

# Marks Scam in DU

## “Moderation” Patterns in DU Final Exams

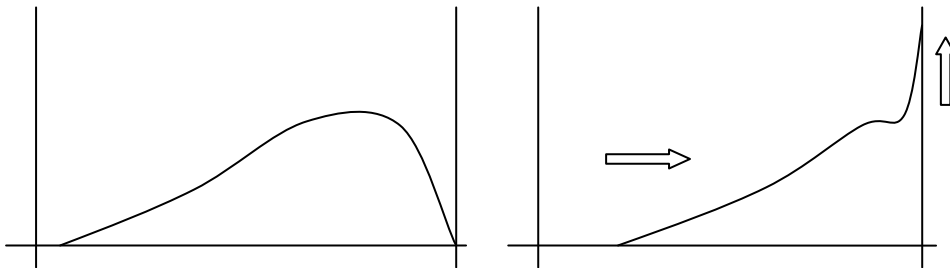
By Abha Dev Habib

Moderation of exams is an academic practice which aims at removing unevenness in grading practices and creating results which can be used for genuine comparisons across batches. It is rare for moderation to lead to large changes in marks for many students. When it does happen it is a clear indicator of some serious fault in the teaching or evaluation processes.

In the recently declared Delhi University final exam results (under the semester scheme) we repeatedly see patterns of unusually heavy-handed moderation – which, indeed, should just be called *inflation*. The two key patterns are given below. These are hardly ever seen in a properly executed assessment, but in the DU results, *almost every paper* (that we have managed to extract the data for) shows one or both of these. Both indicate generous gifting of marks after the initial checking of the answer sheets.

**Pattern A:** Suppose 5 extra marks are given to every student, in a paper of 75 marks. Then every student who got 70 or more will end up at 75. This causes students to bunch up at 75 and creates a peak at 75 - more students finally get 75 than get 74, 73, etc. The more the marks that are added, the higher is this peak. In the DU results, this peak – which should be absent in a fair assessment – is often astonishingly high, with a frequency as much as twice that of any other mark. It is one thing for many students to get full marks, but here we have full marks as the most common result!

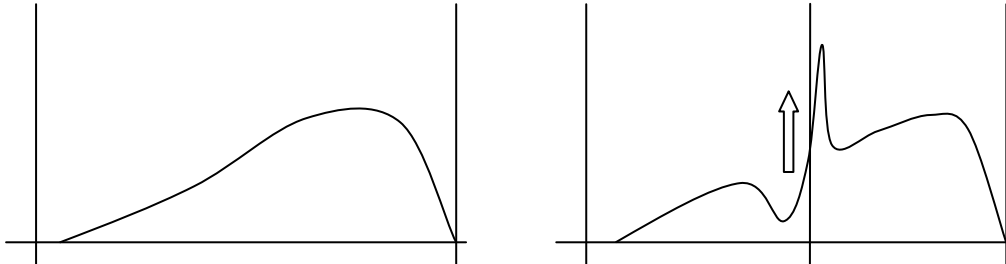
**How Pattern A is created:** As extra marks are given, the distribution of marks shifts to the right and creates a peak at the maximum mark.



**Pattern B:** This pattern occurs when the institution gives “grace marks” to bump failing students up into the passing levels. This creates a sharp bump in the middle of the range of marks. This bump is not unusual, but it should be small. If it is very high then it indicates the university trying to cover up its own failure. An indicator that a bump is not natural is the presence of a deep well in front of it, this represents the students who have been scooped up into the bump.

**How pattern B is created:** Students who are close to a threshold are given marks to make them cross it. This creates a trough before the threshold and a peak after it.

