approved for dissemination by the Taught Degrees and Awards Panel whilst further feedback is sought, for any staff involved in examining, assessing and marking who may wish to consider moderated marking. This includes:

- Course directors
- Exam Boards
- Divisions considering requests from Exam Board Chairs who wish to introduce moderated marking.

Moderated marking processes can be used for all types of assessment (eg submissions or examinations) and can be used whether the marking is by numbers, grades or steps.

Different marking process may be used for different forms of summative assessment on any one course. Flexibility is provided to enable Exam Boards to use a marking process that ensures academic rigour and is proportionate to the assessment aims.

Moderated marking provides a fair and effective approach to ensuring assessment accuracy while supporting the diversification of assessments. Rather than relying solely on the number of markers, **assessment reliability is strengthened by well-defined criteria, clear grading rubrics, and robust calibration processes** that align assessors' expectations. Moderation allows for **systematic review and adjustment**, ensuring consistency across markers while maintaining transparency and fairness.

By incorporating **pre-marking calibration, benchmarking, and structured moderation**, assessment outcomes can be both rigorous and sustainable. Additionally, moderated marking offers **greater flexibility for diverse assessment formats**, such as coursework, presentations, and practical evaluations, where traditional double marking may not be feasible. This adaptability enables institutions to **broaden assessment tasks** while maintaining **fairness, consistency, and alignment with academic standards**, ensuring a robust and inclusive assessment process.

Introduction

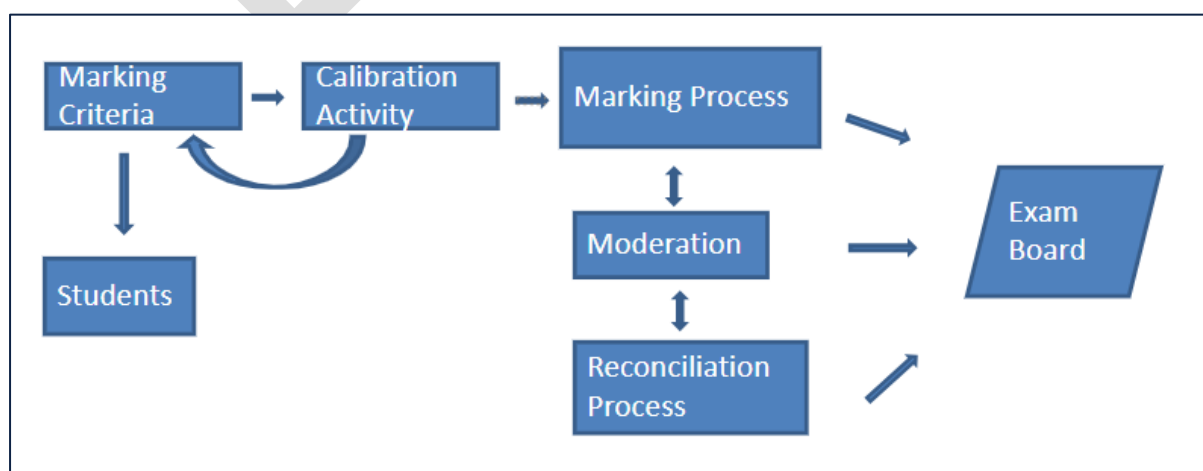
1. This document provides guidance on approaches to moderated marking and demonstrates how they align with the overarching principles of summative assessment outlined in the [Examinations and Assessment Framework \(Section 11.2\)](#). These principles apply irrespective of the approach to marking the assessment.
2. This guidance provides examples of moderated marking processes:
 - Example 1: sampled second marking
 - Example 2: check marking (also known as second-sighted marking)
 - Example 3: comments marking
3. Other processes are also permissible, with divisional approval, where these align with the overarching principles of summative assessment outlined in the Examinations and Assessment Framework (Section 11.2). Further examples of permissible processes may be added to this guidance as experience is acquired.

4. The ability to choose between different approved marking practices, subject to divisional approval, gives exam boards greater flexibility in the use of their resources without compromising rigour, fairness or accuracy.
5. Divisions are encouraged to note the reasons for their decisions relating to department or faculty requests for moderated marking.

