



Icon Accreditation Guides

Moderation and quality assurance

November 2025

Icon

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT - VARCS	3
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	3
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF ASSESSORS	5
MODERATION PROCESS	6
RECEIVING A NOTIFICATION TO MODERATE.....	7
ASSESSMENT REPORT FORMAT	7
STARTING YOUR MODERATION	8
SUPPORTING NOTES FOR MODERATORS.....	9
SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORTS	11
SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT #1: INTERVENTIVE	11
SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT #2: PREVENTIVE / CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT	12
SAMPLE MODERATOR DECISION #1: MODERATOR IN AGREEMENT WITH ASSESSOR	13
SAMPLE MODERATOR DECISION #2: MODERATOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSOR.....	14
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.....	15
APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY.....	15
CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY	15
FAIR ACCESS POLICY	15
GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE STATEMENT.....	15
MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY	15
QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY	15

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of moderation is to provide internal quality assurance for Icon Accreditation assessments. The moderator's role is to check assessors have undertaken their role correctly and assessment decisions are fair, objective and are informed by the **Icon Assessment Criteria** and the **VARCS Principles of Assessment** and no other reasoning.

It is important to have a clear moderation framework so moderators understand exactly what quality assurance checks should be undertaken for each assessment. This ensures all assessors are being held to the same rules and standards of practice.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT - VARCS

Valid: Is the type of evidence presented appropriate for the sub-standard candidates are trying to meet?

Authentic: Does the evidence presented appear to be the candidate's own?

Reliable: Can the assessor make a reliable judgement about the standard of the candidate's work based on the evidence?

Current: Does the work reflect current practice or is it outdated? (There is an important caveat to this, if practice has moved on since the project was completed, we expect candidates to acknowledge this and discuss how they might complete that project differently today.

Basically, projects can be older, but knowledge must be current.)

Sufficient: Is there enough information to meet the assessment criteria for the substandard?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Icon Accreditation process involves several roles – candidates, mentors, assessors, specialist advisors, committee member and relies on Icon to manage and quality-assure the system. Each contributes to ensuring that assessment is fair, consistent, and professionally robust.

Candidate	• Complete a Portfolio of Evidence. • Take part in the Professional Discussion.
Icon	• Responsible for managing and delivering the assessment process, including: • Coordinating all assessment activities. • Developing policies and maintaining quality assurance. • Matching candidates with Assessors, Specialist Advisors, and Mentors, and supporting all parties. • Recruiting, training, and maintaining pools of assessment personnel. • Providing ongoing standardisation and training. • Ensuring assessment decisions are reliable and valid. • Managing moderation, appeals, and complaints.
End-Point Assessors	Paid professionals who independently and fairly assess candidates. They must be ACR, hold (or be working toward) an assessment qualification, be independent of the candidate, have relevant current competence, and attend all required training.

Key responsibilities:

- Lead the assessment: review/mark the portfolio and prepare Professional Discussion questions.
- Complete the assessment report and provide clear, evidence-based feedback.
- Work with and guide the Specialist Advisor.
- Make fair decisions, participate in standardisation, and discuss decisions with Icon/AMC as needed.
- Broad material knowledge is expected, though not necessarily in the candidate's specialism.

**Specialist
Advisors**

Volunteers who ensure material-specific expertise informs the assessment. They must be ACR, independent, have relevant current practice/knowledge, and attend required training.

Key responsibilities:

- Support the Assessor in reviewing evidence.
- Help shape and participate in the Professional Discussion.
- Review sections of the assessment report if needed.

Note: Assessment management remains the Assessor's responsibility.

Mentors

Volunteers who support candidates in preparing portfolios and the Professional Discussion. They must be ACR or ACR (Emeritus) and attend required training. They do not judge evidence or make assessment decisions. Icon provides candidates with a shortlist; mentors are chosen for suitability and availability.

**Accreditation
Moderation
Committee (AMC)**

Volunteers (10–15 members) who ensure decisions are fair, accurate, consistent, and evidence-based. Members must be ACR, have assessment knowledge, and participate in standardisation.

