



**PROCEDURES FOR THE OPERATION OF BOARDS OF
EXAMINERS FOR TAUGHT AWARDS**

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Board of Examiners play an essential role in enabling the University to ensure that its awards meet its academic standards. No student, therefore, may be awarded a qualification or credit, or progress from one level to another, without having their achievement considered by a Board of Examiners.
- 1.2 The procedures set out in this document apply to all taught awards and to the taught stage of a research degree.
- 1.3 The University operates a two-stage system for its Boards of Examiners, normally separate by a period of time, comprising:
 - (i) a Module Achievement Board of Examiner [MAB];
 - (ii) a Progression and Award Board of Examiner [PAB].
- 1.4 Modules belong to a Parent Programme, except for a small number of Modules which are “owned” by the School, which has responsibility for their delivery. It is expected that the modules of a Parent Programme will not be separated for the purpose of Module Achievement Boards of Examiners.
- 1.5 The Registry within Planning and Academic Administration is responsible for the oversight of the effective administration of Boards of Examiners.
- 1.6 Schools should organise pre-board activities to review mark profiles, but these are not part of the University’s formal process and are not covered by this document. Heads of School and Programme Directors should, however, ensure that no pre-board activities compromise the integrity of a Board of Examiners, including, for example, acting in such a way that would pre-empt a decision of the Board of Examiners, offer a *fait accompli* or prevent it from making a decision without full knowledge of relevant information.
- 1.7 In view of the Covid-19 outbreak and the rules on social distancing, it is anticipated that from 2020-21, briefings, inductions and meetings will be carried out virtually. The University’s main software used for all virtual meetings is MS Teams. All references to meetings will, therefore, be assumed to be taking place on-line.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 2.1 The terms of reference for both Module Achievement Boards of Examiners and Progression and Award Boards of Examiners are set in Section 14 of CCCU, Regulations for Taught Awards, and this document should be referred to when required.

3 OVERVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- 3.1 Each Board of Examiners must have the following membership:
 - (i) a formally appointed Chair;
 - (ii) all members of University academic staff who are required to participate in the Board;
 - (iii) one or more External Examiners;

- (iv) a representative from the Registry to advise on University regulations
 - (v) a secretary.
- 3.2 Membership of the Board of Examiners is limited to:
- (i) those academic staff with a permanent contract, or on fixed or fractional contracts.
 - (ii) those who are able to participate as affiliate examiners
 - (iii) approved External Examiners.
- 3.3 No-one may be a member of a Module Achievement Board of Examiners if they are a student on any module being considered by that Board of Examiners, or of a Progression and Award Board of Examiners, if they are a student on any programme being considered by that Board of Examiners.

4 PROGRESSION AND AWARD BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 4.1 All programmes will be allocated to a Progression and Award Board of Examiners, which will meet, as set out in the appropriate University Calendar, to consider the progression and/or award of students.
- 4.2 Progression and Award Board of Examiners will be organised at an institutional level and cover all programmes on calendars relevant at the time of the Board.
- 4.3 The Progression and Award Board of Examiners will comprise:
- (i) a Chair, who will normally be the Dean, Deputy Vice Chancellor, or nominee;
 - (ii) the Head of School or their nominee for Schools with programmes being presented to the Board of Examiners;
 - (iii) PAB External Examiner;
 - (iv) a Representative from the Registry to advise on University regulations;
 - (v) a secretary, who will normally be from the Registry.
- 4.4 The Registry is responsible for organising the schedule of PABs, which are held at institutional level in alignment with the University's calendars. This includes setting dates for PABs for programmes on exceptions-based calendars.
- 4.5 An Annual Calendar of Board of Examiners will be prepared by Planning and Academic Adminstrating. This will normally be in the December preceding the upcoming academic year.
- 4.6 PABs will only receive Profiles that are to be approved and which have been confirmed by the Faculty. Confirmation that profiles have been reviewed by the programme team is required before profiles are presented to the Board. Therefore, the Board will not be required to discuss individual profiles or the students on the profiles unless there are specific issues of concern identified about a decision or process.
- 4.7 The key responsibilities of the Progression and Award Board are to: -
- (i) consider, within the framework of the regulations, the overall profile of marks for each student and recommend students for awards or make recommendations for a course of action in the case of failure