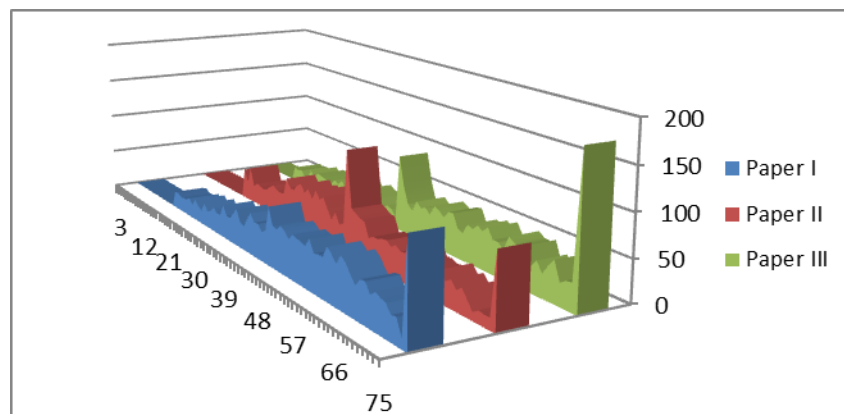
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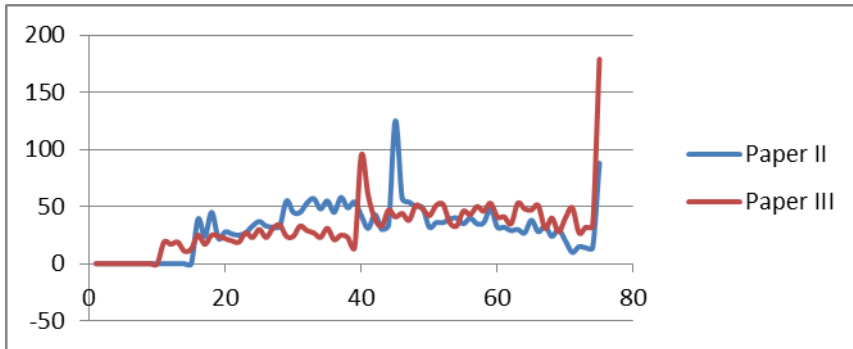


Now, over to the actual marks! Note that Pattern A is more prevalent in the sciences (and economics) where there would normally be many high-scoring students. In the humanities & social sciences we see a greater prevalence of Pattern B.

A final note: These are all courses with large enrolments – of 1500 to 3500. Anomalies in such large courses can never be attributed to chance.

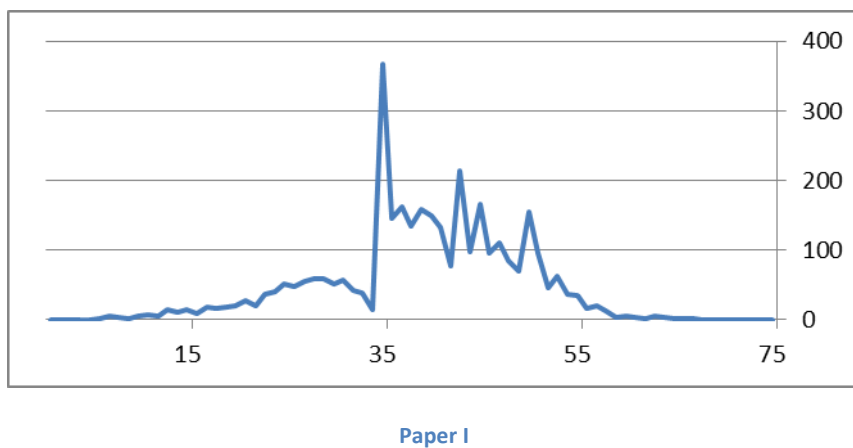
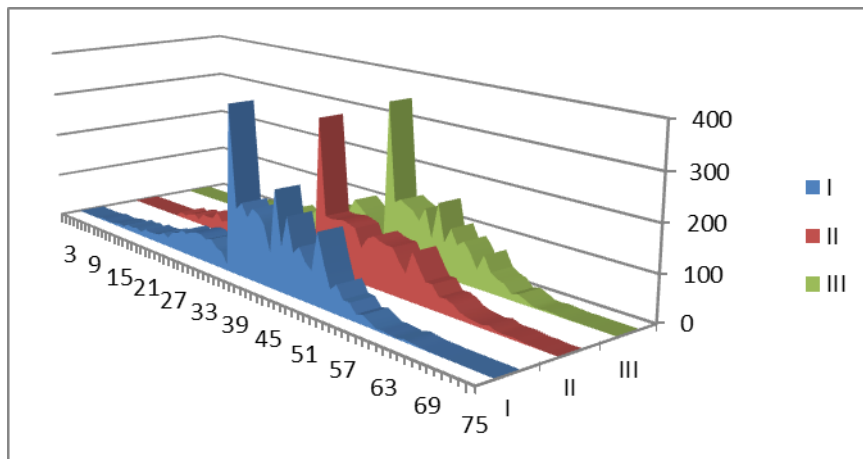
## BA Economics Semester I:



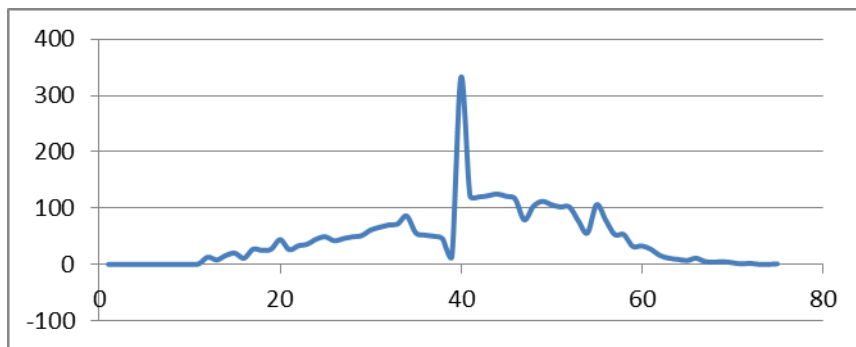


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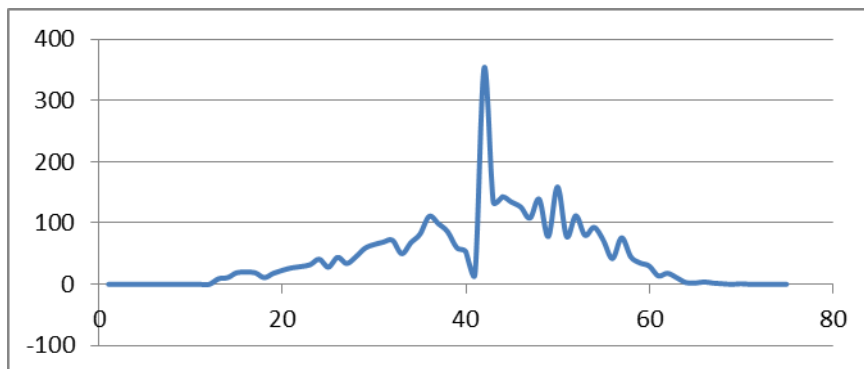
### BA Political Science Semester I:



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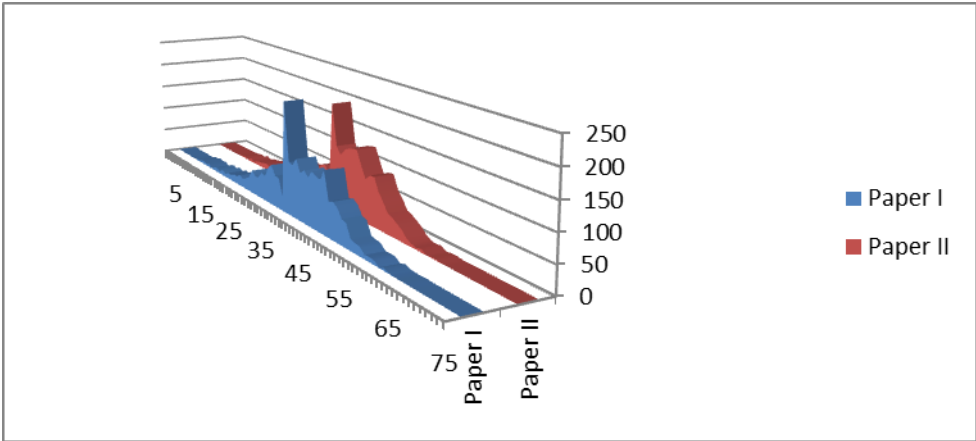