Key responsibilities:

- Review assessment reports and portfolios to confirm decisions.
- Evaluate Assessor decision-making.
- Take part in three annual moderation meetings.

Specialist Advisors may support moderation if specific material expertise is missing. Collectively, the AMC covers the full range of conservation specialisms.

The AMC Chair (an appointed member) leads meetings and has the casting vote.

**Professional
Standards and
Development
Committee (PSD)**

The PSD Committee oversees Icon Accreditation. It:

- Ensures consistent, high professional standards.
- Leads ongoing review and development of the scheme.
- Develops and reviews core policies (Complaints & Appeals, Conflict of Interest, Fair Access, Malpractice, QA, etc.).
- Reviews AMC quality assurance reports.
- Manages complaints and appeals.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF ASSESSORS

End Point Assessors work as independent contractors for Icon. As such, The Icon Accreditation and Skills Manager is responsible for overseeing their performance management.

Assessment reports will be rated in the following ways.

Report Invalid	Report Unsatisfactory	Report Satisfactory
Icon Team / Moderation Committee reject the assessment due to malpractice/ maladministration.	Moderators need to challenge/clarify assessor's decisions due to either insufficient information or unclear rationale for decision.	Moderators find a clear, fair rationale for assessor's decisions.
Outcome: Icon follows procedures outlined in Assessment malpractice/maladministration policy.	Outcome: Assessors approached for further information before proceeding with moderation.	Outcome: Assessment decision upheld, result confirmed with candidate.

Assessor's performance will be rated in the following ways:

Red Assessors	Amber Assessors	Green Assessors
Have completed fewer than 0-2 satisfactory assessments.	Have completed 3-5 satisfactory assessments.	Have completed 6+ satisfactory assessments.

The extent of moderation required for an assessment is dependent on the assessor's current RAG rating.