- (ii) make recommendations, within the framework of the regulations, about students, not in their final year, with regard to progression or make recommendations for a course of action in the case of a student not being eligible to progress to the next level
 - (iii) receive notification of any significant issues relating to the operation of assessment of modules as reported from Module Achievement Boards
 - (iv) confirm that the assessment processes have operated in a fair and reliable manner making use of agreed degree classification criteria and in line with the University's Regulations and assessment procedures.
 - (v) assure the appropriate standards for the awards.
- 4.8 A Progression and Award Board does not have authority to change module marks previously agreed by a Module Achievement Board except in cases relating to extenuating circumstances and/or plagiarism or academic misconduct

5 MODULE ACHIEVEMENT BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 5.1 All modules will be allocated to a Module Achievement Board of Examiners, which will meet at the end of the semester or trimester in which the module was delivered, and after each reassessment period.
- 5.2 Module Achievement Board of Examiners are organised at School level.
- 5.3 A Module Achievement Board of Examiners will comprise:
- (i) a Chair, who will normally be the Head of School;
 - (ii) Subject Leads (or equivalent) or Programme Directors for any programmes with modules being considered by the Board;
 - (iii) Academic Link Tutors for any collaborative programmes with modules being considered by the Board;
 - (iv) Module External Examiners;
 - (v) a representative from the Registry to advise on University regulations;
 - (vi) a Secretary, normally from the School/Faculty.
- 5.4 For International Collaborative Programmes, a Programme Director based at the partner does not have to attend if the Academic Link Tutor is attending but may do so if they wish.
- 5.5 Module leaders are not required to be present at the Module Achievement Board of Examiners. They will be expected to confirm sign off of the module outcomes, prior to the Module Achievement Board.
- 5.6 External Examiners may attend for only the modules to which they are allocated, provided that:
- (i) they are given the opportunity to attend for the whole meeting if they so wish;
 - (ii) their attendance has been agreed prior to the meeting to ensure that the Module Achievement Board of Examiners remains quorate.
- 5.7 Module Achievement Board of Examiners which take place subsequent to the Board at the end of the first reassessment period may be organised at an Institutional level.

- 5.8 Responsibility for authorising the academic groupings allocated to a Module Achievement Board of Examiners rests with the Head of School in consultation with the Faculty Registrar.
- 5.9 An Annual Calendar of Board of Examiners that includes information on the modules assigned to each Module Achievement Board of Examiners is prepared by the Faculty in advance of the Academic Year.
- 5.10 The allocation of modules to Module Achievement Boards of Examiners should not normally change from year to year, so, for administrative purposes, each Module Achievement Board of Examiners will be considered to be the successor to the previous Module Achievement Board of Examiners that considered those modules.
- 5.11 A Module Achievement Board of Examiners will receive all Module Profiles ready to be approved. As modules profiles have been confirmed by the Module Leader, the Board will not discuss the individual profiles or the students on the profiles, unless there are issues of concern identified by the MAB. Marks/profiles that have not been confirmed in advance will need to be approved via the standard Chair's Action process.
- 5.12 The key responsibilities of the Module Achievement Board are to: -
- (i) consider the performance of students on modules.
 - (ii) confirm the marks achieved by students on modules.
 - (iii) award credit for the achievement of students on modules.
 - (iv) take account of the decisions made by Extenuating Circumstances Request panels.
 - (v) take account of the agreed outcomes of investigations into cases of plagiarism or academic misconduct.
 - (vi) assure the appropriate standards for the modules.
- 5.13 The Chair of the Module Achievement Board of Examiners will, at an appropriate point of the meeting, invite each external examiner to provide comments on any issues relating to the delivery of modules in the context of the programme(s).
- 5.14 It should be noted that module marks for Trail and Progress students will need to be confirmed at a Module Achievement Board of Examiners. The requirements for this will be scaled accordingly, where the module has not been delivered in that semester.
- 5.15 There may be instances where a Module Achievement Board of Examiners will be required to consider the marks achieved for academic components of modules only to permit decisions to be made regarding reassessment prior to completion of practice components.

6 REVIEWING MODULE PERFORMANCE MODULE ACHIEVEMENT BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 6.1 It is an important part of the role of Module Achievement Board of Examiners to consider the performance of each module through a review of the spread of marks awarded to students.

6.2 This document sets out guidelines that should be followed in order to support Module Achievement Board of Examiners in this task. These set out the following:

- (i) criteria that identify modules which require consideration by the Module Achievement Board of Examiners;
- (ii) typical responses that the Module Achievement Board of Examiners may make where the marks of a module deviate from the expected norms.

