

Anonymous Marking: Additional Information for Students

From September 2020, the University of Northampton will be introducing anonymous marking of student work, where it is appropriate to do so.

The purpose of this document is to provide additional information about this decision.

Why are we changing to anonymous marking?

A number of reasons underpin the decision to introduce anonymous marking. These include:

- Feedback from the University of Northampton Students' Union (SU) *Black and Minority Ethnic Attainment (BME) Gap Survey*, leading to a recommendation to the University to introduce anonymous marking in the SU 2018 Academic Review, and reiterated in 2019.
- Student feedback via the National Student Survey (NSS).
- Anonymous marking has been adopted by other higher education providers in response to the challenges of differential outcomes correlating to demographic characteristics.

Anonymous marking helps to minimise the impact and the perception of unconscious bias. The whole UK HE sector has a profound and long standing gap in outcomes, including enrolment, continuation, awards and graduate level employment, correlating to the ethnicity of students (but not directly correlating to entry tariffs or markers of socioeconomic class). Over recent years, initiatives to lessen these unequal outcomes have been shown to reduce the gap.

At UoN, the average gap in degrees awarded to BAME and white students in 2017/18 is 17%¹, and students report in the NSS a perception of lack of fairness.

"As BME students we feel undervalued and lack a voice. Our academic needs are not recognised, and I feel our work is not graded fairly."

"I feel that the marking at this Uni tends to be harsh towards people of colour."

The move to anonymous marking, where pedagogically possible, is one step in our journey towards obliterating the ethnicity gap in outcomes.

What's the rest of the Sector doing?

A sector-snapshot of institutional approaches to electronic management of assessment (EMA) was conducted in March 2018. This snapshot included a question on institutional approaches to anonymous marking, to which 24 institutions contributed. Of these, there is a mixed picture:

Anonymous marking required

25%

¹ Source: [OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard](#). This figure is down from a high of 20% in 2015/16 but is still statistically significant. This is against a sector average of 13.7% (which is also statistically significant).

Anonymous marking permitted/required, some exceptions	37.5%
No anonymous marking	37.5%

Reflection and Review

We will review experiences and best practice in Spring/Summer 2021, to learn from what works from both staff and student perspectives. If you have any feedback on or questions about this process, please contact your Module Leader in the first instance.