

Calibration Toolkit for Geography: Detailed Programme

This detailed programme provides the facilitator with all the information and instructions needed to run a calibration event. The event comprises two parts – an online marking exercise followed by a one-day workshop. PowerPoint slides with notes are provided to help the facilitator work through the day. See the notes under each slide for further explanation of the bullet points.

The timings below assume a 10.00 am to 3.30 pm workshop and can be adjusted to different start and finish times.

Stage 1: Online marking exercise

1. Two weeks before the workshop, each delegate is invited to read three Geography final-year research-based coursework assignments and decide their grade based on the delegate's sense of appropriate academic standards for this stage of study. The assignments have been selected for their relevance to both human and physical geography.
2. Delegates are provided with contextual material for the assignments, such as the module learning outcomes and the assignment brief.
3. Delegates enter their marks and comments online without sight of other people's judgements. The final date for entering marks and comments should be three or four days before the workshop to allow the facilitator time to combine the results and incorporate them into the PowerPoint slides.
4. Delegates are also invited to comment on the extent to which the assessment method enables the students to demonstrate the desired learning – is it fit for purpose?
5. Delegates are asked to bring with them to the workshop copies of the assignments (digitally or on paper) with their marks and comments.

The wording for the invitation to mark and comment on the assignments can be found in the file 'Instructions for marking the calibrated assignments'.

Between Stage 1 and the workshop

The facilitator will almost certainly need to send out a reminder to delegates to ensure they complete the online marking. The message should make clear that participation in the workshop is dependent on having completed the marking in advance.

The facilitator should combine the marks as indicated in the notes on the relevant PowerPoint slides.

Workshop

Have these items available.

- Spare printed copies of the assignments (at least one per group of four to five delegates)
- The PowerPoint slides
- Flip chart, white board or multi-media projector for sharing feedback from the groups
- Flip chart paper and pens

10.00 Introduction

Use PowerPoint slides to

- Welcome delegates
- Communicate housekeeping matters (fire alarms, location of toilets, refreshments etc.)
- Explain the programme for the day
- Explain the rationale for the event
- Explain the aim of the event
- Explain the small group stage
- Evaluation questionnaires, one per delegate

10.30 Stage 2: Small group

Place the delegates in groups of four or five, mixing up people from different institutions and geography sub-disciplines where possible.

The delegates are shown their range of marks for Assignment 1. They are asked to discuss the marking, sharing their individual marks and comments as they wish.

Each group attempts to come to a consensus regarding the grade for each piece.

Reference material such as the Subject Benchmark Statement and the FHEQ is available to support discussion.

Groups note which characteristics of the work were most influential in making their decision about the grade – for example which

characteristics influenced the decision to place the work above or below a key borderline such as pass/fail or 2.2/2.1?

Marks and comments are recorded for using in the whole group discussion.

11.00 Stage 3: Whole group

The small group marks are displayed.

Where there is variation, the facilitator encourages the small groups whose marks are most different to make the case for their grade, drawing on the influential characteristics they noted. Other groups are welcome to add comments to the discussion. The aim is to try and reconcile differences and achieve a level of agreement on both marks and influential characteristics.

Where there is no variation in marks, the discussion focuses on influential characteristics and gaining consensus on what most contributed to the grade awarded.

Where consensus cannot be achieved, it is important to point out the consequences for standards and students in terms of fairness and the comparability of awards. Discuss how the variation might be tackled, perhaps by greater adherence to national reference points.

Share the grade and comments determined by the expert panel.

11.30 Break

11.45

Stages 2 and 3 are repeated for Assignment 2

12.45 Lunch

13.30 Influential characteristics

Change small groups to mix up delegates across the groups. The table below shows how morning groups can be reconfigured in the afternoon to bring together representatives from all the different groups.

Morning groups	Afternoon groups
Group 1: 1,1,1,1,1	Group 1: 1,2,3,4
Group 2: 2,2,2,2,2	Group 2: 1,2,3,4
Group 3: 3,3,3,3,3	Group 3: 1,2,3,4
Group 4: 4,4,4,4,4	Group 4: 1,2,3,4

Ask each group to reflect on the influential characteristics put forward during the morning, including those from the expert panel. Their task is to write a definitive list of influential characteristics arising from this calibration exercise, particularly focusing on those characteristics that influence judgements at the borderlines of important marks such as pass/fail, 2.1/2.2 or 2.1/1.

Groups should try to ensure that they share an understanding of the characteristics on their list by highlighting elements of the text in the different assignments which illustrate the characteristic, where this is possible.

Ask them to write their list on a flip chart.

13.50

In each group, one person (list owner) stays with their list and the others distribute themselves across the rest of the group tables. On each table, the list owner explains and takes questions on their list of influential characteristics. The emphasis should be on building a shared understanding of what the characteristics mean in the context of actual student work.

14.00

Group members return to their own group to discuss their findings from visitors and from visiting with other groups. The lists should be finalised and posted on the wall.

14.10

The facilitator explains the reasoning for the last exercise in terms of building a shared understanding of standards that might be used across staff, programmes and institutions to create common assessment criteria. The facilitator attempts to draw on the commonalities in the lists as the characteristics that we should probably concentrate on in building assessment criteria as there is across-the-board agreement.

The facilitator should stress that, on their own, such common assessment criteria are unlikely to have a significant impact on assuring common standards unless they are illustrated through exemplars, and assessors have this kind of calibration opportunity to discuss their meaning.

14.15

Stages 2 and 3 are repeated for Assignment 3, but the facilitator actively encourages the groups to draw on their lists of influential characteristics, particularly common ones, in making their decision about the appropriate grade.

As the assignment is likely to be of a different standard than the first two, other influential characteristics may arise.

15.15 Conclusion

Note that the process has confirmed the challenge of agreeing marks across multiple markers.

Encourage the delegates to consider what they can take from the day in terms of their own standards, those of their home institution and where they are external examiners.

Encourage the delegates to use the toolkit in other forums, such as their department or an examining department.

Explain that this calibration process can be repeated across many types of assignment with different learning outcomes in the broad field of Geography: oral presentations, practical work, examinations, final-year projects, reflective learning journals, online resources and work-based assessments.

Ask delegates to complete an evaluation questionnaire.

After the workshop

Share a summary of the evaluation questionnaires with Advance HE to contribute to the evidence base for calibration. Send the summary to external.examining@advance-he.ac.uk