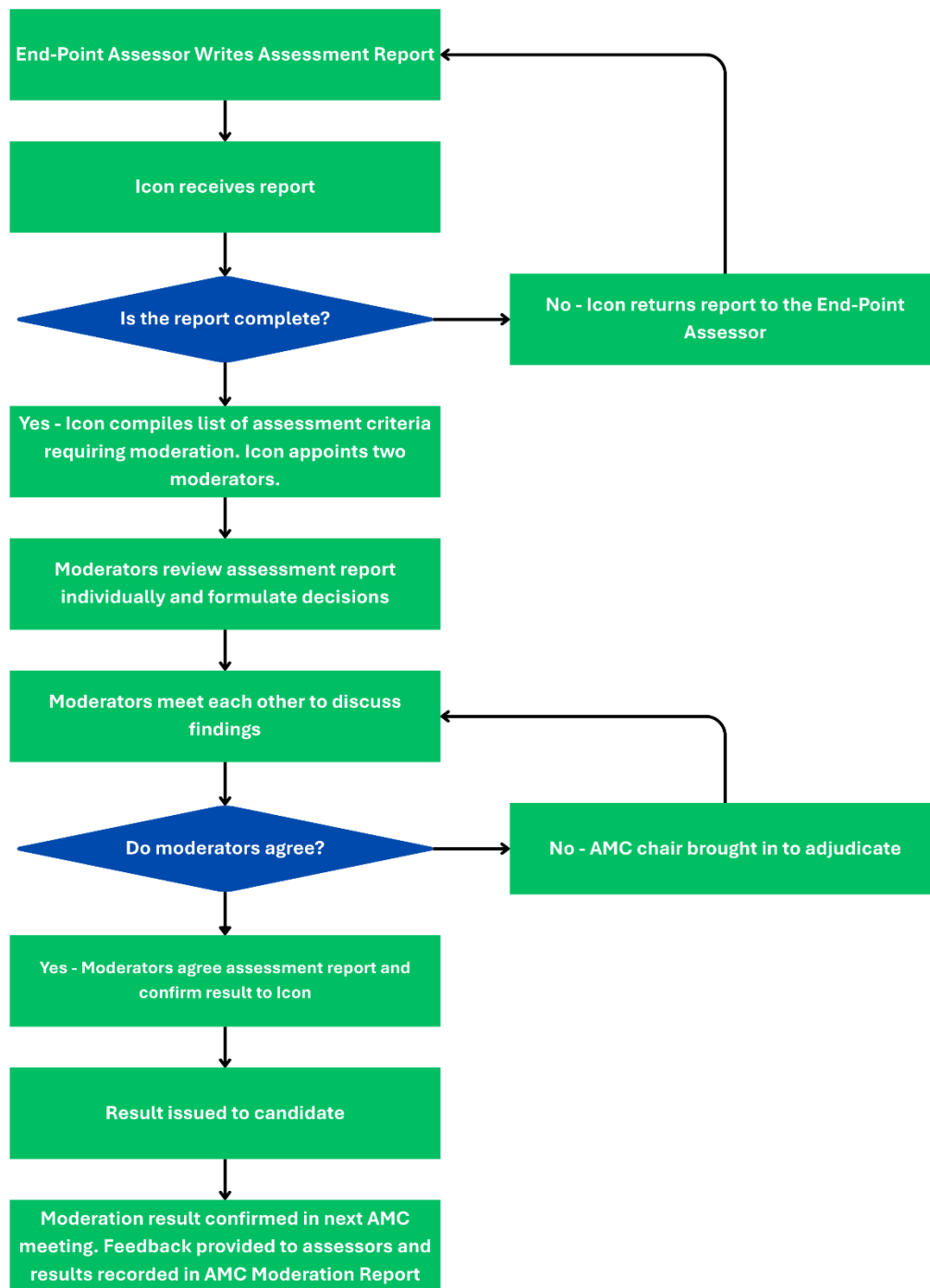
Moderation Rules – what to moderate

Red Assessors	Amber Assessors	Green Assessors
All 37 sub-standards.	Moderate a minimum of 20 sub-standards. Your moderation sample must include the following: - Any failed sub-standards - At least 2 sub-standards from each of the 6 areas of the Icon Professional Standards, picked at random by Icon.	Moderate a minimum of 10 sub-standards. Your moderation sample must include the following: - Any failed sub-standards - At least 1 sub-standard from each of the 6 areas of the Icon Professional Standards, picked at random by Icon

Assessors can be moved down a category in the RAG rating system if any of the following conditions apply:

- Their last assessment was carried out over 12 months ago.
- Assessors failed to attend the annual standardization meeting, either in person or online.
- The assessor has had 1 or more unsatisfactory reports in a rolling 12-month period.

MODERATION PROCESS



- Assessments happen on a rolling basis across the year and are moderated as soon as the assessment report is received by Icon.
- Each assessment will be moderated by a minimum of two members of the moderation committee including, where possible, a member with expertise in the same area of conservation as the candidate.

- Icon will inform moderators which sub-standards to moderate, based on the moderation rules above.
- Members will initially read the assessment report individually and then come together with their co-moderator to discuss their views and come to an agreement.
- Where moderators are unable to agree upon a moderation decision, a third moderator will be brought in to help reach a consensus. Once moderators have reached a consensus, results will be issued to candidates.
- Accreditation Moderation Committee meetings will be held 3 times a year, results for recently moderated reports will be shared with the committee. Feedback for assessors will be agreed and the information shared will be incorporated into the Icon Internal Quality Assurance Moderation Report, which Icon staff will compile.

RECEIVING A NOTIFICATION TO MODERATE

Moderators will receive a notification to moderate via email from the Icon Skills Team. The Icon Skills Team will try to ensure moderation requests are spread evenly across the members of the Moderation Committee; however, this will not always be possible as some conservation specialisms may be in higher demand than others.

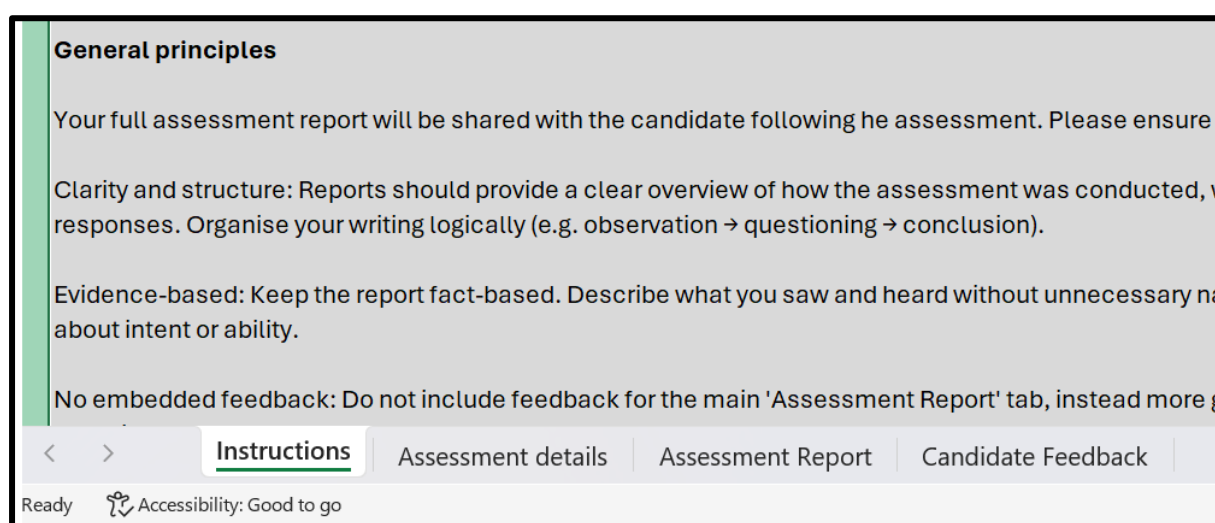
Moderators will receive the following information:

- Assessment Report – this contains the names of the candidate, End Point Assessor and Specialist Advisor.
- The list of sub-standards they are required to moderate.
- Access to the candidate's e-portfolio on OneFile

Upon receipt of a notification to moderate, Moderators are requested to confirm with Icon that they have availability to moderate and have no conflict of interest with the candidate.

ASSESSMENT REPORT FORMAT

The assessment report is an Excel spreadsheet with several pages (see tabs at the bottom of the sheet.)



Tab 1 is 'Instructions'. This is aimed at assessors and contains no content to moderate.

Tab 2 is 'Assessment Details' and contains the names of the candidate, the End Point Assessor and Specialist Advisor, dates and names of the moderators. Your name will already be entered onto this sheet by Icon.

Tab 3 is the main 'Assessment report', where assessors cite the evidence seen for each sub-standard, their assessment decision and rationale.

Tab 4 is the 'Candidate Feedback'. This provides an overall summary of the candidate's performance across each of the 6 areas of Professional Standard: Assessment of Cultural Heritage, Options and Strategies, Conservation Measures, Organisation and Management, Continuing Professional Development and Judgement and Ethics. It also provides space for general candidate feedback

STARTING YOUR MODERATION

Step 1. You may find it helpful to review the 'Sample Moderation' materials (see appendix) before you begin.

Step 2. Start by reading the information provided in the 'Candidate Feedback' tab. This will give you an overall indication of whether the candidate is deemed to have passed or whether there are areas of concern. It is a useful contextual summary for moderators.

Step 3. Refer to the list of sub-standards to moderate provided by Icon, depending on the RAG rating of the Specialist Advisor, in a full assessment this will be between 10 and 37 sub-standards. If the candidate is undertaking a partial reassessment, it may be fewer than 10 standards.

