

Policy and Procedures for Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes – Membership, Responsibilities and Operation

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the University’s policy on the membership, responsibilities and operation of Boards of Examiners for taught programmes. It includes information about the key roles involved in the operation of the Board, the standard agenda to be followed and issues to be considered by all Boards of Examiners.
- 1.2 This document is of particular interest to all Chairs and members of Boards of Examiners (including external examiners), Associate Deans (Education), Deputy Heads of School (Education), Examinations Officers, Professional Services colleagues involved in the administration and assessment processes.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 It is recognised that in some cases Schools and Faculties have different roles. For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

Chair of the Board of Examiners	The Chair of the Board of Examiners is appointed by the Board. Best practice is to appoint a member of the academic staff of the School, who has responsibility for assessment quality within a discipline or group of cognate disciplines. The Chair of the Board of Examiners must not
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	be the same person as the Examinations Officer or the Programme Lead.
Programme Lead	The person present at the Board of Examiners with management responsibility for the programme(s) being discussed. This may be the Director of Programmes where this role exists. The Programme Lead must not be the same person as the Chair or the Examinations Officer.
Examinations Officer	The Examinations Officer should have a thorough and up to date understanding of relevant regulations regarding progression, referrals, and repeats and should ensure consistency of approach to Board of Examiners practices across the discipline(s) for which they are responsible. The Examination Officer must not be the same person as the Chair of the Board of Examiners or the Programme Lead.
Module Lead	An internal examiner with responsibility for a module(s) of the programme(s) under consideration by a Board of Examiners.
Internal Examiner	An internal examiner is an academic member of staff (full time and part time) involved in the marking of assignments and examinations that contribute to the programmes of study under consideration by a Board of Examiners.
External Examiner	All external examiners for the programmes of study under consideration by a Board of Examiners.
Chair of Special Consideration Board	The person present at the Board of Examiners who can talk about the recommendations arising from the Special Consideration Board. It is recognised that it may not be practical for the Chair of the Special Consideration Board to attend all the relevant Board meetings and a nominee who was also in attendance at the Special Consideration

	Board can undertake this role at the Board of Examiners (and Pre-Board).
Academic Conduct Officer	The person present at the Board of Examiners who can talk about academic conduct cases. It is recognised that it may not be practical for the Academic Conduct Officer to attend all the relevant Board meetings and a nominee can undertake this role at the Board of Examiners (and Pre-Board).

3. Membership/Constitution of Boards of Examiners

- 3.1 Each School shall be responsible for ensuring that there are Boards of Examiners which are appropriately constituted and which ensure the annual consideration and confirmation of module and year results contributing to all taught programmes of study that are under the remit of that School. Where appropriate, groups of cognate disciplines may hold a single Board of Examiners.
- 3.2 The Boards of Examiners shall consist of at least the following members for each programme of study
- two examiners in every subject or group of subjects, of whom one shall be an external examiner.
 - such other members as may be required by Regulations.
- 3.3 All internal examiners involved in the marking of assignments and examinations that contribute to the programmes of study under consideration by a Board of Examiners shall be members of that Board of Examiners. 'Internal examiners' refers to all academic members of staff (full time and part time) plus those other staff required to be involved in the examining process, as determined annually by the School Programmes Committee.
- 3.4 All external examiners for the programmes of study under consideration by a Board of Examiners shall be members of that Board of Examiners. The role is set out in the [External Examiners Procedures](#) document

available in the Quality Handbook and supplied to all external examiners on their initial appointment.

- 3.5 Depending on how the Boards are organised, internal and external examiners may need to be members of more than one Board of Examiners.
- 3.6 There may be some special groups and boards mandated by the University (e.g. Special Consideration Boards) or set up by Schools to undertake specific roles (e.g. boards with subject representatives to look at first year progression) that may have a more limited membership.
- 3.7 In the case of education partnership taught programmes, it is the responsibility of the School to ensure that a Board of Examiners is constituted which includes appropriate representation of academic colleagues from all partner institutions involved in the programmes. It is normally expected that the 'Programme Lead', or other similar officer, from each partner institution shall be a member of the Board of Examiners together with all University internal examiners for the programme and the University-appointed external examiner. For education partnership taught programmes where it has been agreed that the responsibility for making the arrangements for the Board of Examiners sits with the partner, the responsibilities, membership, quoracy and operation of the Board of Examiners will be approved as part of the Collaboration Approval Process and any variations to this Policy will be detailed in the Operations Manual for the collaboration.
- 3.8 The Chair of the Board of Examiners is appointed by the Board. Best practice is to appoint a member of the academic staff of the School, who has responsibility for assessment quality within a discipline or group of cognate disciplines. Please see paragraph 5.1 for further information on the role of the Chair.
- 3.9 Schools will appoint academic members of staff to act as Examinations Officers in the School. From amongst the Examinations Officers, one will be nominated to coordinate any Faculty level activity and to represent the

Faculty at University level events. Please see paragraph 5.2 for further information on the role of the Examinations Officer.

3.10 In summary the membership of the Board of Examiners is as follows:

- (a) The Chair of the Board of Examiners
- (b) The Examinations Officer
- (c) The Programme Lead(s)
- (d) The Director of Programmes (where this role exists)
- (e) The Deputy Head of School (Education)
- (f) The Module Leads
- (g) The internal examiners for the programme(s) (including for contributing disciplines to a Joint Honours programme)
- (h) The external examiner(s) for the programme(s)
- (i) The Chair of the Special Consideration Board (or nominee)
- (j) The Academic Conduct Officer (or nominee)
- (k) For education partnership programmes, the Programme Lead and relevant internal examiners from the Partner(s)

3.11 The Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee is entitled to nominate a member of the Subcommittee to attend any Board of Examiners meeting in an advisory capacity. This member of staff will be in attendance at the Board but is not considered a member of the Board of Examiners and will therefore not be involved in the decision making process.

3.12 The Board of Examiners will be supported by Faculty based Professional Services staff who will be responsible for making the administrative arrangements for the effective operation of the Board, preparing the required documentation for the Board, taking minutes of the Board and ensuring all the necessary administrative actions are carried out following the Board. These members of staff will be in attendance at the Board but are not considered members of the Board of Examiners.

3.13 The meeting of the Board of Examiners may be held in person or virtually using a University of Southampton approved platform such as Microsoft Teams. The decision on how to run the Board will be made by the Chair of the Board of Examiners. All University members should attend in the mode advised by the Chair, unless exceptions are agreed in advance. The external examiner may choose to attend a physical board virtually, by prior arrangement with the Chair and the Examinations Officer.

4. Attendance at Board of Examiners Meetings

- 4.1 In order to facilitate attendance at Board of Examiners meetings, the dates of the meetings should be set at least 10 months in advance and the date communicated to all internal and external examiners.
- 4.2 All internal examiners are expected to attend meetings of the Board(s) of Examiners for which they are a member. Any apologies must be communicated to the Chair of the Board of Examiners.
- 4.3 If a Module Lead is unable to attend, they must ensure there is a member of the Board present at the meeting that can discuss and respond to any issues related to that module.
- 4.4 In the case of education partnership programmes if representatives from partner institutions are unable to attend the Board of Examiners in person, they may participate in the Board of Examiners through video conference or other appropriate means. Board of Examiners meetings which involve an overseas education partner should be scheduled at appropriate times to enable telephone or video attendance where applicable.
- 4.5 In the case of joint honours programmes, there must be appropriate liaison between the disciplines involved and the Boards of Examiners should normally be attended by representatives of those disciplines. If representatives are unable to attend they should be given the opportunity to provide input ahead of the meeting and included in the circulation of minutes following the meeting.

- 4.6 An Examinations Officer must attend each Board of Examiners which takes place within the School, or a defined discipline group. Further information on the Examinations Officer role can be found in 5.2 and Appendix B.
- 4.7 It is recognised that one person could be undertaking more than one role at the Board of Examiners, for example, the Examinations Officer could also be a Module Lead but this should be minimised. The roles of the Chair, the Examinations Officer and the Programme Lead should be undertaken by three different people.

External Examiner Attendance

- 4.8 At least one external examiner must be present for most Board of Examiners to be quorate, see detail below. External examiners must be notified of the date of the meeting in writing as soon as the date is set (see paragraph 4.1). Virtual attendance by the external examiner, using a University of Southampton approved platform such as Microsoft Teams, is considered as being 'in attendance' at the Board of Examiners meeting.