Paper II

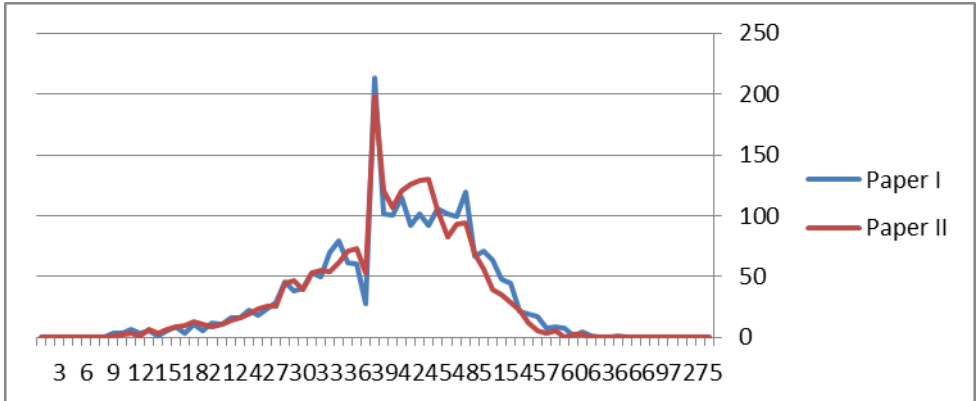


Paper III

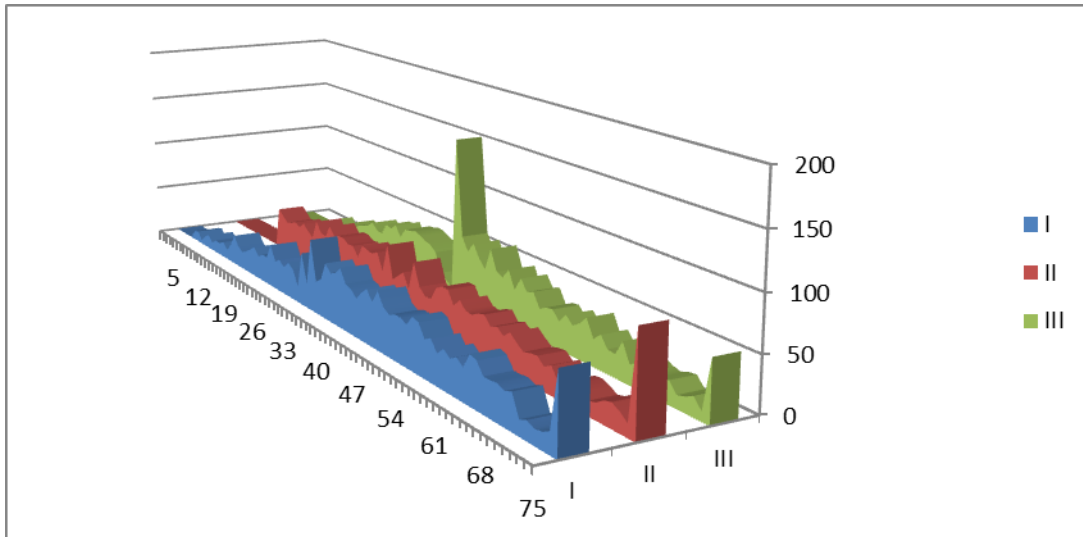
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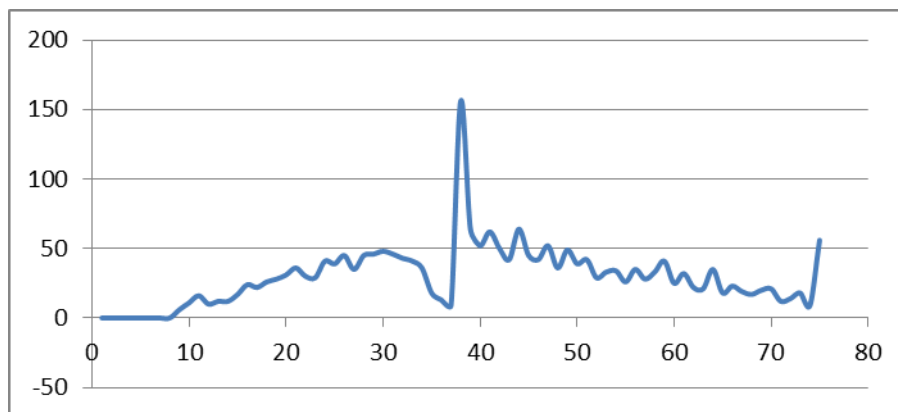
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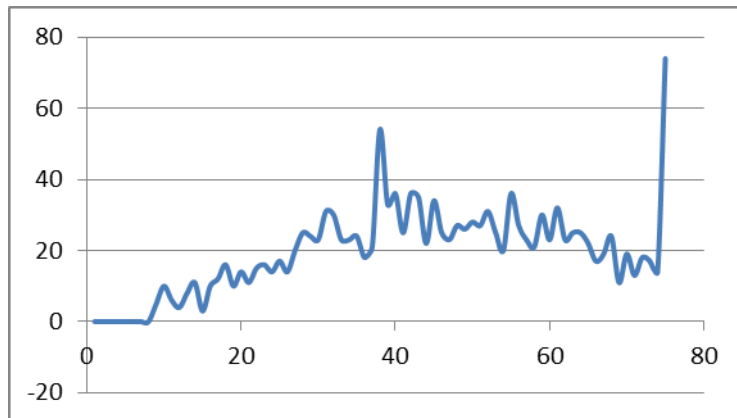
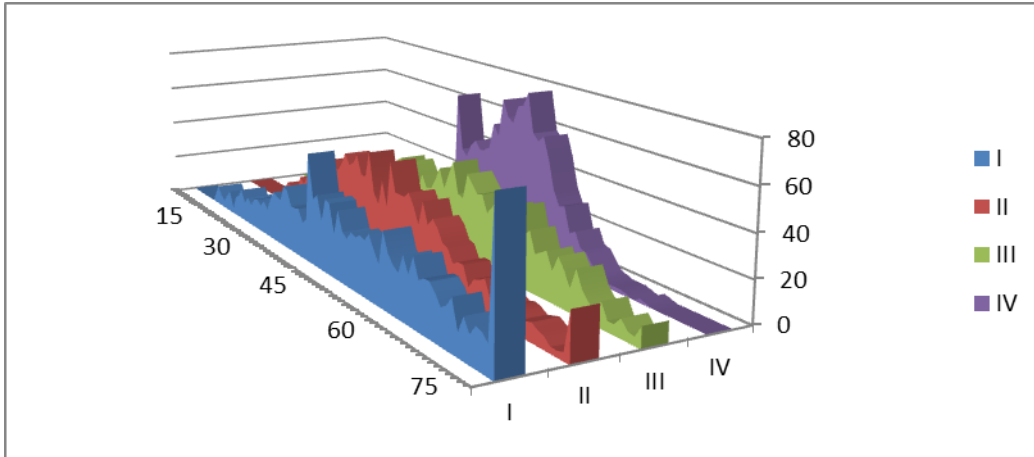