Step 4. Go to the 'Assessment Report' tab. For each sub-standard you are required to moderate, doing the following:

- Check which projects this sub-standard is featured in.
- For the relevant projects read the text in the '**Evidence**' box. Has the assessor clearly explained where the evidence was found (e.g. the project write-up, a specific document or during professional discussion?) Has the assessor clearly explained what evidence was seen?
- For the relevant projects, check the '**Outcome**' box. What decision has the assessor reached on this evidence. The options are:

Pass – evidence fully meets the assessment criteria

Partial – evidence meets part of assessment criteria

Fail – evidence does not meet the assessment criteria

Not addressed – the sub-standard is not covered by this project.

- For the relevant projects, read the text in the '**Rationale**' box. Does the assessor give a clear explanation for their decision? Is this decision fair and objective and informed by either the language of the assessment criteria and/or one of more of the VARCS principles?

- Scroll across the page to **‘Summary of outcomes’** section. This will list the total number of ‘pass’, ‘partial’ and ‘fail’ decisions against that sub-standard. The box entitled ‘additional comments’ may have some further text to contextualise the decisions – however if the result / evidence is straightforward then additional comments may not be necessary. Are you satisfied that the assessor’s overall decision on that standard is fair, based on the evidence seen?
- Scroll to the grey columns entitled **‘Moderation Decisions’**. This will be where your notes and decisions will eventually be recorded. (See appendix for examples.) **However, this section is only completed once both moderators have met and have decided they are satisfied with the decisions.** Initially, please record your thoughts elsewhere – for instance, in a notebook or on a MS Word document.

Step 5. Arrange a time to discuss your findings with your co-moderator. Are you in overall agreement? If so, decide which moderator will populate the relevant sections of the ‘Moderation Decisions’ columns with your feedback and return to the completed Assessment Report form to the Icon Skills Team. If you are not in agreement, contact the icon Skills Team who can bring in a third Moderator to adjudicate.

SUPPORTING NOTES FOR MODERATORS

1. A decision of ‘partial’, will be used where a candidate has addressed some of the assessment criteria for that sub-standard within a project, but not all. If, across the assessment as a whole, the assessor considers all aspects of the criteria are eventually met in sufficient quantity, then the candidate can pass the sub-standard.
2. Conversely, if assessors highlight a serious ‘red flag’ in a project (e.g. practice that is harmful to heritage or people), the sub-standard should be failed overall. This is regardless of whether the candidate has met the assessment criteria in other projects.
3. If any aspect of the assessor’s commentary is unclear, Moderators have the option of looking at the candidate’s evidence in OneFile to provide further clarification. However, **moderators should not need to do this routinely** – this runs the risk of the moderators assessing the candidate, not the assessor. **If a moderator is routinely struggling to review the assessor’s commentary, they should flag this with the Icon Skills Team. This indicates that either the assessment report is inadequate and needs returning to the assessor or further moderation training may be necessary.**
4. Overall, moderators should be confident that the candidate can demonstrate a consistency of approach and **depth of understanding** in their chosen area, therefore standards should have a **minimum** of 2-3 passes against them (or sufficient partial passes that equate to 2 complete passes.)
5. Some assessor/moderator discretion may sometimes be applied to point 4 if a candidate is deemed to be demonstrating a sub-standard to a substantial degree within a single project. This would usually occur when a project or task is large in scale. See the following examples:

Example 1:

A candidate presents a project where they are required to care for a collection of 50 books. They are evidencing sub-standard **6.4: *Demonstrate and Observe the Icon Code of Conduct***. For each book the candidate is making individual decisions based on the Code of Conduct. The candidate gives detailed evidence for a selection of these decisions, with reference to the Code of Conduct each time. The evidence presented covers all aspects of the assessment criterion and the VARCS principles. The assessor could argue that the candidate meets the standard multiple times within 1 project.