Pre-marking

6. Pre-marking calibration is essential to ensure all marking practices are fair and accurate. This includes double-blind marking as well as moderated marking.
7. All programmes must include rigorous calibration processes for all markers, regardless of the method of marking. Pre-marking calibration activities are an important step for all marking processes and especially when using moderated marking processes.
8. A calibration meeting develops a shared understanding of marking criteria among examiners and assessors, using a sample of assessments. Pre-marking calibration meetings enhance the consistency of markers' judgements by developing a shared understanding of the marking criteria as applied to sample assessments. The role of calibration in the assessment process is shown in Fig 1.
9. A typical process to support pre-marking calibration is as follows:
 - a. Before the meeting, examiners and assessors mark at least three sample assessments representing a range of achievements. Samples could be from a previous cohort or live assessments.
 - b. Markers submit their marks anonymously to mitigate power bias (eg record marks by adding to a post-it note and putting in a box and then placing all on a whiteboard on arrival, or add to a shared document in advance).
 - c. A member of the Board of Examiners leads a discussion on how the assessment criteria are applied to each piece of work, raising common issues to reach a consensus judgment.
10. Pre-marking calibration meetings can be specific to a paper or combined across papers that share a task type and common marking criteria.

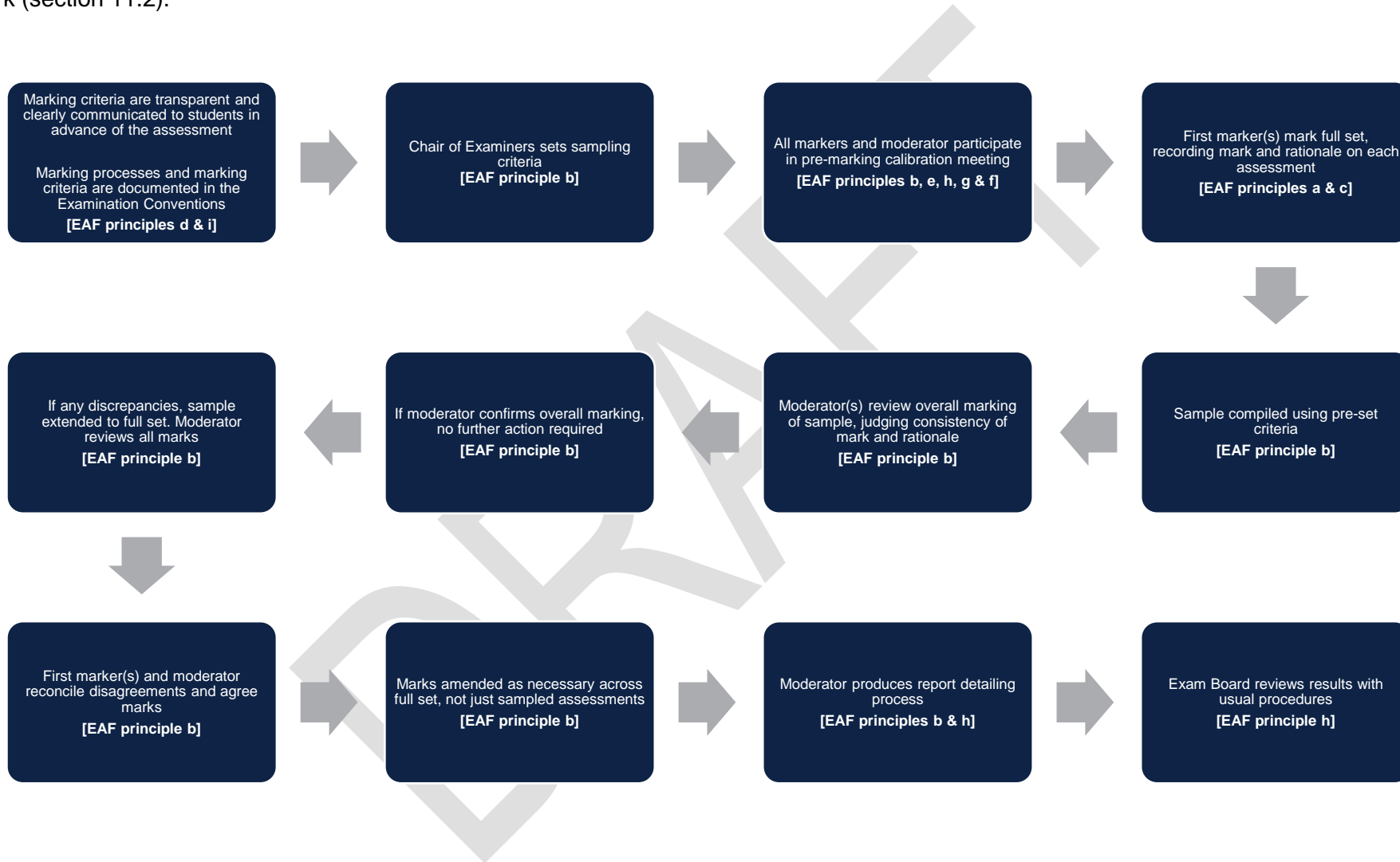
Figure 1: A summary of the marking and moderation process for summative assessment