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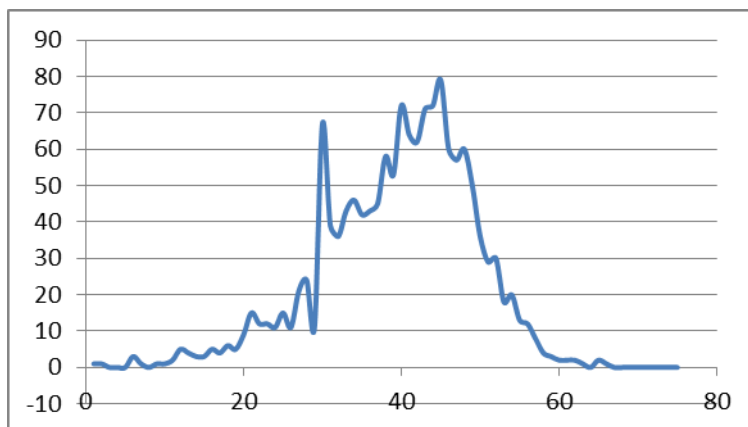
Paper III

**BSc Physics Semester I:**



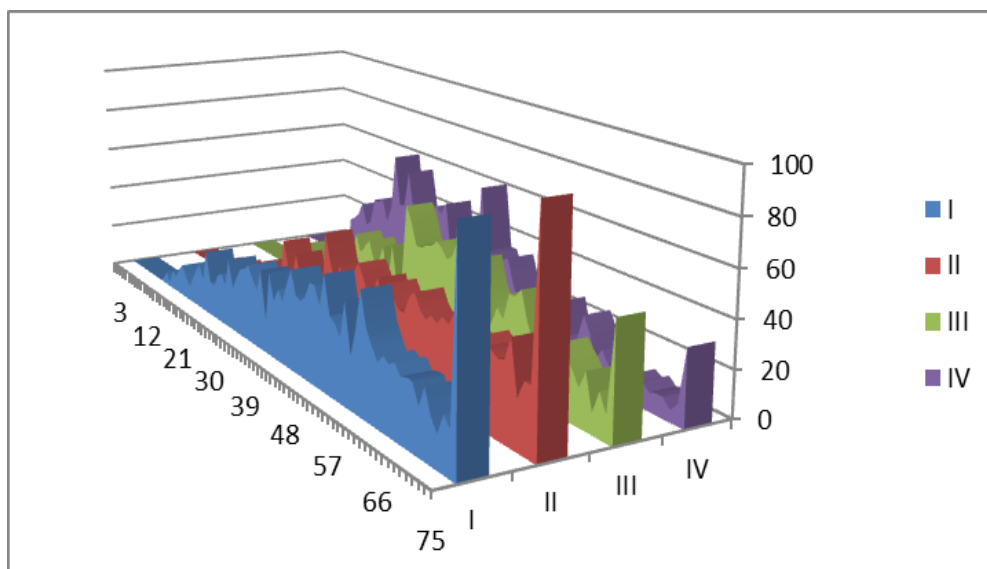
Paper I

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Paper IV

## BSc Physics Semester III:



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## BSc Chemistry Semester III:

