

# Policy

## Board of Examiners

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## Introduction

- 1 These guidelines refer specifically to the roles and responsibilities of Boards and their members; they will be applied in conjunction with the Academic Assessment Regulations and with any specific professional/programme requirements, which include details of the academic framework for Boards
- 2 The 'Results Process' is integral to the Boards and will provide guidance for detail of organisation and management of Boards. All templates for Board management and all records will be held on the network shared drive, accessible to relevant staff. This will ensure consistency of operation across the institution and easy access to current and historic information.
- 3 Board members are expected to attend all boards as required and to deputise a replacement member, approved by the Head of School, if required. Any deputisation must be informed to the Board Secretary
- 4 Schools will consider the required pattern of attendance of External Examiners across all Boards at the start of the academic year to ensure adequate attendance for quality and standards assurance. External Examiners will then be notified of their individual Board attendance responsibilities, including dates, by Academic Registry.
- 5 Dates for all Boards will be set as early as possible for the academic year and will be communicated to all Board members after agreement and confirmation. It is not expected that dates will change once they have been confirmed and they will become part of the fixed University academic calendar.
- 6 Chairs are normally expected to have a degree of independence from their Boards: it is an expectation that Boards should not be chaired by staff with any significant teaching contact with the students under consideration or with significant responsibility for oversight of the programmes/modules under consideration.

## Module Boards

- 7 The role of the module board is to:
  - confirm module results
  - agree scaling of marks if recommended by External Examiner and approved by Board
  - undertake a quality assurance/enhancement role at module level by discussing the performance of individual modules and identifying modules for Module Review and Action Plans and modules for reporting of good practice, taking into account student feedback, levels of achievement, external scrutiny feedback and any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports
  - receive brief summary reports verbally from module External Examiners who are present and *in absentia* from those who are unexpectedly unable to attend

- 8 The membership of Module boards will consist of:
- Chair
  - Module Leader/s /Coordinator/s
  - Academics who teach on modules, if required to provide information relevant to discussions for areas not already covered by the Module Leader/s / Coordinator/s
  - External Examiner/s
  - Board Secretary
  - Notetaker

### **Module Board Chair**

- 9 The Chair will normally be a Head of School, Associate Head of School or Principal Lecturer. In accordance with paragraph 6 above, the Chair should be appointed from a School different to that responsible for the modules under consideration.
- 10 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the business of the Module Board is conducted according to University regulations.
- 11 The Chair will:
- ensure that marks presented are confirmed and that the required quality assurance processes have been undertaken
  - ensure full and relevant debate of the performance of each module taking into account student feedback, levels of achievement, external scrutiny and any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports
  - ensure that modules are identified for Module Review and Action Plans and for reporting of good practice after this debate
  - ensure that Module Board business is conducted at a pace that allows all members the opportunity to contribute to the debate
  - summarise any debate and ensure that decisions made are correctly recorded
  - invite External Examiners present to make reports either after consideration of each module or at the conclusion of business
  - invite presentation of written summary reports from External Examiners unexpectedly unable to attend

### **Module Leader/Coordinator**

- 12 The module leader/coordinator will normally be the individual/s having overall responsibility for the module/s under consideration and for ensuring that the marks required for the Module Board are presented to the administrative team with sufficient time for processing.
- 13 The module leader/coordinator will:
- ensure that marks presented to the Module Board are confirmed
  - ensure the Module Board is informed of any known irregularities in the conduct or assessment of the module/s
  - ensure that appropriate and adequate members of the teaching team are present as required to contribute to the debate for each module. This does not need to be all those who teach on the module provided that all relevant aspects of delivery and assessment are represented

- ensure that all information required to identify modules for Module Review and Action Plans is available to the Module Board; specifically student feedback, external scrutiny information and information from any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports in addition to the statistical data set on module performance

### **Academics**

14 Academics present will:

- confirm that marks presented have been processed through the appropriate University procedures and that all assessments, marking and moderation have been conducted according to University regulations. They will resolve any outstanding queries during the time the Module Board is sitting if possible
- inform the Module Board of any known irregularities in the conduct or assessment of the module/s
- bring student feedback, external scrutiny information and any other relevant review information for the module to the Module Board to aid discussion on module performance

### **External Examiner**

15 External Examiners appointed to the modules under consideration will be invited to attend. The Schools will have agreed at the start of the academic year which externals will be invited to which Boards to ensure appropriate representation at Module Boards and Assessment Boards

16 The External examiner will:

- comment on performance of the module, on the quality and standards of assessments set and the appropriateness, fairness and level of marking and moderation experienced
- comment on any relevant feedback received from students where such meetings have formed part of the external examining duties
- submit the proforma *In absentia* External Examiner report if unexpectedly unable to attend the Module Board. N.B. this does not replace the annual report.

### **Board Secretary (Registry Officer)**

17 The designated Academic Registry Officers and Registry Administrators are responsible for receiving marks and preparing all paperwork for the Module Board, overseen and by the Board Secretary.

18 The Module Board Secretary will:

- ensure that all relevant paperwork is presented to the Module Board by electronic means where possible as a 'paperless' Board
- ensure that any data required as back up information for the running of the Board is available if required. This may be by means of an electronic network link or a memory stick
- liaise with Module Leader/s / Coordinator/s and External Examiners re attendance at Board
- ensure that any amendments to marks are entered onto system after Board

### **Academic Registry Administrators**

19 The Academic Registry Administrators will support the Board Secretary in preparation of papers for the Board.

## Assessment Boards

- 20 Assessment Boards will take place at three main stages of a programme/course:
- at the end of the approved course of study to approve conferment of final award
  - at validated progression points to make decisions about a student's ability to proceed to the next stage
  - after set periods of retrieval or deferment to review the amended student profile.
- 21 Decisions can also be made at any one of these stages to award an interim exit award or to fail a student whose profile does not permit any other decision under University or specific programme regulations.
- 22 The role of the Assessment Board is to:
- consider student profiles and results individually by exception
  - ensure that all appropriate University and professional/programme regulations are considered when making recommendations
  - ensure consistency and fairness in applying University and specific professional/programme regulations to consideration of individual student results
  - confirm recommendations for the conferment of approved awards for those students who have gained all required credits and fulfilled any specific requirements of the professional/course regulations
  - make decisions on a student's eligibility for progression to the next stage, including recommendations for deferral, compensation, progression carrying outstanding credits and/or retrieval of failed modules or elements as approved by University and professional/programme regulations
  - confirm satisfactory completion of modules ending part way through a stage
  - confirm and apply appropriate actions according to regulations on Mitigating Circumstances and/or Academic Misconduct to those cases where decisions have been referred to the Board through the relevant processes
  - recommend an award or progression following successful retrieval of failure or completion of deferred assessment
  - recommend an interim award
  - refuse any of the above
  - confirm overall module marks if these have not already been approved by an earlier Module Board
  - undertake a quality assurance/enhancement role at module level where this has not been undertaken by a previous Module Board. This to be achieved by discussing the performance of individual modules and identifying modules for Module Review and Action Plans and modules for reporting of good practice, taking into account student feedback, levels of achievement, external scrutiny feedback and any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports
  - receive brief summary reports verbally from module External Examiners who are present and *in absentia* from those who have been unexpectedly unable to attend
- 23 Every effort will be made to reach a decision by consensus. However, in exceptional circumstances a decision shall be determined by a simple majority of voting members of the Board and the Chair will have a casting vote.

## Quorum

- 24 No numerical quorum will be established for Assessment Boards. It is expected that all appointed members of Assessment Boards will attend.
- 25 Quorum will not be established without the presence of both the Chair, or their nominated deputy, and the Academic Quality representative. In the case of Assessment Boards held at partner Institutions quorum is additionally not established without the presence of a member of academic staff of the University.

## Membership

- 26 The membership of Assessment Boards will consist of:
  - Chair
  - Programme Leader/s /Course Leader/s /Module Leader/s
  - Academics - a representative group from those responsible for the teaching and assessment of the course/programme.
  - External Examiner/s
  - Academic Quality representative (normally a senior member of the Academic Registry)
  - Board Secretary
  - Registry administrators as required

## Assessment Board Chair

- 27 The Chair will normally be a Head of School or Associate Head of School. In accordance with paragraph 6 above, the Chair should be appointed from a School different to that responsible for the programmes under consideration.
- 28 Where required, the Academic Registrar or the Director of Student Success may chair Assessment Boards.
- 29 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the business of the Board is conducted according to University and relevant professional/programme regulations
- 30 If the Chair will not be available during the period following the Board they will deputise a senior academic colleague to authorise any post Board amendments to decisions as permitted under Chair's Actions regulations
- 31 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that business is conducted at a pace that allows all members the opportunity to contribute to debate and to understand recommendations that have been made.
- 32 The Chair will:
  - summarise any debate and ensure that decisions made are correctly recorded
  - invite External Examiners present to make reports either after consideration of each programme/course or at the conclusion of business
  - invite presentation of written summary reports submitted by External Examiners unexpectedly unable to attend
  - ensure that module performance is discussed and that individual modules are identified for Module Review and Actions Plans and for reporting of good practice,

taking into account student feedback, levels of achievement and external scrutiny and any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports where this has not been undertaken at a previous Module Board

- ensure that marks presented are confirmed as being correct where this has not been undertaken by a previous Module Board