Example A: sampled second marking

11. In sampled second marking a first assessor/examiner marks the assessment, recording a mark and rationale.
12. A sample is then compiled using pre-determined criteria. The sampling criteria should be agreed before marking commences. Typically, the sample will include:
 - a. all fails
 - b. assessments at each borderline
 - c. at least 10% of each first marker's allocation, representing the full range of achievement
 - d. a minimum sample size of five assessments (for small cohorts), and a maximum of 50 (for large cohorts).
13. To form a judgement on the fairness and consistency of the overall marking in relation to the marking criteria, a moderator reviews the first assessors' marks and rationale. If the moderator confirms the marks for the sampled assessments, it can be assumed that the marking is reliable for that cohort, and there is no need to review the whole set of assessments.
14. Where assessments are neither written nor physical artefacts, such as presentations and performances, the moderator should be present when the student presents their work or have access to a recording of the student's submission (made with the student's consent).
15. If the moderator considers that there are discrepancies, for example, in consistency, leniency, or at particular mark profiles, the sample must be extended and all assessments reviewed. In extending the sample, the moderator will look at the overall marking again.
16. The process for sampled second marking is shown below in **Figure 2**.

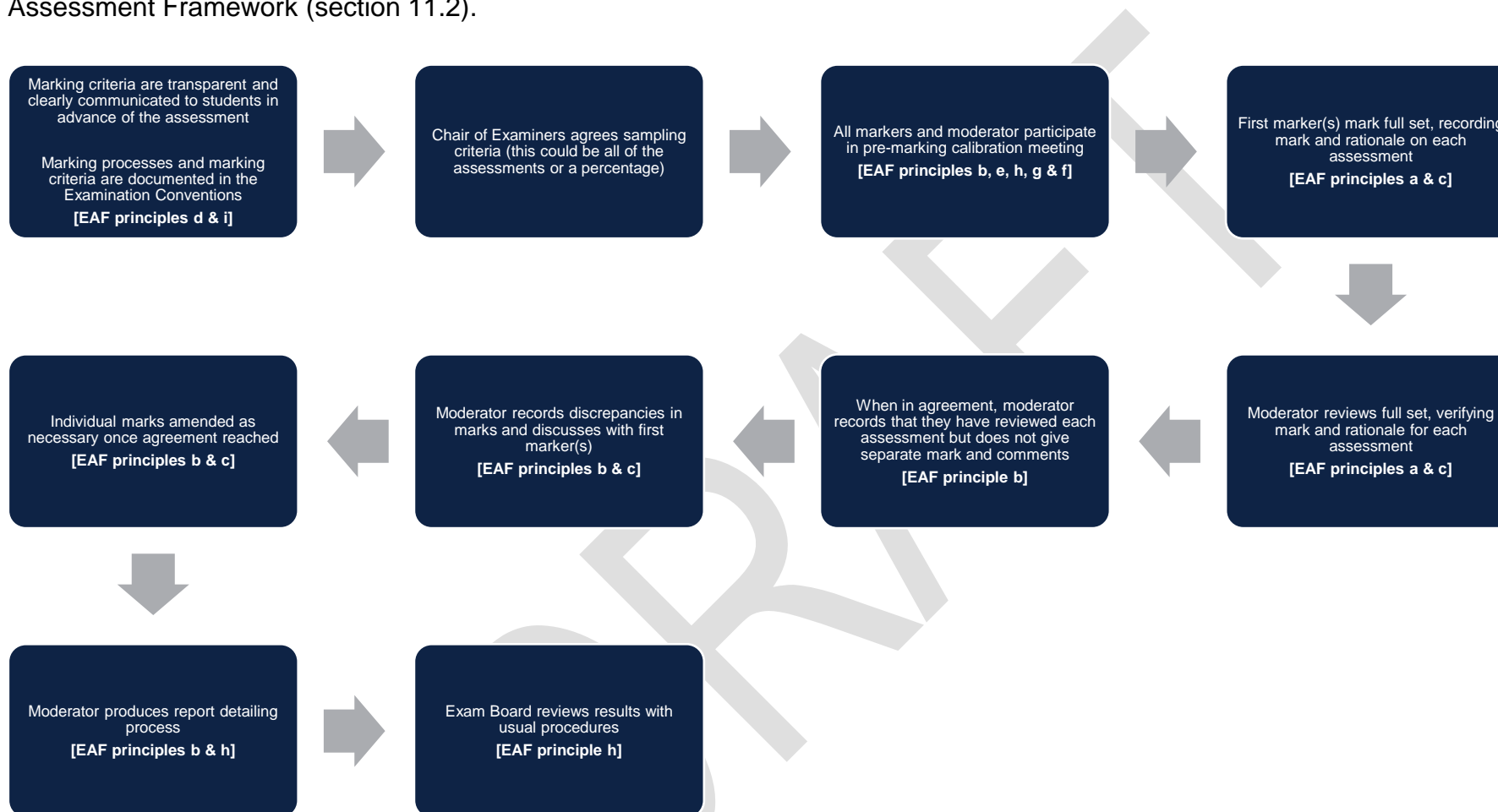
Figure 2: Sampled second marking flow chart showing alignment with the overarching principles of assessment outlined in the Examinations and Assessment Framework (section 11.2).



