

# University of Plymouth

## Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards

### Operational Instructions for Subject Assessment Panels

(Changes since 2018-19 show in **bold and underlined**)

#### 1 Constitution

The membership of the Panel will be: Chair (normally the subject leader or equivalent), Internal Examiners for all subject (or group of subjects) modules, the Subject External Examiner(s), and the Faculty Business Manager (or HE Administrator in a partner institution) or nominee acting as Secretary to the Panel (non-voting member). It is vital for all Internal Examiners to be present at the Panel. If, due to unforeseen circumstances an Internal Examiner is prevented from attending a Panel, he/she **MUST** ensure the Panel is provided with written comments on the marks and the standard of assessment in the module(s).

Subject External Examiners are required to be involved with the standards of assessment in all modules which contribute to a final award and must attend the relevant Panel meetings:

- for master's programmes this will normally mean level 7
- for degree programmes this will normally mean modules at levels 5 and 6
- for Foundation Degree/HNC/HND programmes this will normally mean modules at levels 4 and 5.

#### 1.1 Absence of an Internal Examiner from a Panel

It is expected that arrangements will have been made to ensure that the standards within a module and the range of marking are agreed between the Module Leader and the Subject External Examiner **BEFORE** the Panel meeting. Should it be impossible for a Module Examiner to attend a Panel, s/he should notify the Chair of the Panel in advance and nominate a suitable alternate member with appropriate background and knowledge to act in her/his place. Alternatively, s/he may provide comments on module delivery and assessment and on the performance of students in advance of the meeting, or s/he may be deemed to be present and in attendance through a video link or through teleconferencing, provided it is possible to ensure that s/he is as well informed as other members and has access to all necessary documents.

If a Subject External Examiner raises issues about the standard of a module or the marks awarded, and the Internal Examiner is absent and is not available through a video link or teleconferencing, the marks for the module cannot be finalised until there is the opportunity for discussion between the Internal Examiner and the External Examiner.

This should not arise if arrangements have been made to agree standards and range of marking in advance of the Panel meeting.

## **1.2 Absence of the Chair of a Subject Assessment Panel**

Should it be impossible for the Chair of a Subject Assessment Panel to attend a Panel meeting, s/he should notify the Head of School. An alternative Chair may be appointed from among staff with experience of chairing Panels.

## **1.3 Absence of a Subject External Examiner**

In the unavoidable absence of a Subject External Examiner, the Panel may proceed provided the External Examiner has provided comments on the standard of all modules for which s/he has responsibility, and any queries regarding marks have been resolved in advance with the Internal Examiner. If it is clear at an earlier stage in the academic year that a Subject External Examiner will not be able to fulfil all the duties required of her/him, it may be appropriate for an emergency replacement External Examiner to be appointed for that year. If the Subject External Examiner is unable at the last minute to attend a Panel, s/he may be deemed to be present and in attendance through a video/telephone link provided it is possible to ensure that s/he is as well informed as other members and has access to all necessary documents. If the above conditions are not met, the Subject Assessment Panel must be postponed. This may also result in the postponement of the Award Assessment Board.

## **2 Areas of Responsibility of the Panel**

The Subject Assessment Panel will consider the results of all modules in the subject irrespective of the programme or award on which the students are registered.

The areas of responsibility of the Panel are as follows:

- a) to review the standard of assessment in the subject, and ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards at subject level in modules and across centres, as appropriate, including discussion of the data provided on marks distribution for modules,
- b) to confirm or modify module marks (marks once confirmed by a Panel may not subsequently be altered by an Award Assessment Board unless an error in transcription or an omission is discovered),
- c) to discuss any problems with assessment (NOT individual students),
- d) to make recommendations on the form of referral for individual modules, (including confirmation that the referral assessments meet the learning outcomes with which they are associated), to be forwarded to the Award Assessment Board, through the Chair of the Panel (or nominee),
- e) to receive a list of those modules which have been subject to detailed scrutiny by the Subject External Examiner in the current academic year and in the previous two years

- f) to receive information from the Panels/Committees of Investigation on proven examination and assessment offences; these must be fully recorded in the notes of the Panel,
- g) to receive the report from the Subject External Examiner(s) for the previous academic year, together with any written response/action plan, in order to ensure that all issues raised have been addressed. (Issues raised in the annual reports of the Subject External Examiner(s) will be discussed by the staff involved in the Subject Assessment Panel. Discussion may take place at a special meeting of the Subject Assessment Panel or an alternative forum if more appropriate. A written response will then be agreed. If appropriate, the Chair of the Award Assessment Board (or the Head of School) could co-ordinate the responses from Panels to the External Examiner(s)).
- h) to receive a list of those modules for which alternative assessment has been requested and the decision on each (providing a list of all decisions, whether alternative assessment has been agreed or not, will provide a record of where it was concluded inappropriate to amend assessment and more generally facilitate transparency and consistency in decision-making).

The Panel does not receive details of extenuating circumstances relating to individual students and does not consider the overall performance of individual students.

### **3 Before the Meeting of the Panel**

It is essential that marks have been verified by module examiners/leaders by the time the Panel sits, to ensure that:

- a) marks are correct,
- b) where marks are missing for a particular candidate, this is the correct position, and
- c) Subject External Examiners must notify the SAP Chair of any disagreement about marks in advance of the Subject Assessment Panel.

