GUIDELINES FOR MARKING COURSEWORK

franco vivaldi

Marking coursework has two purposes: assessment and feedback. It is not easy, and many things can go wrong. Marking is good only if it can withstand scrutiny; think of it as a public activity, not protected by confidentiality.

— — —

- *Keep scripts in a safe place.*

  Coursework scripts constitute official examination material.

- *Devise a bookkeeping procedure for scripts and marks.*

  Some common mistakes in coursework submission (wrong box, missing name, etc.) result in no mark being awarded. If a student claims that you have lost his/her coursework, your answer has to be more convincing than "no, I haven't".

  – Download the course list from SID and print it;

  – sort the scripts; annotate on paper the submitted scripts.

- *Penalize sloppy submissions.*

  Missing student number or name, loose sheets, etc, can create a lot of problems for markers and administrators. Zero tolerance is the most effective approach. Agree a penalty scheme with the course organiser, and apply it consistently.

- *Marking scheme*

  – Check that the marks add up to 100;

  – decide on partial credit and quantize marks. For example, if 4 marks are available for a question, use just 4 (essentially right), 2 (one mistake) and 0 (essentially wrong).

- *Mark question-by-question, always.*

  – Use a pen with bright ink (red, typically);

  – put marks on right margin;

  – write something on every page, so you'll know if you have left pages unmarked by mistake.

- *Encode your thinking and decisions; clarify where marks have been lost.*

  Queries tend to occur long after you have marked, and you must be able to reconstruct your thinking.

  – Encode common marking decisions, such as M (correct method), FT (follow through: an initial mistake, but otherwise correct), BOD (benefit of the doubt), etc.

  – Encircle your comments ("unclear"), to distinguish them from material inserted for corrections.

  – Do not write dismissive comments ("nonsense"); "wrong" is more accurate, and equally forceful.

  – For each question or subquestion, assign marks in fractional form, with the denominator indicating the total; so 3/5 means that the student got 3 marks out of the available 5.

- *Report instances of copying, but only the blatant ones.*

  There is a fine line between close collaboration and copying. If in doubt, discuss this matter with the course organiser.

- *Write your initials near to the total mark.*

  The marker needs to be identified for the purpose of quality assurance, and to handle queries.

- *Keep an independent record of the marks.*

  A paper copy in addition to an electronic record is advisable.

- *When handling queries, put fairness first*

  Queries can be very annoying: do not let your ego, or a student's insistence get in the way.

- *When entering marks, identify students by number first, then by name.*

  Typically, we have a dozen Patel or Khan. The last four digits of the student number will suffice: only 5% of our students share the last four digits with someone else.

- *Using SID (administrators only)*

  – enter all marks at once;

  – learn the standard codes (N,E,S, etc).

Franco Vivaldi

London, October 2006.