Example B: Check marking

17. In check marking (also known as second-sighted marking), the first assessors/examiners marks the assessment, using the comments sheet to record the mark and rationale. There may be several first assessors/examiners.
18. One or more moderators then review/s the entire set of assessments and marks from the first marker/s (or a sample as above) verifying that the individual marks and rationales on each assessment are appropriate according to the marking criteria.
19. If a moderator disagrees with a mark, they should discuss it with the first examiner/assessor and come to an agreement using the reconciliation protocol in the Examinations and Assessment Framework.
20. The moderator(s) can also check for consistency between the first markers and across the whole set.
21. Check marking is most suitable for tasks where marking criteria are objective and there is usually a high degree of agreement between examiners. Assessment tasks suited to check marking include quantitative tasks, problems, short essays, short answer questions, language exercises and translations.
22. The process for the check marking is shown below in **Figure 3**.

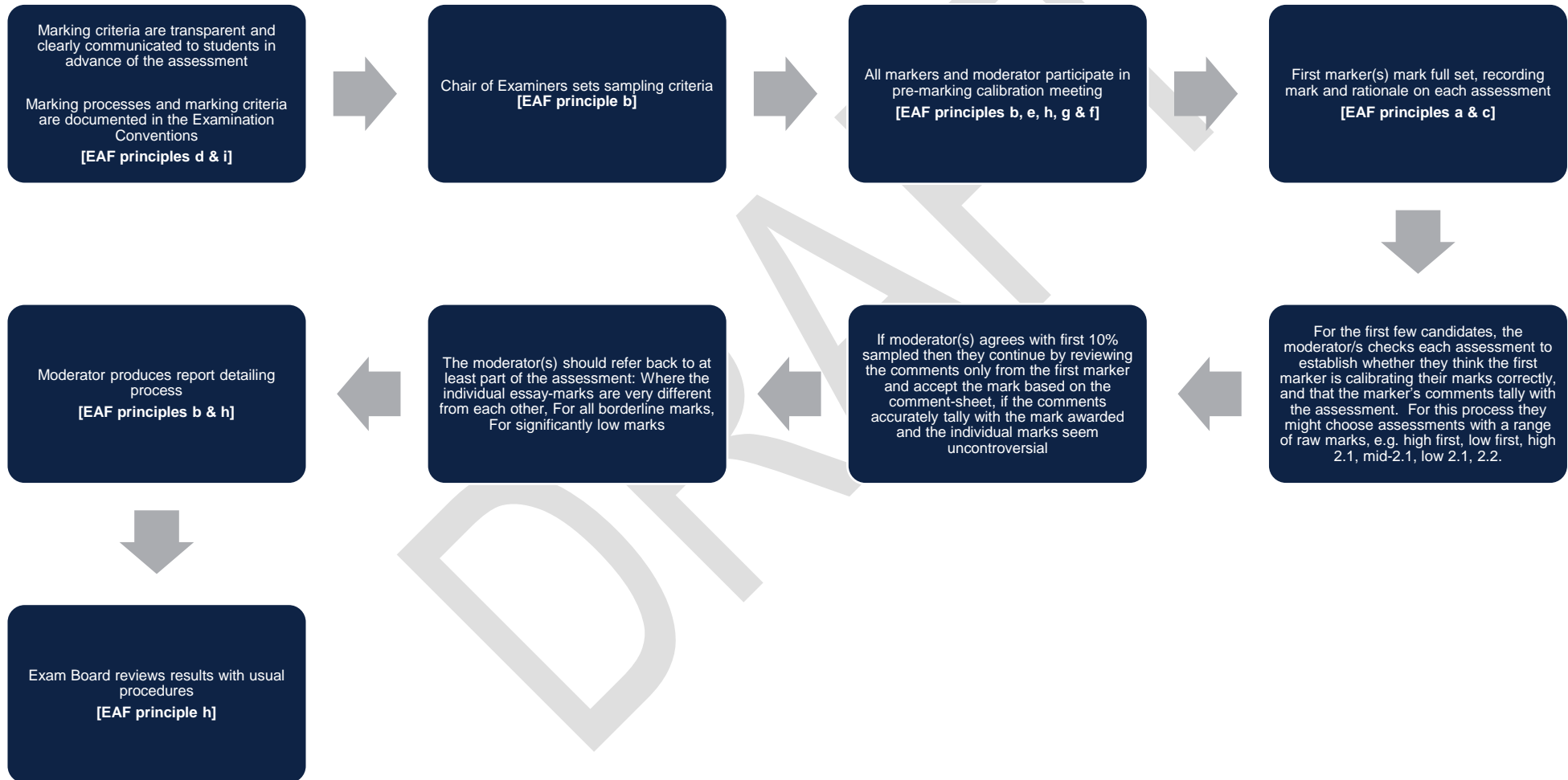
Figure 3: Check marking flow chart showing alignment with the overarching principles of assessment as outlined in the Examinations and Assessment Framework (section 11.2).