### **Programme/Course Leader**

- 33 The Programme/Course Leader will normally be the individual/s having overall responsibility for the programmes/courses under consideration and for ensuring that the marks required for the Board are presented to the administrative team with sufficient time for processing.
- 34 The Programme/Course Leader will:
- ensure the Assessment Board is informed of any known irregularities in the conduct or assessment of the module/s and/or programme / course
  - ensure that marks presented to the Assessment Board are confirmed if this has not happened at a previous Module Board
  - ensure that appropriate and adequate members of the teaching team are present as required to contribute to any debate. This does not need to be all those who teach on the programme/course provided that all relevant aspects of delivery and assessment are represented
  - ensure, in liaison with the Board Secretary, that External Examiners have been invited as required after considering the attendance pattern at all Boards
  - ensure, in liaison with the Board Secretary, that any External Examiner who was due to attend but has subsequently sent apologies completes and submits the short template report form for presentation to the Board
  - ensure that all information required to identify modules for the Exception reporting is available to the Board; specifically student feedback, external scrutiny information and information from any relevant periodic, partner or PSRB reports in addition to the statistical data set on module performance

### **Academics**

- 35 If the academic leader of the module does not have all required information on the delivery and assessment of particular courses/programmes then other academic colleagues will also be required to attend.
- 36 Academics responsible for individual modules will be required to prepare reassessment work and provide this to the Board Secretary within 3 days of the Board if this has not already been provided.

### **External Examiner**

- 37 External Examiners appointed to the programme/course under consideration will be invited to attend. The School will have agreed at the start of the academic year which externals will be invited to which boards to ensure appropriate representation at Module Boards and Assessment Boards
- 38 The External Examiner will:
- comment on the course/programme, on the quality and standards of assessments set and the appropriateness, fairness and level of marking and moderation experienced

- comment on any relevant feedback received from students where such meetings have formed part of the external examining duties
- submit the *in absentia* report if unexpectedly unable to attend the Board. N.B. this does not replace the annual report.

### **Board Secretary (Registry Officer)**

39 The Board Secretary is responsible for preparing all paperwork for the Board.

40 The Board Secretary will:

- confirm to the Assessment Board which University and/or specific professional/programme regulations are relevant to the particular programme/courses under consideration
- ensure that all relevant paperwork is presented to the Board by electronic means where possible. This may be by means of an electronic network link or a memory stick
- take a record of decisions made - together with the Assessment Board record this will form the official record of the Board
- liaise with Module Leader/s / Coordinator/s and External Examiners re attendance at Board and submission of *in absentia* report if required

### **Academic Quality representative**

41 The Academic Quality representative will:

- advise the Assessment Board of regulatory parameters where required and will do this with regard to maintaining consistency of decision making across Schools
- complete the Assessment Board Record

### **Registry Administrators**

42 The Registry Administrators will support the Board Secretary in preparation of papers for the Board and assist during the operation of the Board as required.

## **Agenda and paperwork**

43 Details of all processes and procedures, as well as all templates, can be found on the shared network drive at the following location: S:\Bucks\Results Board

## **Chair's Actions**

44 The Board will authorise the Chair, or their nominated deputy, to approve amendments to Board decisions made after the conclusion of the Board. This authority will be limited to changes necessitated by the disclosure of undisputed factors which were not reported to the Board but which may have affected the decision made.

45 This will include:

- Identification of an error or other procedural irregularity within the assessment process
- Outcome of late decisions made on Mitigating Circumstances submissions or investigations into allegations of academic student misconduct
- Updated information on placement hours and/or documentation
- Completion of mandatory course specific requirements.



- 46 Approval of these Chairs' Actions will include a confirmation that the marks presented are correct. In all cases the decision made will be consistent with those made by the fully convened Board in similar situations for all other students in the cohort.
- 47 It is not expected that this process will be used to make decisions on groups of students where whole batches of marks were not available to the original Board or for cases where the consideration regarding a changed decision involves academic judgement.
- 48 In these instances the Chair is required to reconvene a Board representative of the original event. This Board would include, at a minimum, the Chair, or their nominated Deputy, the Academic Quality representative and at least one academic from the area under consideration. In rare cases where it is considered that the External Examiner should be informed, it is acceptable that there is evidence presented to demonstrate that the External has been notified of the circumstances.
- 49 The Board Secretary, or their nominated representative, will enter details of Chairs' Actions onto a separate spreadsheet for each Board that has taken place. This will indicate the date of approval by the Chair, or their nominated deputy. It will also record the date that the decision was entered onto the system. This spreadsheet will be filed on the shared drive and will form part of the official record of the Board.

## **Boards for Collaborative Programmes**

- 50 Where possible Boards for students of the University enrolled in partner institutions will be held at one of the University's UK campuses. Membership will be as described above and may include teaching staff from the institution where the programme is delivered in addition to University based academics.
- 51 Where Boards are to be held and serviced in institutions other than the University (whether in the UK or abroad), it is the responsibility of the Academic Registry to ensure that such Boards are serviced by appropriately qualified staff who have received training in the University's regulations and procedures.