6.3 Module Achievement Board of Examiners should consider performance on all modules where: EITHER

- (i) 20% or more of the students taking the module do not pass the module at the first sitting (including 0% due to non-submission); OR
- (ii) 30% or more of the students taking the module achieve a module mark of at least 70%; OR
- (iii) the range of marks on a module is not consistent with the performance of other modules being presented to the Board; OR
- (iv) the average mark of the module is not within the normal range of marks for the level across the university as given in the table below; OR

| Level | Middle 50% range |
|-------|------------------|
| 0 | 45.0-66.3 |
| 4 | 46.0-66.8 |
| 5 | 50.0-67.6 |
| 6 | 53.0-70.0 |
| 7 | 56.5-70.0 |

- (v) there is a specific reason that requires the Module Achievement Board of Examiners to give special consideration to a module, such as where there is a high plagiarism rate, maladministration, or missing marks.

6.4 The pre-board of examiner process should look at all modules.

- (i) to ensure marks are complete and accurate
- (ii) to identify any issues with the delivery of assessment
- (iii) to identify any specific student issues that need to be reported to the Module Achievement Board of Examiners.

6.5 In all instances where the student achievement on a module meets one or more of the criteria, set out in 6.3 above, the Module Achievement Board of Examiners should discuss and comment on the relevant module(s) based on the report from the module leader in the presentation of the module marks.

6.6 In response to the discussion in respect of 6.6 above, the Module Achievement Board of Examiners may refer the module to the Board of Study with the recommendation that the Board of Study considers, one or more of the following:

- (i) the nature of assessment;
- (ii) the use of formative assessment;
- (iii) particular cohort challenges;
- (iv) learning and teaching strategies

- (v) whether the achievement on the module reflects subject norms that do not align with the University's performance.
- 6.7 If the Module Achievement Board of Examiners determines there has been maladministration, University policy for the scaling of marks should be followed (see Regulations for Taught Awards, Scaling of Marks section [\[link\]](#)).

7 CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 7.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners must not be involved in a way which constitutes a conflict of interest. Where there has been any direct involvement with a programme or module, the Chair must declare the conflict of interest and where students on the relevant module or programme are being discussed, the Chair must relinquish that role for the duration of consideration of the relevant students, during which period they will pass the chair to another senior member of staff.
- 7.2 The Chair of the Board of Examiners will ensure that:
- (i) the proceedings of the Board are conducted in a fair and impartial manner, with all due diligence;
 - (ii) the Board of Examiners follows all regulations including Special Regulations;
 - (iii) there are sufficient attendees to ensure that each candidate's profile is capable of consideration;
 - (iv) each candidate listed on the profiles provided by Planning & Academic Administration is considered;
 - (v) no anecdotal information that is irrelevant to the decision-making of the Board is raised in discussion;
 - (vi) a clear record is kept of consideration of evidence, together with the reason why the evidence was treated in a particular way
 - (vii) all decisions of the Board are properly recorded in the minutes;
 - (viii) due process is followed in the case of posthumous or aegrotat award or where Academic Board is asked to exercise its discretion for the recommending of an award "notwithstanding the Regulations" to the Special Cases Panel.
- 7.3 In the case of collaborative provision, no person who has any personal or private connections with the partner organisation, may Chair the Board of Examiners there.
- 7.4 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board of Examiners to ensure that: -
- (i) the Board of Examiners makes all recommendation in line with the University regulations in relation to each student considered.
 - (ii) marks are not changed as a result of review by an External Examiner at a meeting of a Board of Examiners, unless the work of the whole cohort is reconsidered.
- 7.5 On the completion of the Board of Examiners, the Chair will: -
- (i) sign-off of the mark profiles and ensure that the External Examiner is happy to do the same.

- (ii) confirm that the External Examiners has endorsed the outcomes of the Board of Examiners before the publication of pass lists, or similar documents

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 8.1 The Chair will ask members of a Board of Examiners to declare any interest in the proceedings. Examples of interest include:
- (i) any relationship with a candidate, or a close relative of a candidate, being examined;
 - (ii) any contract with a partner institution or sponsoring body for the programme;
 - (iii) any outside involvement that might be construed as a conflict of interest.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of all members of a Board of Examiners to declare any interest they may have in the proceedings, in line with the above. Should any interest be declared, it is for the Chair of the Board of Examiners to decide whether the member of the Board of Examiners should be excluded from any part of the meeting and whether the business of the meeting should be amended.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall determine the extent to which a member of the Board of Examiners shall be excluded from the proceedings of the Board of Examiners and may amend the agenda accordingly.
- 8.4 A note of any declaration and the actions taken should be included in the minutes of the meeting.