Example 2:

A candidate is supplying evidence for sub-standard **6.9: Act with responsibility towards the environment, promoting environmental sustainability in conservation practice and minimising adverse environmental impact**. This standard asks for candidates to demonstrate an awareness of ways in their work can adversely affect the environment and consider ways in which they can mitigate this. Examples could include sourcing more sustainable materials for a project or taking actions to reduce waste. However, the candidate has gone beyond taking actions at an individual project level. They have developed a comprehensive policy for environmental sustainability at organisational level, with lists of actions for specific teams to follow. The assessor judges that the evidence meets the VARCS criteria and the candidate is demonstrating the standard beyond the level required to achieve accreditation.

Summary

- Remember your role is to assess the assessor and NOT reassess the candidate.
- Check the materials you have been sent carefully to ensure you are clear about what standards you are moderating
- If you have any questions or concerns about the report you are moderating, the Icon Skills Team are happy to provide ongoing support.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORTS

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT #1: INTERVENTIVE

Below is a screenshot of an example assessment decision, as you will see on the 'Assessment Report Template'.

The report template lists the number and description of the sub-standard in the first two columns. These columns are frozen (so they always appear to the left of the sheet even when you scroll across the page.)		This title should correspond to the number and title of the project on OneFile – so if you do need to explore further, you can look up the relevant information on there.		
		Project 1: Thames landscape (oil on canvas)		
Criteria	Description	Evidence	Outcome	Rationale
1.1	Understand the significance and context of the heritage to be assessed, along with any implications for potential conservation measures.	From PR1 Assessment Report. The candidate described the significance of the painting. A late example (1935) by artist X, who died within a year of completion. Painting depicts buildings that were either partially or fully destroyed by the blitz, so forms a contemporary record visual of pre-war Thames skyline. The candidate explained that the object was a family object, it was kept at the owner's home in an uncontrolled environment, subject to dust and fluctuating temperatures which had contributed to poor overall condition.	Pass	The evidence was valid and developed in sufficient detail. The candidate clearly understood the significance of the heritage being assessed. In discussion (6 min, 46 seconds) the candidate was able to clearly describe the impact of agents of deterioration (e.g. dust and fluctuating / inappropriate temperature) on the materials. They showed that they had clearly communicated this with the owners through their post conservation reporting.
<i>This 'evidence' column shows several areas of good practice:</i> • Highlighting where the evidence is found in bold. • Describing the relevant information supplied by the candidate: (e.g. historical significance of artist and subject matter and the current environmental context of the heritage.) <i>If you are unsure if the information supplied is relevant to the standard, you can cross reference with the ACR assessment criteria document.</i>		<i>This 'rationale' column shows several areas of good practice.</i> • Giving a clear opinion on whether they think the candidate can demonstrate the requirements of the standard. • Referring to one or more of the VARCS criteria that has informed this decision (in this case 'Valid' and 'Sufficient') • Highlighting another area of evidence - in this case a timestamp to the recording of the assessment discussion.		

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT #2: PREVENTIVE / CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Below is a screenshot of an example assessment decision, as you will see on the 'Assessment Report Template'.

		Project 4: Decanting South Gallery ahead of building renovation		
Criteria	Description	Evidence	Outcome	Rationale
3.2	Implement conservation measures.	Evidence: 'Decant plan', ppt presentation entitled 'South Gallery large object move'. Documentation shows the candidate's plan being implemented by a team of 20+ staff and contractors. In discussion , assessors asked about the decision to leave Duke of Portland statue in situ rather than move to stores. The candidate explained that it already had several stress fractures. Removal meant navigating 3 staircases with narrow turns and some uneven steps. Leaving in situ, suitably protected by installation of a canopy, was preferable to risk of removal.	Pass	Evidence met VARCS criteria - particularly 'sufficient and authentic' criteria. The documentation viewed highlighted the complexity of the project. The candidate applied a high level of specialist knowledge and skill to ensure the safe packing and removal of a diverse collection of 90 objects. The candidate fulfilled the aims of the project

