Project marking feedback

Honours project are independently marked by two markers and, if there is not close agreement between their marks, a moderator. The marking forms require information to justify the mark given, including a justification of the ratings given on the individual marking criteria, a justification of the numerical mark given, and (from the supervisor) comments on mitigating factors and the extent of the student's self-direction. The agreed mark form contains a justification of the agreed mark.

By law, this information is available to students if they demand to see it, and a handful of students do request it, but it is not otherwise provided to students as a matter of course. An exception is for students continuing from an MInf4 project to an MInf5 project, where the justification of the ratings on the marking criteria are forwarded.

In the interest of improving feedback, we could consider changing this policy and forward feedback to students following the Board of Examiners meeting. I suggest the following as being a workable compromise:

- For unmoderated projects, forward an unedited copy of the justification of the ratings on the marking criteria from both markers' reports.
- Ditto for moderated projects, plus the moderator’s comments. The moderator’s comments should explicitly address the markers’ views and make it clear that they have been taken into account but that the moderator’s view is the one that determines the mark.

These are to be forwarded by the ITO. Just the text relating to the ratings on the marking criteria would be forwarded – not the marks, nor the ratings on the criteria, nor comments on mitigating factors and self-direction.

Minor changes to the marking forms would be appropriate so that (1) markers are aware that their comments will be seen by students, and (2) moderators are prompted more specifically for what is required. Automation of the process of sending feedback to students will be discussed with the computing staff.

The Agreed Mark Form would not be forwarded to students, but still it would be better to avoid statements like “Our marks were close, so we flipped a coin” which suggest that the decision was not given due consideration.

The same question applies to MSc projects, where marking procedures are similar. The previous MSc project coordinator agrees with this recommendation, and the new coordinator (who has no experience coordinating marking yet) says that he sees no problems.

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