9 ROLE OF THE REGISTRY MEMBER OF STAFF

- 9.1 Each Board of Examiners will be attended by a member of the Registry who will:
- (i) advise the Chair on issues relating to the business of the Board in advance of the meeting;
 - (ii) advise the Board on the application of University Regulations.
- 9.2 The Deputy Academic Registrar will be responsible for ensuring that the individuals undertaking this role are appropriate for this role

10 ROLE OF THE SECRETARY

- 10.1 The Secretary of each Progression and Award Board of Examiners and Module Achievement Board of Examiners will be identified by the Faculty Manager of Administration, or counterpart, except where they are at Institutional level, when they will be identified by an equivalent individual in the Registry.
- 10.2 It is the role of the Secretary to:
- (i) ensure that a decision is recorded in a suitable manner for each candidate under consideration;
 - (ii) take detailed minutes to produce an accurate record of the meeting and circulate to the Board members after the Board.
 - (iii) undertake administrative duties in respect to Board of Examiner meetings.

11 INDUCTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 11.1 All staff undertaking the roles of Chair, member of the Registry and Secretary are required to attend a compulsory Briefing Session prior to undertaking their role. Refresher updates will be provided for all Chairs on an annual basis.
- 11.2 The Quality and Standards Office will organise the institutional induction event for newly-appointed External Examiners on an annual basis.
- 11.3 The Head of School will ensure that academic staff members of their School appropriate induction, training and mentoring and where appropriate shadowing of staff who are new to the assessment procedures of the University.

12 ATTENDANCE OF INTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 12.1 It will, from time to time, be likely that a member of the Board will be absent from a Board of Examiners due to unforeseen circumstances such as illness or bereavement. In such circumstances:
 - (i) the Chair of the Board of Examiners will require the examiner, or if that is not possible, a senior colleague to provide all necessary information required to enable the Board of Examiners to reach fair and equitable decisions;
 - (ii) where it is not possible for a senior colleague to be briefed, the Chair of the Board of Examiners will determine whether the absence of the internal examiner will make a material difference to the deliberations of the Board of Examiners;
- 12.2 If, in the view of the Chair of the Board of Examiners, the absence of the internal examiner will make a material difference to the deliberations of the Board of Examiners, the programme or module will not be included in the Board and the Chair of the Board will determine what steps will be taken to ensure that due process is followed without delaying the progress of the students concerned.

13 ATTENDANCE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 13.1 All External Examiners are full members of the Board of Examiners and their involvement is crucial to the examination process.
- 13.2 External Examiners have the right to attend any meeting of examiners where significant decisions are taken for which they are concerned. No meeting of a Board of Examiners shall take place in the absence of an External Examiner if that External Examiner indicates a wish to be present at the meeting, unless the Deputy Vice-Chancellor authorises the meeting to proceed as scheduled, in which case a report outlining the decision where this was taken will be submitted to the Academic Board.
- 13.3 It is expected that each External Examiner will attend Board of Examiners meetings.
- 13.4 There are circumstances in which the Chair of the Board of Examiners may view it as impractical for the External Examiner to attend the Board of Examiners. The following is not an exhaustive list, but suggests the circumstances in which the meeting may go ahead as scheduled:

- (i) the presence of another External Examiner to fill that role has been agreed in advance;
 - (ii) there are few candidates, usually five or less, and the External Examiner has seen all the relevant work in advance;
 - (iii) only reassessment candidates, or first sit candidates sitting along with reassessment candidates are considered, and the External Examiner was involved at an earlier stage.
 - (iv) All decisions regarding awards and progression at these meetings are minuted and forwarded to the External Examiner(s);
 - (v) there is another External Examiner present and the absent External Examiner was involved earlier for the same candidates.
- 13.5 In such instances, the External Examiner must be invited to the meeting and enabled to attend should he or she wish to do so.
- 13.6 Where a Module External Examiner is unable to attend a Module Achievement Board of Examiner meeting, or in the event of IT failure, they should submit brief written confirmation in advance of the meeting or when prevented from doing so as soon as possible after the meeting that they have:
- (i) reviewed the students work from the allocated modules;
 - (ii) are satisfied that threshold academic standards have been maintained and that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly;
 - (iii) are happy for the Chair of Module Achievement Board to sign-off the profiles for the relevant modules.
- 13.7 This confirmation should be provided to their primary contact using the External Examiner Standards Confirmation template. The template will be provided to the External by the relevant Faculty in which the programme resides.
- 13.8 If an External Examiner has been unable to attend a Module Achievement and there has been a significant issue with the assessment of a module, the Chair must have a discussion with the External Examiner regarding the issue prior to confirmation of module results by the MAB. Any discussion and final agreement must be minuted.
- 13.9 Where an External Examiner is unable to attend a meeting of a Board of Examiners another External Examiner present at the Board of Examiners may act for the absentee in confirming the decisions of the Board of Examiners.
- 13.10 Following the Board of Examiners, the Secretary of the Board of Examiners will provide the External Examiner with a report of the proceedings of the Board as soon as practicable after the meeting;

14 CHAIR'S ACTION

- 14.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners may take Chair's Action outside the meeting, where this has been authorised by the Board of Examiners.
- 14.2 A Chair cannot use Chair's Action to take a decision independently of the Board of Examiners. Chair's Action must only be used to confirm a decision taken by a Board

of Examiners but is dependent on information becoming available after the Board of Examiners.