<i>This 'evidence' column shows several areas of good practice:</i> • Highlighting where the evidence is found in bold. • Providing useful contextual information: the candidate was supervising a team of 20+ people. • Providing an example of assessor questioning and candidate response, to demonstrate the level of rigor applied in discussion.	<i>The 'rationale' column shows several areas of good practice:</i> • Assessor referring to one or more of the VARCS criteria. • Assessor refers to the terminology of the assessment criteria in the report 'the candidate applied a high level of specialist knowledge and skill.' • The assessor cites a successful outcome.
---	--

SAMPLE MODERATOR DECISION #1: MODERATOR IN AGREEMENT WITH ASSESSOR

Summary of outcomes					Moderator decisions	
Total Pass	Total Partial	Total Fail	Final Assessment Decision	Additional notes	Notes	Agree / Disagree with decision
3	0	1	Pass	Assessors felt 1 project was insufficiently complex for inclusion in ACR assessment – hence marked as fail. However, overall, the candidate has sufficient evidence for pass in this standard.	Evidence of rigorous questioning. Clear rationale by assessor which is informed by VARCS criteria.	Agree



Note: The assessor is only required to populate the 'Additional Notes' column if there is something that requires further explanation to the moderators. (In this instance, a candidate failed on one project, but assessors felt the remaining evidence was compelling.)

If the moderation decision is straightforward, notes can be succinct. Useful feedback may include:

- Was the assessor description /rationale clear and sufficiently detailed?
- Was there evidence of VARCS criteria / or assessment criteria being applied?
- Was questioning during discussion appropriate?

SAMPLE MODERATOR DECISION #2: MODERATOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSOR

Summary of outcomes					Moderator decisions	
Total Pass	Total Partial	Total Fail	Final Assessment Decision	Additional notes	Notes	Agree / Disagree with decision
2	0	0	Pass		Rationale for decision on project 2 is clear. Rationale for assessment decision on project 4 is unclear. Commentary provided by assessors is insufficient. The assessors state 'candidate provided RH data' but give no further information about candidate's interpretation of this data. The information in the 'Rationale' box only says, 'evidence supports the standard.' Was this covered further at discussion? With no further information to support decision for project 4, candidate has insufficient passes for this sub-standard overall.	Disagree



Where the moderator disagrees with the assessor decision, they need to provide their own clear rationale that is focused on the **assessor's** performance.

- Grounds for rejecting an assessment decision could include:
- Lack of detail / clarity in narrative
- No clear rationale provided for decision.
- Decisions based on criteria other than VARCS / assessment criteria (e.g. assessors' personal biases / evidence of overly lenient or strict assessment decisions.)
- Obvious mistakes on the form – e.g. assessor adding up number of passes / fails incorrectly, missing information or commenting on the wrong project or sub-standard.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures support the delivery of Icon Accreditation:

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy details Icon's approach towards dealing with complaints and managing the appeals process to ensure that candidates receive a fair and objective

assessment. This policy relates appeals and complaints with respect of:

- the results of assessments,
- decisions regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration, and
- decisions relating to any action to be taken against a candidate following an
- investigation into malpractice or maladministration.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

This policy details Icon's approach to identifying and mitigating the risks of conflicts of interest in undertaking Icon Accreditation assessments.

FAIR ACCESS POLICY

Icon must have in place the necessary systems and procedures to allow for the provision of access arrangements, including reasonable adjustments and special considerations. These should reflect the needs of candidates, whilst also ensuring that all assessments are valid, reliable, and consistent. This document relates to the following Policies: Appeals and Complaints Policy

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE STATEMENT

Sets out Icon's position on the use of generative AI in assessments, including where it is allowed and where it is not permitted.

MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY

This policy details Icon's approach towards identifying and dealing with cases of malpractice and maladministration

Outlines the procedures for handling suspected malpractice (such as plagiarism) or maladministration and explains the responsibilities of all parties involved.

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) recognises the vital importance of ensuring that all assessments it undertakes as part of the delivery of Icon Accreditation are valid, fair, objective and meet the high standards of the conservation profession.



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

The Institute of Conservation

Studio 32, FBC Clerkenwell, 40 Bowling Green Lane
London EC1R 0NE