

The moderation process

Each session we get a number of queries from candidates who are disappointed by their results. I therefore thought it would be useful to give a bit more detail on what happens to the exam papers between the exams being sat and the results being issued.

Immediately following the exams, the tutorial bodies are provided with copies of the questions and answers, which they then review and feed back to us any comments they may have on them and on how they expect candidates to perform.

The examining teams will receive the candidates' answers and then mark a small initial batch of scripts to get a feel for how candidates have performed and see if there are any common issues. They will also have regard to the comments received from the tutorial bodies.

Following this process, in conjunction with the manager for the paper, the draft model answers and marking guides may be revised so that they are more appropriate, for example if it is clear that candidates have all approached a question in a different way to that which the examiner expected.

For consistency, all answers to a particular question are almost always marked by one person and normally that person will be the person who set the question. To be clear, at this level (and particularly for the APS paper) there may not be a single correct answer. Different appropriate answers will receive credit (but not those which try to answer the question the candidate would have preferred the examiner to have set).

Once the answers have been marked, the examiner will prepare their Examiner's Report on that question.

The moderator will then review a random sample of answers (typically 10%), taking account of the comments from the examiner and the tutorial bodies, to see whether the marking has been fair and accurate and whether, for example, bonus marks have been awarded.

The marks for all papers are subject to detailed statistical analysis. Armed with this, the Examiners' Reports, reports from the moderators and any other matters relevant to the session, the Exam Committee meets to consider the results. As a result of this process, if it is determined that a paper was unusually difficult or time-pressured compared to other sittings or for some reason candidates may have been disadvantaged, the Committee may decide to uplift the marks for all candidates on a paper. It does not however reduce marks if a paper is considered to be unusually easy.

Following the Exam Committee meeting, all scripts which are just below a pass are remarked to see if any marks can be found to put the candidate into the pass category.

Having arrived at the final marks, on a case by case basis, extenuating circumstances for individual candidates will be considered.

The Chief Examiner