External Examiner attendance at Board of Examiners for Parts II, III, IV, V and VI of a Programme

- 4.9 External examiners are required to be present at all Board of Examiners where Parts II, III, IV, V and VI of a programme are being considered as these levels of assessment contribute to the classification of awards. Please see Section 11 for further guidance on the expectations regarding external examiner attendance at Boards of Examiners for Postgraduate Taught Programmes.

External Examiner attendance at Board of Examiners for Part I of a Programme

- 4.10 External examiners are not required to attend a Board of Examiners where only Part I of a programme is being considered, as this level of assessment does not normally contribute to the final award classification. External examiners are required to attend any Board of Examiners meeting which is convened to consider programmes where Part I contributes to the final award classification or concludes at this level, for

example a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE). External examiners may attend the Board of Examiners meeting if they wish to and have access to draft assessments and marked work if requested.

External Examiner attendance at Supplementary Board of Examiners

- 4.11 For Supplementary Boards of Examiners it should be agreed in advance with the relevant external examiners whether they wish to attend and this should be clearly noted in the minutes of the Board of Examiners. If they do not attend they must nonetheless be involved in verifying marking standards and confirming progression and award decisions.
- 4.12 If an external examiner **exceptionally** cannot attend a meeting of the Board of Examiners that they are required to attend in person or virtually, this shall be reported in advance to Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee and the Subcommittee shall agree and note the alternative arrangements through which the external examiner will exercise their responsibilities to the Board – for example by submission of a written report in advance of the meeting. In cases of emergency, or where there is not a Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee scheduled before the Board of Examiners, the arrangements may be agreed by the Associate Dean (Education) as Chair of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee. In those **exceptional** cases where it has been agreed that the external examiner will exercise their responsibilities at the Board through other means, the Board of Examiners must receive, and record in the minutes, clear evidence of the views of the external examiner on the appropriateness of marking standards. The minutes should also record when the Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee/Associate Dean (Education) agreed the alternative arrangements for the external examiner.
- 4.13 The External Examiner Scrutiny Group will monitor external examiner attendance at Boards of Examiners meetings via the external examiner reports and will report any areas where attendance of external examiners is an issue to Academic Quality and Standards Subcommittee.

Quorum for the Board of Examiners

4.14 The quorum for the Board of Examiners is:

- (a) the Chair of the Board of Examiners
- (b) the Examinations Officer
- (c) the Programme Lead(s) (or Director of Programmes where applicable)¹
- (d) at least four other internal examiners²
- (e) the external examiner(s) in person or virtually (unless, in exceptional circumstances, Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee has approved alternative arrangements for external examiner contribution to the Board, or an external examiner is not required for that particular Board, see 4.8).

4.15 If a Programme Lead is **exceptionally** unable to attend a Board of Examiners meeting, a person with appropriate experience of the relevant programme and approved by the Deputy Head of School (Education)³ may attend in their place.

4.16 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board of Examiners to confirm the meeting is quorate. The Associate Dean (Education) should be

¹ There must be a person present at the Board with responsibility for the Programme(s) being discussed. This is normally the Programme Lead but can be the Director of Programmes where this role exists and the Programme Lead is unable to attend.

² Where a programme has fewer than four other internal examiners the number of internal examiners required for the quorum shall be one third of the number of internal examiners plus one – normally rounded up.

³ The Faculty of Medicine does not have Deputy Heads of School (Education) and therefore this role will be undertaken by the relevant Director of Programmes.

advised immediately if a Board of Examiners is inquorate. If the Board is inquorate, the Associate Dean (Education) will decide that either:

- (i) the meeting may continue but any decisions made will remain provisional until confirmed by a Board of Examiners which is quorate, such meeting to be arranged at the earliest opportunity; or
- (ii) the meeting shall be postponed and reconvened at the earliest opportunity when a quorum may be secured.

4.17 Where an external examiner is unable to attend the meeting of the Board of Examiners in person or virtually but alternative arrangements have been approved by Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee, they will be regarded as present for the purpose of confirming the quorum.

4.18 In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to hold an Exceptional Board of Examiners to undertake the work of one or more discipline level Board of Examiners (see section 15).

Failure In Technology

4.19 If there is a failure in the technology during a virtual Board of Examiners meeting, attempt should be made to reconnect. In the event of a protracted failure in technology the Board of Examiners meeting should be halted. The Chair should consult with the Examinations Officer, Programme Lead(s) and external examiner(s) via an alternative method (e.g. telephone) and they should decide whether there is a need to reconvene at another date or whether sufficient discussion has taken place. If it is agreed that the Board needs to be re-scheduled care should be taken that the re-scheduled meeting will be quorate. In making the decision whether or not the Board must reconvene, the Chair should consider whether or not the external examiner feels they have been able to express their view on whether they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process and whether overall academic standards have been maintained. If the external examiner is satisfied they have been able to do this, the Chair may judge that the external examiner's input

has been sufficient for the Board to make all necessary recommendations with adequate confidence.

5. Key Roles and Responsibilities

Chair of the Board of Examiners

5.1 The main responsibilities of the Chair of the Board of Examiners are:

- to advise members on the remit and format of the Board;
- to confirm the Board is quorate;
- to ensure all agenda items are covered;
- to ensure that members of the Board have the opportunity to contribute to discussions and that business is conducted collegially;
- to ensure that the Board reaches decisions on student achievement which are fair, consistent, robust and in accordance with relevant University and [programme regulations](#).
- to ensure the outcome of each decision is clear and accurately recorded;
- to identify and refer actions as appropriate;
- to check and approve the draft minutes of the Board of Examiners as a true record of proceedings before they are circulated to other members;
- to take Chair's action on behalf of the Board of Examiners outside the meeting where a matter is urgent or where for some reason the Board of Examiners does not have sufficient information or is for some other reason unable to take a decision at the meeting (see 9.11).

Examinations Officer

5.2 The main responsibilities of the Examinations Officer at the Board of Examiners are:

- to have a thorough and up to date understanding of relevant regulations regarding progression, referrals, and repeats;
- to ensure consistency of approach to Board of Examiners practices across the discipline(s) for which they are responsible;
- to liaise with support staff to ensure that the dates and times for Boards of Examiners are communicated to academic staff and external examiners with adequate notice and by appropriate means;
- to liaise with support staff to ensure the assessment grids are completed with correct and complete marks, attend relevant Pre-Boards and identify modules and cohorts or sub-cohorts where student performance is likely to warrant discussion at the Board of Examiners;
- to present the recommendations of the Pre-Boards to the Board of Examiners, leading discussion of cohort/sub-cohort performance on identified programmes or modules;
- to present the programme/module data to the Board of Examiners, identifying any trends through time;
- to act as a source of advice to the Board of Examiners, including external examiners, on regulatory matters; notifying Boards of Examiners and external examiners of changes to regulations;
- to inform academic colleagues of procedures for communication of marks to students, including issues relating to confidentiality and GDPR.

5.3 The full role description for the Examinations Officer including their responsibilities regarding assessment and examination is set out in Appendix B.

Programme Lead

5.4 The expectation is that there must be a person present at the Board with responsibility for the Programme(s) being discussed. This is usually the

Programme Lead. The Director of Programmes (where applicable) may undertake this role if the Programme Lead is exceptionally unable to attend the Board of Examiners meeting and the Director of Programmes is not chairing the meeting. The role of the Programme Lead is to provide information on the delivery and management of the programme and the assessment processes during the year.

Module Lead

5.5 Module Leads are responsible for providing marks to the Faculty assessment teams by the specified deadline. All Module Leads are expected to attend meetings of the Board(s) of Examiners for which they are a member to contribute to discussions and to comment or answer any questions relating to the module. If a Module Lead is exceptionally unable to attend the Board of Examiners they must ensure there is a member of the Board present at the meeting that can discuss and respond to any issues related to that module. This could be the Programme Lead, the Director of Programmes (where applicable) or another internal examiner on the Board.

External Examiner

5.6 The role of the external examiner is set out in the [External Examiners Procedures](#) document available in the Quality Handbook and supplied to all external examiners on their initial appointment.

5.7 At the meeting of the Board of Examiners, the role of the external examiner is:

- to ensure that recommendations accord with the requirements and normal practice of the regulations for that programme of study and the University;
- to ensure that decisions made are fair and consistent;
- to comment on the quality and standards of the programme and student performance in relation to those standards; the consistent and fair application of policies and procedures ensuring the

integrity and rigor of academic practices; and areas of good practice and possible enhancements.