Example C: Comments marking

23. This method is modelled on a process used by many Exam Boards in terms of checking marks by starting with the comment-sheets rather than blindly with the assessment. In this case, the moderator/s (who need not necessarily be as expert as a blind-marker) looks at each candidate's work (rather than sampling some and leaving others), starting by reading the first-marker's comment-sheet, rather than blind-marking the assessment.
24. For 10% of papers, the moderator/s check each assessment to see whether they think the first marker is calibrating their marks correctly, and check that the first marker's comments tally with the mark awarded. For this process, they might choose assessments with a range of raw marks, eg high first, low first, high 2.1, mid-2.1, low 2.1, 2.2. If grade marking is used, they might choose B+, B and B-. The moderator may then accept the mark based on the comment-sheet, if the comments accurately tally with the mark awarded and the individual marks seem uncontroversial. Experienced moderators would (after the initial reading-in) be able to identify where they need to do further reading of the assessment, as well as in the cases listed below:
 - a. For all borderline grade marks;
 - b. For all fails;
 - c. For significantly low (or high) marks
25. The process for comments marking is shown below in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Comments marking flow chart showing alignment with the overarching principles of assessment outlined in the Examinations and Assessment Framework (section 11.2).



Notes on the process

26. In all version of moderated marking, a record must be kept of which assessments the moderator has reviewed. The moderator should add a note and comments on each assessment to provide evidence that they have been reviewed. At the end of the moderation process, the moderator must complete a short report to detail the process and the steps undertaken to ensure that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by the inclusion (or not) of their assessment in the sampling undertaken.
27. Students must not be advantaged or disadvantaged by the inclusion or exclusion of their assessments in a sample. As a result, individual marks cannot be changed unless the sample is extended and a moderator has reviewed all marks. Differences between the first marker(s) and the moderator should be reconciled using the guidance in the Examinations and Assessment Framework (section 11.2).
28. External Examiners should be informed of the marking processes being used at the earliest opportunity. Where check marking or sampled second marking is used, the moderation process must be evidenced, and part of the sample used should be included in the batch reviewed by the External Examiner. External Examiners should be encouraged to record their observations about the marking and moderation arrangements in their reports.

Glossary of terms

Table 1 summarises some terms used in the different steps in the marking process.

Term	Description
Calibration	Internal calibration involves all markers reviewing a small sample of submissions, then discussing grading standards and decision-making ahead of all marking being done. The goal is to ensure assessors within a subject area make consistent, fair, and stable judgments over time.
Moderation	Moderation is the process of agreeing on standards and verifying the consistent application of marking criteria, ensuring robustness and equity in the examining process at the point of marking .
Moderator	A moderator is an assessor with subject expertise and prior examining experience. They attend pre-marking moderation meetings to align their understanding of marking criteria with other markers but cannot act as the first marker for papers they moderate. External examiners cannot serve as moderators.
Check-marking	The second marker assesses whether the first marker's awarded mark is appropriate, confirming if it aligns. This method is ideal for objective tasks with high agreement between markers. Check-marking is always open.
Sampled Second marking	The second marker assesses a sample of work to judge consistency. If overall marking is consistent, no action is required; if discrepancies arise, the sample is expanded to all assessments.