

Marking examination essays

This supplements the document entitled 'Preparing Examination Questions (Essays)', and is principally concerned with the marking of examination essays. Although a number of the suggestions will also apply to supervision essays, the primary focus of the assessment will differ. For examination essays, you would be trying to make a judgement about the essay. For supervision essays marking will primarily be an exercise in providing constructive feedback to enable the student to improve.

Ideas to help ensure consistency between essays

- Skim-read to get a feel for the field of answers
Depending on the numbers of essays that you are marking, skim reading all of them (or a selection) can give you an overview of the range of answers. You could start marking a small subset of answers – from the very good to the very poor – to help ensure that you award an appropriate spread of marks.
- Remark some essays
At the end of your marking, go back and re-mark (blind) the first essays that you looked at to ensure you have been consistent from start to finish.
- Review the marks once you've finished
Assemble the marked scripts in order of the marks you've assigned them: skim through them again to assure yourself you've been fair.

Ideas to help ensure consistency between yourself and other markers

- Ensure that all examiners and markers are using the same marking scheme
See 'Preparing Examination Questions (Essays)' for further information.
- Review where your marks sit in relation to other examiners and markers.
If you're paired with another examiner/marker, it is perhaps easier to review whether you are marking to similar criteria. Some faculties and departments (e.g. English, Zoology) undertake a statistical review of the marks to feed back to examiners for future reference.
- Calibrate your marking
If you're paired with another examiner/marker, agree to mark a few essays (either together or separately and then compare notes) before you proceed with marking all scripts.
- Review whether your marking profile is comparable (in range and spread) for the same candidates with other examiners/markers. At what point does a difference become an issue?
Some parts of the medical course have meetings of all assessors to ensure calibration before all scripts are marked.
- Get a second opinion
This may be particularly important if you suspect plagiarism, or if you have an answer which is very different from the expected range of answers.