- 14.3 Where a Board of Examiners is unable to take a decision due to missing information that could have been available, the Board of Examiners may authorise a subset of its members, including an external examiner, a member of the Registry and the secretary of the Board of Examiners, to take that decision after the meeting, which may be undertaken electronically. The outcome may then be confirmed by Chair's Action.
- 14.4 Where, following a meeting of a Board of Examiners, it is determined that a factual error requires correction or that there are extenuating circumstances that were not known to the Board of Examiners, the Chair may authorise appropriate action to resolve the matter.

15 DOCUMENTATION

- 15.1 The following arrangements pertain to Meeting Papers:
- (i) all documentation will be provided to the Board of Examiners in electronic format only. No members will be provided with hard copies of the documentation.
 - (ii) a report should be provided to the Board regarding expected Chair's Actions.
 - (iii) where available reports should be provided to the Board with updated statistical data regarding achievement or award.
- 15.2 It will be the role of the secretary to provide a set of documentation which forms the record for each Board of Examiners. This documentation serves to:
- (i) provide evidence that meetings were conducted in an orderly fashion in line with the University's Regulations, and attended to all necessary business;
 - (ii) record clearly the decisions taken and where appropriate the reasoning for those decisions;
 - (iii) report actions recommended for the future and issues programme teams or others are to address;
 - (iv) enable review and audit of Board of Examiner decisions.
- 15.3 The core documentation forming the record of the meeting will be:
- (i) the agenda
 - (ii) the Profiles
 - (iii) the decision pending log
 - (iv) minutes of any specific issues raised by the Board about decisions or process;
 - (v) comments from the External Examiner presented to the Board.
- 15.4 The minutes must not:
- (i) name individuals other than candidates, either by title or role, except where it is necessary to refer to the Chair or to the External Examiner;

- (ii) record the views of individual examiners, or any generic comments, other than is necessary to demonstrate due process, and record the reasoning behind a decision
- 15.5 The Chair of the Board of Examiners will confirm, within two weeks of the Board, that the documentation provides a fair and accurate record of the meeting.
- 15.6 Where a Board of Examiners takes place in a Faculty or School, the Quality Manager in the faculty concerned will ensure that all records are kept securely in electronic format and these are made available on request, in line with University's Document Retention Policy.
- 15.7 Where a Board of Examiners takes place at University level, the Registry will ensure that all records are kept securely in electronic format and these are made available on request, in line with University's Document Retention Policy, and, in addition, a copy of the record will be made available to the Faculty Quality Managers of each Faculty concerned.
- 15.8 Where Chair's Action is taken, the Chair of the Board of Examiners must document the action taken and the reason for that action. Chair's Actions will form part of the meeting record and should be accessible accordingly.

16 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 16.1 A Board of Examiners must be mindful of the following matters, which are detailed in University Regulations and/or University Procedures:
 - (i) Regulations regarding Compensation;
 - (ii) Arrangements for Trail and Progress;
 - (iii) Regulations regarding arrangements for Extenuating Circumstances, Temporary
 - (iv) Learning Agreements and Learning Support Plans;
 - (v) Late-submission penalties;
 - (vi) Scaling of marks;
 - (vii) Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL];
 - (viii) Procedures for use of notwithstanding the Regulations
- 16.2 As Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning [RPEL] normally leads to the award of credit, it will be overseen by the Board of Examiners in the same way the Board of Examiners oversees any other assessed work.

17 ACTION FOLLOWING AN APPEAL

- 17.1 Where an Academic Appeal is upheld and referred to a Board of Examiners, the Board of Examiners must consider the outcome of the Appeal in full and the action taken will form a part of the record of the Board.
- 17.2 It is the responsibility of the appropriate member of the Registry to ensure that the referral is made to the correct Board of Examiners.

- 17.3 Where there is no scheduled meeting that can consider the appeal in a timely manner, the Chair of the previous Board of Examiners may convene a subset of that Board, following the procedure set out in 13.3 above.