Where academic staff are assessing the work of academic colleagues within the same School, that work should always be referred to an external examiner as part of the requisite sample.

### **4 Role of the Chair of the Subject Assessment Panel**

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Subject Assessment Panel to conduct the meeting of the Panel in a manner which ensures that module marks are properly confirmed. The Panel Chair should be fully aware of the module assessment regulations for each module to be considered by the Panel.

The Chair of the Panel (or nominee) is the representative of the Panel at the Award Assessment Board and must ensure that the proceedings and any recommendations of the Panel are properly represented at the Board.

### **5 Standard of Assessment in the Subject**

A review of the standard of assessment in the subject, and comparability of standards across modules, is the most important task of the Panel and all discussions must be formally minuted. The maintenance of standards and quality is the central role of the Subject External Examiner, whose views will be crucial in this debate. The Subject External Examiner will have been required to sample work from all modules, in advance of the meeting in order to comment on the overall standard.

The Panel should ensure that the assessments have been conducted in accordance with the regulations for the modules.

To aid the debate on standards Panels should be provided with the statistical information normally available from the student record system (eg means and standard deviations). It would be helpful for the Panel to discuss the range for the means and standard deviations which would normally be expected. The agreed ranges are merely tools to encourage discussion of standards and are not intended to cause automatic normalisation of marks. Naturally, these are only used as a guide, and most useful where the numbers of students on a module are of a reasonable size. Faculty Administrative staff should also normally have available the module marks for the previous year in case the results should need to be compared.

It is important that Panels consider and specifically comment upon the spread of marks and the pass rates for ALL modules in the light of the statistical data provided. When considering the statistics for each module, all modules with a pass rate <85% at level 0, <90% at level 4 and <95% in levels 5 and above should be of particular concern and should include commentary to take forward to the module action plan to raise standards for the future (where class sizes are less than 30 the Panel should use its discretion).

Individual Panels may wish to consider pass rates even where they are above these thresholds.

This discussion will provide the basis for any debate on the need for the reference to the Programme Committee of issues of underlying concern. All discussions MUST be carefully noted by the Secretary of the Panel.

The Panel must receive a list of those modules for which alternative assessment has been requested and the decision on each (providing a list of all decisions, whether alternative assessment has been agreed or not, will provide a record of where it was concluded inappropriate to amend assessment and more generally facilitate transparency and consistency in decision-making).

## **6 Anonymous marking**

It is important that the Panel are aware of the University's Anonymous Assessment Policy, which requires that, wherever possible, external examiners and subject assessment panels should not be able to identify students.

All information and samples of work (where appropriate) sent to external examiners should be anonymised.

The Panel should only have access to anonymised data.

The Panel should be notified of assessments not marked anonymously.

The University's Anonymous Assessment Policy is available online, via <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/plymouth-university-assessment-policy-2014-2020>

## **7 Confirmation of Marks**

Module marks may be modified and must be confirmed at the Panel. Discussion should focus on the span of overall marks in a particular module and not on individuals. In the modular system Panels are responsible for maintaining standards at the module level and the overall profiles of results for individual candidates are not available to Panels.

The regulations for passing individual Modules must be clearly reported at the outset.

Overall module marks will be automatically rounded up or down by the computer system (although the actual mark obtained will be used to calculate the final overall aggregate mark for the stage and final mark).

In a modular system it is important that module examiners use the full range of marks available (0 - 100). For undergraduate programmes, the module grade profile is invoked for borderline candidates when considering degree classifications at the Award Assessment Board; for Postgraduate programmes aggregate marks at 60% and 70% determine awards at merit or distinction; and it is important for marks of modules to place candidates clearly in the appropriate 'class' for that particular module.

## **8 Problems Affecting the Assessment of all Students in a Module**

Any problems affecting the assessment of all students in a module (for example power failure during an examination) should be reported to the Panel before marks in that module are considered. It would be good practice for the internal examiner to have a clear remedy for the problem formulated ahead of the meeting - if possible one which has been discussed with the Subject External Examiner responsible for the module and the Chair of the Panel.

## **9 Moderation of Marks**

It is the role of the Subject External Examiner to be able, where necessary, to alter the characteristics of the marks distribution and, where there were inconsistencies of marking, it would be appropriate for marks to be amended where a representative sample of scripts had been appropriately reviewed. For example, the marks of one member of staff may seem to be out of line with those

of other staff, or the distribution of marks for a particular module may appear skewed, perhaps with a very large proportion of marks above 55 or 60%.

The University currently does not have a policy for the norm-referencing or scaling of marks. Should the marks for a particular module need to be adjusted an appropriate fair and just method will need to be devised with the full agreement of the Subject External Examiner (where appropriate). It is good practice that such adjustments are only made on the basis of a well-constructed sample of work.

Subject External Examiners must notify the SAP Chair of any disagreement about marks in advance of the Subject Assessment Panel. If a disagreement with the marks could not be resolved with the Module Leader, the SAP Chair would convene a meeting between the academic staff who marked the work and the relevant Subject External Examiner. The purpose of the meeting would be to determine and resolve the disagreement, taking into account the assessment criteria for the module. If the meeting could not resolve the dispute, the assessment should be reviewed by another Subject External Examiner(s) from the group appointed to the subject area. It may be necessary as a result to defer consideration of the results of the student(s) involved. If there is only one Subject External Examiner for the subject area, the Faculty will be expected to identify another suitable person to act as a second reviewer for the work, and should seek the advice of the Central Quality Office on the appropriateness of this nomination.

The Subject Assessment Panel must receive a list of those modules which have been subject to detailed scrutiny by the Subject External Examiner in the current academic year and in the previous two years.

## **10 Examination and Assessment Offences**

Any offences should have been dealt with, following the procedure outlined in the Regulatory Document "Examination and Assessment Offences" prior to the meeting of the Panel. The Subject External Examiner does not have a specific role in relation to offences since these are not directly related to the moderation of work, although it is recognised that an undiscovered offence may be identified during the process of moderation.

The Faculty Business Manager (or nominee) will ensure that all recommendations from Assessment/Examination Offences Panels or Committees of Investigation are notified to relevant Subject Assessment Panels. A Subject Assessment Panel, for quality assurance purposes, must ensure all proven cases are recorded fully in the minutes of the Subject Assessment Panel and reported to the relevant Award Assessment Board.

Should there have been insufficient time for an alleged case to be dealt with following the approved procedures the appropriate position would be to defer consideration of the mark until this has been done.

## **11 Extenuating Circumstances**

Extenuating circumstances can **only** be discussed at the Award Assessment Board and are **not** within the remit of the Panel. Therefore, marks for a particular student should not be adjusted at the Panel on the basis of extenuating circumstances.

It has been agreed for modules with multiple tests, or laboratory practicals, that where one of the series of tests or labs is missed for valid extenuating circumstances then the module leader may, where it is deemed academically appropriate, calculate the marks by, for example, averaging across those tests/labs completed. The principle that averaging may be permitted for a particular module should be agreed with the Subject External Examiner in advance and could only be allowed provided the learning outcomes for the module would be satisfactorily completed. If each test/lab assessed different learning outcomes then averaging across modules could not be permitted. Where averaging has been agreed, this must be reported to the Award Assessment Board.

## **12 Form of Referral**

The Panel is required to make recommendations on the form of referral for individual modules to the Award Assessment Board(s), through the Chair of the Panel (or nominee). This includes confirmation that the referral assessments meet the learning outcomes with which they are associated.

## **13 Involvement of Subject External Examiners with Work which is to be Reassessed**

The Subject External Examiner(s) would be expected to agree the form and content of referred examination papers and the form of referred coursework. For referred examination papers this should normally be undertaken at the same time as approval was sought for the main examination papers. The form of referred coursework may be dealt with at the Panel or by correspondence. The Subject External Examiner(s) has the right to sample work and/or see marking schemes; alternatively, s/he may express satisfaction with standards in the Summer and on that basis decide that s/he does not wish to see referred work nor be involved in the Panel/Board meeting. In such case, the Subject External Examiner(s) should be asked to sign the appropriate statement on the declaration form to that effect.

## **14 Representation on the Award Assessment Board(s)**

The Chair of each contributing Panel is a member of the relevant Award Assessment Board(s) which are charged with the responsibility for making decisions on progression and awards. Should the Chair be unable to represent the Panel at an Award Assessment Board, the Panel **must** decide on an alternative representative from among their membership. This is important in order to ensure, *inter alia*, that Award Assessment Boards are quorate.

## **15 Communication between Subject External Examiners and Award External Examiner**

Where it is logistically possible, Faculty Registrars/Chairs of Award Assessment Boards should make arrangements for a meeting between relevant Subject External Examiners and the Award External Examiner in order that any issues could be aired and discussed prior to the meeting of the Award Assessment Board. Where this was not possible, Faculty Registrars should ensure that the Faculty has in place an appropriate means of facilitating communication between examiners responsible for the same group of awards, for example, the exchange of email addresses.

## **16 Minutes of Panels**

Minutes of the proceedings must be produced as soon as possible following the Panel meeting, and a copy forwarded to the Chair of the Panel, the Subject External Examiner and any other member of the Panel who is attending an Award Assessment Board on behalf of the Chair.

For the cases where modules may contribute to more than one Award Assessment Board, perhaps in different Faculties, copies of the notes or minutes should also be distributed, in confidence, to other Faculty Offices, as appropriate, in time for the meeting(s) of the relevant Award Assessment Board(s).

## **17 Signatures of Subject External Examiners**

The Secretary of the Panel will be responsible for ensuring that the Subject External Examiner(s) sign the appropriate Declaration Form.



## **SUBJECT ASSESSMENT PANEL STANDARD AGENDA**

### **1 Membership**

- a To welcome members.
- b To receive apologies.
- c To receive any declarations of interest.

### **2 Confidentiality**

To note the confidentiality of the proceedings.

### **3 Minutes of Previous Panel Meeting**

- a To receive the Minutes of the Subject Assessment Panel meeting held in the previous academic year.
- b To consider matters arising from the Minutes.
- c To receive the written annual reports for the previous academic year of the Subject External Examiners and Award External Examiners (ie those primarily linked to the Panel) together with any formal response and to consider any matters arising.

### **4 Subject Assessment Panel Regulations**

- a To receive a statement of the purpose of the Panel:
  - i) to review the standard of assessment in the subject, and ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards in modules,
  - ii) to confirm or modify module marks (NB once the marks have been confirmed by the Panel they may not be subsequently altered by an Award Assessment Board unless an error in transcription or an omission is discovered),
  - iii) to decide on recommendations which are to be forwarded to the Award Assessment Board through the Chair of the Panel on the form of referral for individual modules, confirming that the referral assessments meet the learning outcomes with which they are associated
  - iv) NOTE: the Panel will NOT consider details of extenuating circumstances relating to individual students and does NOT consider the overall performance of individual students,
- b To note the regulations for passing modules.

### **5 Standards of Assessment and Marks in each Module**

- a To review the standards of assessment in the module by consideration of the following:
  - the mechanisms used to ensure academic standards,
  - when considering the statistics for each module, all modules with a pass rate <85% at level 0, <90% at level 4 and <95% in levels 5 and above, should include commentary within the module action plan to raise

standards for the future (where class sizes are less than 30 the panel should use its discretion)<sup>1</sup>,

- b To report and discuss any problems affecting the assessment of all students in the module.
- c To note any assessments not marked anonymously.
- d To receive a list of those modules for which alternative assessment has been requested and the decision on each (providing a list of all decisions, whether alternative assessment has been agreed or not, will provide a record of where it was concluded inappropriate to amend assessment and more generally facilitate transparency and consistency in decision-making).
- e Professional Body/Subject Association Issues – to discuss developments in relation to assessment – in particular those relating to disability.
- f To receive the module marks.
- g To receive a report on any examination and assessment offences.
- h To confirm the module marks.

## 6 Referral

To agree recommendations to the Award Assessment Board on the form of the referral, the date for submission of referred work and the involvement of the External Examiner in referred work.

## 7 Subject External Examiner(s) Matters

- a to receive a list of those modules which have been subject to detailed scrutiny by the Subject External Examiner in the current academic year and in the previous two years
- b To receive the Subject External Examiner(s) Report(s) for the current academic year.
- c To confirm the Subject External Examiner's agreement or otherwise that the assessment strategy is appropriately enacted in the questions set.
- d To confirm whether there are any matters that require discussion with the Award External Examiner prior to the Award Assessment Board.
- e To obtain signature(s) of the Subject External Examiner(s) on the declaration form.
- f To receive a report on the status of the Subject External Examiner(s) appointment and, where appropriate (a year before that appointment was due to come to an end), steps that had been taken to identify a replacement.
- g To record thanks to External Examiner(s), particularly if their period of office is ending.

## 8 Board Representation

To agreed Panel representatives for Award Assessment Boards.

## 9 Any Other Business

**The following documents should be available at the meeting for reference purposes:**

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<sup>1</sup> Pass rate specifications are intended as guidance to encourage a reflective approach towards the reasons for failure and action that might be taken to improve achievement, rather than an expected threshold.

- **The regulatory document entitled "The Organisation and Operational Instructions of Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment"**
- **Regulations for passing specific modules**
- **Minutes/Notes of Subject Assessment Panel meeting held in the previous academic year**
- **Previous Subject External Examiner Report and Responses**

## **SUBJECT EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S DECLARATION**

**FACULTY/INSTITUTION:**

**SUBJECT ASSESSMENT PANEL:**

**DATE OF MEETING:**

**This is to confirm that:**

\* I agree with the outcomes of the Panel in relation to the standard of assessment in the subject.

\* I have/have not identified any matters that require discussion with the Award External Examiner

\* I have approved the form and content of referred examination papers and the form of referred coursework and am satisfied that they meet the learning outcomes with which they are associated.

\* **EITHER**

Since I have deemed standards to be appropriate, I do not require being involved in examining any referred work

**OR**

I wish to see samples of referred work (sampling in line with that agreed for the original assessments).

**(Please delete/amend as appropriate)**

**NAME OF SUBJECT EXTERNAL EXAMINER:**

**SIGNATURE:**

# Operational Instructions for Award Assessment Boards

## 1 Constitution

The membership of the Award Assessment Board will be as follows:- Chair (normally the appropriate Head of School), the Chair of each contributing Subject Assessment Panel or nominee, the Programme Manager(s) or equivalent, the Award External Examiner(s) (for Stages where marks contribute to the final award classification), the Faculty Business Manager or HE Administrator in a Partner Institution (or Nominee) as secretary to the Board (non-voting members).

For boards held at partner institutions, Academics Partnerships designated academic liaison person/Subject Forum Chair/Assessments Manager will also attend and the HE Administrator will act as secretary to the Board. The Faculty Business Manager will normally attend to ensure that the University's Regulations are adhered to and that decisions are clear and unambiguous. For meetings held at partner institutions, the timings of the Subject Panel and Award Assessment Board should be agreed with the designated academic liaison person and the Programme Administration Manager for Academic Partnerships to ensure attendance.

Where the panel and board is subsumed into one meeting the Subject External Examiners must be present for the Panel Business but may not participate in the Award Assessment Board discussions.

The membership of the Award Assessment Board may be extended to include Subject External Examiners and other Internal Examiners where this is a requirement for professional accreditation. In such cases the membership of the Award Assessment Board must be clearly specified in the current Award definitive document.

The Award External Examiner must be present at the Board. If an Award External Examiner is unable to attend an Assessment Board, a substitute appointment will be made by the relevant Dean after appropriate consultation from amongst the other Subject or Award External Examiners.

### 1.1 Absence of the Chair of an Award Assessment Board

In the unavoidable absence of the Chair of an Award Assessment Board, the Dean (or Vice-Principal or equivalent in a Partner Institution) should nominate another appropriate senior staff member with experience of an Award Assessment Board, who is also fully conversant with the University and programme regulations, to take the Chair.

### 1.2 Absence of an Award External Examiner

In the unavoidable absence of an Award External Examiner, the Award Assessment Board may proceed provided an alternative Award External can be appointed from within the group of Subject/Award External Examiners.

The Award External Examiner may be deemed to be present and in attendance through a video/telephone link provided it is possible to ensure that s/he is as well informed as other members, has access to all necessary documents.

## **2 Responsibilities of the Board**

The responsibilities of the Award Assessment Board are as follows:

- a) To make decisions on progression (if appropriate) and awards for all students registered for the named award(s) for which the Board is responsible.
- b) To ensure that decisions are arrived at fairly and democratically and in accordance with the appropriate University Academic Assessment Regulations (and any approved modifications for the particular award stated in the definitive document), that justice is done to the individual student.
- c) To ensure that threshold academic standards of student performance are being maintained at award level, on the basis of the reports received from each of the constituent Subject Assessment Panel chairs on the standard of assessment in subjects/modules, and are comparable with similar awards in other UK institutions, in the expert opinion of the Award External Examiner.
- d) To ensure that in making decisions all corroborated extenuating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached.
- e) To report and discuss, where appropriate, any examination or assessment offences and take appropriate action. The Award Board will accept the recommended penalty. Should further information come to light which causes the Board to doubt the proposed decision/ penalty the case should be referred back to the relevant Panel/Committee of Investigation for reconsideration.
- f) The Board will also formally receive the Award External Examiner's report for the previous academic year, together with any written response/action plan, in order to ensure that all issues raised have been discussed.

## **3 Extenuating Circumstances**

It is the responsibility of the Award Assessment Board to take into account any fully documented extenuating circumstances evidence relating to the student.

It is recommended that Faculty Offices/Partner Institutions should prepare a summary of all the facts which have been submitted on Extenuating Circumstances Forms (in typed format), including the name of the student, the dates during which the student's performance was affected and the tests/examinations/ presentations missed and any late coursework submitted.

There are regulations regarding the submission and consideration of extenuating circumstances which apply to all taught programmes of study, including postgraduate.

All extenuating circumstances will have been reviewed by the formal Faculty/Institution prior to the meetings of the Subject Assessment Panels and the Award Assessment Board to determine whether the circumstances are validated within the definitions established in the Extenuating Circumstances policy.

#### **4 Examination or Assessment Offences**

Proven case will have been notified to the Subject Assessment Panel and formally recorded in the minutes of the Panel and on the student records system. The Award Assessment Board will accept the penalty recommended by the Panel/Committee of Investigation. Should further information come to light which causes the Board to doubt the proposed decision/penalty, the case should be referred back to the relevant Panel/Committee of Investigation for reconsideration.

Should multiple offences not come to light until the Board meeting, for example where assessment offences have been considered by different Faculties, the Board would need to reconsider the penalties to be applied to a student.

Exceptionally an alleged offence may come to light at or immediately after the meeting of the Subject Assessment Panel/Award Assessment Board. Such allegations must be investigated as soon as practicable thereafter and in the meantime the decision on the student must be deferred.

Where a student, whose alleged assessment offence was proven, has submitted valid extenuating circumstances covering the module in question, the Award Assessment Board may, where it considers the severity of the circumstances could have affected the student's judgement, re-open discussion concerning the penalty. Faculties would need to ensure that details of the nature of the offence were available for the Board and that the case had been discussed with the Award External Examiner.

A student found guilty of an assessment offence, the penalty for which is such as to make them ineligible for the award on which they are registered (or to result in their exclusion from the University under the student Disciplinary Procedure) is nonetheless eligible for any intermediate award for which s/he has legitimately met the academic requirements, and any such award must therefore be conferred by the Award Assessment Board.

#### **5 Student Transfers**

Where a student has transferred to a new programme after the first two weeks of the delivery of a module, the Board is required to record this, and to confirm that the student will still meet the learning outcomes of the new programme.

#### **6 Before the Meeting of the Board**

Students' academic profiles, together with the minutes of Award Assessment Boards which previously considered the students' previous results, should be available for the Chair of the Award Assessment Board, the Programme Manager (or equivalent) and the Faculty Business Manager (or nominee) (or HE Administrator in a Institution) to peruse before the Board meeting, in that:

- a) overall student performance can be reviewed in the light of valid extenuating circumstances,
- b) any potentially difficult/complex issues and examination and assessment offences can be identified and discussed with the Award External Examiner (if appropriate and necessary).

The Faculty Business Manager or nominee (Programme Administrator in Academic Partnerships for Partner Institutions) must be informed of any difficult cases.

## **7 Role of the Chair of the Award Assessment Board**

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Award Assessment Board to:

- conduct the meeting of the Board in a manner which ensures that decisions on progression or awards for individual students are arrived at fairly and in accordance with the University Assessment Regulations (and any approved modifications for the particular award).
- ensure that decisions are clear and that they have been agreed by the Board in a democratic manner.
- ensure that all extenuating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached on progression or an award.
- where possible, make arrangements for meetings between relevant Subject External Examiner(s) and the Award External Examiner in order to ensure that any matters could be aired and discussed prior to the meeting of the Award Assessment Board.
- ensure that there is a formal written response to all issues raised by the Award External Examiner in her/his annual report, whether these are programme specific or related to matters of a wider nature.

## **8 The Meeting**

### **8.1 At the beginning of the meeting**

The Chair should check the membership of the Board and ensure that the meeting is quorate (a quorum is one-third of the specified membership) and should subsequently ensure that the meeting remains quorate.

The Chair should also check that documents or information indicated on the standard agenda, together with relevant minutes of previous Board meetings, are available to the Board. The Board should formally receive the written annual report for the previous academic year of the Subject External Examiners (ie those primarily linked to the Board) and the Award External Examiner(s) together with any formal response, and consider any matters arising.

The Board must agree guidelines for the treatment of marks/grades obtained at other institutions (eg exchange programmes). For instance, some Schools will have developed detailed scales for converting marks, while others will, with the agreement of the student, discount level 5 marks achieved elsewhere and base a decision on a student's award on performance in the final stage only.



The Board should receive reports on standards of assessment in modules from the Chairs (or nominees) of Subject Assessment Panels.

## **8.2 Criteria for progression and Awards**

The Award Assessment Board may not alter the marks agreed at a Subject Assessment Panel except in exceptional circumstances (i.e. where there has been an error in transcription of the marks or an omission).

## **8.3 Progression and Award**

The criteria for progression or awards, and the rules for compensation and reassessment are specified in the Academic Assessment Regulations.

Where a meeting of the Award Assessment Board is considering the progression of a student who has failed more than one module, that meeting of the Board may not award a combination of referred and repeated modules. However, there may be occasions (e.g. where the time between consecutive Board meetings is short, as on postgraduate taught awards), when a student is completing both referred and repeat modules simultaneously due to consecutive Board decisions.

## **8.4 Decisions**

The decisions reached for individual students must be very clearly recorded. All decisions relating to students with particular extenuating circumstances, and any discussion of cases of examination and assessment offences, together with other instances where a Board has used its discretion, should be very carefully minuted.

## **8.5 Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances**

Decisions regarding the validity of the extenuating circumstances claim may not be overturned by a Board.

Students with extenuating circumstances who have failed to achieve a pass in a module/modules should normally be required to undertake assessment(s) as a 'same' attempt.

Two principles should guide an Award Assessment Board in considering extenuating circumstances:

- a) equity, ensuring that all students are given equal consideration
- b) confidentiality, ensuring that personal information is disseminated only as widely as is strictly necessary for the Board to be confident with its decision

Equity can only be achieved by all students being given an equal opportunity for their case to be heard and by the Board being consistent in its treatment of individual students. In practice this means that 'special pleading' on behalf of a student with whom a member of the Board happens to be familiar must not be permitted.

Decisions on the number of credits of same attempt referrals are made on an individual basis. Students could be permitted more than the standard credit limit of same attempt referrals if this were felt by the Board to be achievable (for students with extensive problems this would usually be following fitness to study process). The reasons for the decisions for all students with extenuating circumstances should be carefully minuted in order that this information was available for any subsequent appeal.

If a student's extenuating circumstances have prevented the completion of an award during the normal period of registration, or have prevented her/him from making academic progress in the previous session, an Award Assessment Board has the option of requiring the student to interrupt studies or withdraw from the programme (subject to the fitness to study process having been followed).

It is also possible for an Award Assessment Board to require a student who has developed a health condition or other problem which prevents her/him from meeting the learning outcomes of her/his programme to be granted the appropriate exit or aegrotat award. (This is also subject to the fitness to study process where possible).

## **8.6 Consideration of Posthumous and Aegrotat Awards**

The criteria for the award of Posthumous or Aegrotat degrees are set out in the Academic Awards Regulations.

If a student has died before completing their programme, the Board may confer a posthumous award, appropriate to the student's stage of study (e.g. the award of Diploma of Higher Education for a stage 2 undergraduate student).

Where a student's ability to complete an award is permanently compromised (e.g. by severe ill health), the Board may confer an Aegrotat award, appropriate to the student's stage of study (e.g. the award of Diploma of Higher Education for a stage 2 undergraduate student). Advice should be sought from the Academic Registrar, prior to conferring the award, to ensure consistency across the institution. Students' eligibility for an Aegrotat award will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **8.7 'Chair's Action' with respect to Awards**

An Award Assessment Board is operating under delegated authority from Academic Board. The Award Board chair cannot agree standards and therefore the phrase 'Chair's Action' should not be used. The action which can be taken by Chairs between meetings of the Award Assessment Board should be clarified. The Summer Board should if possible make decisions for students with outstanding assessments that if 'X' is achieved then 'Y' degree/award will be conferred; such decisions should be clearly recorded in the minutes. Results for such students can then be released if they satisfy the requirements. If 'X' is not achieved there would have to be a meeting of the Award Assessment Board, with a subset of the membership as agreed by the Summer Board.

## **8.8 At the end of the Meeting**

The date of the Referred Assessment Board and the composition of that Board should be agreed. The Award External Examiner will be asked to indicate how much involvement s/he wishes to have with amended decisions following appeals and in the referral process for Levels 5 and 6 degree programmes, Levels 4 and 5 of HND/Foundation Degree programmes and level 8 for postgraduate taught programmes.

The Award External Examiner may wish formally to endorse the amended/referred results or alternatively, s/he may sign a statement authorising decisions to be made in her/his absence.

The Faculty Business Manager or nominee (or HE Administrator in a Institution) must ensure that the appropriate declaration form (see attached) is signed by the Award External Examiner.

## **9 Referred Award Assessment Board**

The Referred Board should confirm marks, and make decisions on progression/awards.

## **AWARD ASSESSMENT BOARD STANDARD AGENDA**

### **1 Membership**

- a To note the membership of the Board and to welcome members.
- b To receive apologies.
- c To receive any declarations of interest.

### **2 Confidentiality**

To note the confidentiality of all the proceedings of the Board

### **3**

#### **Minutes of the Board meetings held in the previous academic year**

- a To receive the minutes of the previous Award Assessment Board.
- b To receive the minutes of the Referred Award Assessment Board.
- c To consider any matters arising from the minutes.
- d To receive the written annual reports for the previous academic year of the Award External Examiner(s) together with any formal response and to consider any matters arising.

### **4 Decisions made on progression and awards following the last meeting of the Board**

To receive a report on any decisions made on progression and awards as a result of amended/deferred results and the outcomes of appeals.

### **5 Award Assessment Board Regulations**

- a To receive a statement of the purpose of the Board:
  - i To make decisions on progression and awards for all students registered for the Named Award(s) for which the Board is responsible.
  - ii To ensure that decisions are arrived at fairly and democratically and in accordance with the University Assessment Regulations (and any approved modifications for the particular award) and that justice is done to the individual student.
  - iii To ensure that threshold academic standards of student performance are being maintained at award level, on the basis of the reports received from each of the constituent Subject Assessment Panel chairs on the standard of assessment in subjects/modules, and are comparable with similar awards in other UK institutions, in the expert opinion of the Award External Examiner.
  - iv To ensure that in making decisions all corroborated extenuating circumstances relating to individual students have been taken fully into account before a decision is reached.
  - v To report and discuss, where appropriate, any examination or assessment offences.

- b To receive an outline of the Assessment Regulations for Awards considered, noting any modules which are essential for an award or progression or are deemed non-compensatable and cannot be compensated.
- c To agree, in accordance with the Operational Instructions for Award Assessment Boards, guidelines for the treatment of marks/grades obtained at other institutions (eg exchange programmes).

## **6 Subject Assessment Panel Reports**

- a To receive reports from Subject Assessment Panel chairs on the standard of assessment in subjects/modules.
- b To report any issues raised by Subject External Examiner(s) and discussed with Award External Examiner prior to Board.

## **7 Results**

- a To receive the students' results and consider individual student's performance.
- b To consider valid extenuating circumstances in relation to individual student results.
- c To report and discuss, where appropriate, any examination or assessment offences.
- d To note, where appropriate, any programme transfers, confirming that programme learning outcomes have been met.
- e To agree decisions on individual student progression and award.

## **8 Referral**

- a To note the forms of referral recommended by the Subject Assessment Panel(s), including confirmation that the referred assessments meet the learning outcomes with which they are associated.
- b To agree the date of the Referred Assessment Board and its composition.

## **9 Prizes and Awards**

## **10 Award External Examiner Matters**

- a To receive the Award External Examiner's Report.
- b To obtain the signature of the Award External Examiner on the declaration form.
- c To receive a report on the status of the Award External Examiner's appointment and, where appropriate (a year before that appointment was due to come to an end), steps that had been taken to identify a replacement.
- d To record thanks to the Award External Examiner (particularly where their term of office is ending).

## **11 Confidentiality**

To remind the Board of the confidentiality of the proceedings and the procedures governing publication of results.

**12 Date of next meeting of the full Award Assessment Board**

**13 Any Other Business**

The following documents should be available at the meeting for reference purposes:

- The University “Academic Regulations, Notes for Guidance and Procedures for Taught Programmes”
- Definitive programme document(s)
- Regulations for passing specific modules
- Rank order list of students, based on the aggregate percentage mark (for final stage boards)
- Summary list of personal circumstances relating to students to be considered by the Board
- Minutes from relevant Subject Panel meetings
- Minutes from Boards held in the previous academic year
- Operational instructions for Award Assessment Boards

## **AWARD EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S DECLARATION**

**FACULTY/INSTITUTION:**

**AWARD ASSESSMENT BOARD:**

**DATE OF MEETING:**

**This is to confirm that I agree:**

- **that the responsibilities of the Award Assessment Board, as set out in the Operational Instructions, have been fulfilled**
- with the decisions reached by the Award Assessment Board
- **that threshold academic standards of student performance are being maintained at award level and are comparable with similar awards in other UK institutions with which I am familiar.**

**AND**

**EITHER**

I do not wish to be consulted on amended decisions following appeals or to attend the Referred Award Assessment Board and hereby authorise decisions to be made in my absence, subject to my confirmation of any which are out with those agreed today.

**OR**

I wish to be consulted on all proposed amended decisions following appeals and to be present at the Referred Award Assessment Board.

***(Please delete the option which does not apply/amend as necessary)***

**NAME OF AWARD EXTERNAL EXAMINER:**

**SIGNATURE:**

## SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS (for standard September start programmes)

<b>Date / Month</b>	<b>Contributory Process</b>	<b>Those involved</b>	<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>	Consideration of student extenuating circumstance claims	Faculty will determine	To establish the validity or otherwise of the circumstances submitted by students.	Held regularly during the year – information provided to Award Assessment Boards
<b>Dec</b>	Marks Verification of Extended resit coursework completed by end Nov.	Faculty will determine	(Not necessarily a formal meeting) To verify the accuracy of marks for Extended Resits by Coursework and identify those at risk.	External examiners to be consulted over any borderline marks. Provisional marks to be issued to students. Provision of pastoral support if required.
<b>June</b>	Subject Assessment PANELS (SAP)	See paragraph 2.1 of this paper	See paragraph 2.2 of this paper	Module leaders will be expected to have checked and verified marks held on the student records system <b>before</b> the Panel meeting.
<b>July</b>	Award Assessment BOARD (AAB)	See paragraph 3.1 of this paper	See paragraph 3.2 of this paper	Copy of Results List Examinations Office  Transcripts issued to students
<b>Sept</b>	Referred Award Assessment BOARD	As specified by the main Board in Summer (Award External Examiner need not attend)	To make decisions on progression and awards for all students referred or deferred.	Formal Panels will not be held. Boards will confirm marks, progression and award.
	Graduation Ceremony	Students, their guests and staff	To celebrate students' achievements	Award documents presented to or sent to students



**DATA CONSIDERED BY SUBJECT ASSESSMENT PANELS AND AWARD ASSESSMENT BOARDS**

	<b>Subject Assessment Panel</b>	<b>Award Assessment Board</b>
<b>Information</b>	Marks for subject modules  Statistics for mark distribution for each module	All module marks for students  Final percentage aggregate  Module profile for each student
<b>Marks for modules</b>	Considered	Not considered
<b>Marks for students</b>	Not considered	Considered
<b>External Examiner's report</b>	Subject External Examiner's report from previous year, plus written response / action plan	Award External Examiner's report from previous year, plus written response / action plan

<b>Version number</b> 2019/20 v1	<b>Status (final)</b> Final	<b>Owned by</b> Academic Regulations Co-ordinator
<b>Summary of any amendments</b>		
<b>Document objectives</b> To describe the University's procedures for the operation of Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards.		
<b>Intended recipients</b> Students, staff and external examiners		
<b>Approving Body and Date approved</b>		Originally approved by Academic Board June 1993
<b>Date of Issue</b>		This version – September 2019
<b>Review date</b>		Summer 2020
<b>Contact for review</b>		<b>Job Title</b> Academic Regulations Co-ordinator

Version	Date	Author(s)	Replaces	Comment
2013-14 v1.0	August 2013	Pat Wilde		New document, drawing together information used in previous University documents relating to the operation of Panels and Boards (" <b>Organisation of Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards in the Modular System</b> ", " <b>Panels and Boards and the Award Process</b> " and " <b>Attendance at Panels and Boards</b> "). Draft used as part of annual review and update of Academic Regulations – not circulated
2013-14 v2.0	December 2013	Pat Wilde	2013-14 v1.0 above	
2013-14 v3.0		Sue Gregory	2013-14 v2.0 above	Update to SAP Standard Agenda, item 7, as agreed by TLQC 20.01.14
2014-15 v1.0	September 2014	Kate Ellis	2013-14 v3.0	
2015-16 v1.0	September 2015	Kate Ellis	2014-15 v1.0	Update to SAP Standard Agenda, item 5a, as agreed by Academic Board, 25.06.15.
2015-16 v2.0	January 2016	Kate Ellis	2015-16 v1.0	Update agreed by Academic Board 16.12.2015
2016-17 v1.0	September 2016	Kate Ellis	2015-16 v2.0	
2017-18 v1.0	September 2017	Kate Ellis	2016-17 v1.0	Updated to incorporate changes required by Learning Outcomes Working Group (LOWG)
2017-18 v2.0	January 2018	Kate Ellis	2017-18 v1.0	Added guidance on refers/repeats, and posthumous / Aegrotat awards, following ARSC 11-01-2018