5.8 During a visit to the University to attend a Board of Examiners meeting, external examiners should, wherever possible, be given the opportunity to meet with students and members of the programme team. Where Boards of Examiners are held outside term time or the external examiner attends the meeting of the Board of Examiners virtually, opportunities to meet students and members of the programme team should be offered to external examiners at other times of the year, or can be arranged as a virtual meeting.

Professional Services Staff

5.9 Each Board of Examiners will be supported by staff from the relevant Faculty based Professional Services who will be responsible for:

- making all the administrative arrangements for the effective operation of the Board e.g. notification of dates and times and room booking;
- preparing the required documentation for the Board, including assessment grids, and ensuring that these are made available to the members of the Board;
- recording the decisions of the Board accurately and producing the minutes of the meeting;
- ensuring all the necessary administrative actions are carried out following the Board.

6. Special Consideration Board

6.1 Special Consideration cases must be handled in accordance with the [Regulations Governing Special Consideration \(including Deadline Extension Requests\) for Taught Programmes and Taught Assessed Components of Research Degrees.](#) The Regulations set out the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Special Consideration Board. The

Special Consideration Board must meet prior to the Pre-Board and the Board of Examiners and make specific recommendations on the cases considered. Boards of Examiners are entitled to ask Special Consideration Boards to revise any recommendations that would not uphold expected academic standards of awards, but may not discuss the details of individual cases from the Special Consideration Board.

7. Academic Conduct Cases

7.1 The University [Regulations Governing Academic Responsibility and Conduct](#) must be followed for suspected breaches of Academic Responsibility and Conduct. Further guidance on Academic Responsibility and Conduct procedures is available in the [Quality Handbook](#).

7.2 The decision of an Academic Conduct Panel to impose a penalty will be reported to, and recorded by, the Board of Examiners (see paragraph 9.4).

8. Pre-Board

8.1 For each discipline or group of cognate disciplines, a Pre-Board is to be convened prior to the Board of Examiners to scrutinise the marks in the assessment grid and to ensure that marks profiles are complete and there are no errors. The Pre-Board allows for the identification of potential issues affecting individual students which need to be investigated before the Board of Examiners meeting. A summary note should be kept of any changes to marks and any recommendations to the Board of Examiners. The Pre-Board will report to the Board of Examiners, but is not intended to duplicate the work of the Board of Examiners.

8.2 The required membership for the Pre-Board is:

- (a) The Chair of the Board of Examiners
- (b) The Examinations Officer

(c) The Programme Lead(s) (or Director of Programmes where applicable)

- 8.3 Where any of the required members are exceptionally unavailable to attend a Pre-Board meeting, a suitably experienced person approved by the Deputy Head of School (Education)⁴ may attend in their place.
- 8.4 It is good practice to ensure there are people present who can talk about the recommendations arising from the Special Consideration Board or any Academic Conduct cases (e.g. Chair of Special Consideration Board or their nominee, Academic Conduct Officer or their nominee).
- 8.5 Module Leads are not required to attend the Pre-Board but should be available for consultation in case there are any queries regarding their module(s).
- 8.6 The Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee is entitled to nominate a member of the Subcommittee (e.g. the Head of Faculty Student Administration) to attend any Pre-Board meeting in an advisory capacity.
- 8.7 The Pre-Board will be supported by staff from the Professional Services who will be responsible for:
- making all the administrative arrangements for the Pre-Board e.g. notification of dates and times and room booking;
 - preparing the required documentation for the Pre-Board including assessment grids, and ensuring that these are made available to the members of the Pre-Board;
 - taking notes of the Pre-Board and ensuring all the necessary administrative actions are carried out following the Pre-Board in preparation for the Board of Examiners meeting.

⁴ The Faculty of Medicine does not have Deputy Heads of School (Education) and therefore this role will be undertaken by the relevant Director of Programmes.

8.8 The notes of the Pre-Board should be submitted to the Board of Examiners and should:

- confirm that moderation has taken place in accordance with the University's Double Blind Marking and Moderation Policy and highlight where further action is required;
- confirm that the marks in the assessment grid have been scrutinised and are correct;
- confirm that Special Consideration cases have been considered and mitigation applied where applicable;
- confirm that Academic Conduct cases have been considered and penalties applied where applicable;
- notify to the Board of Examiners particular modules which may need specific scrutiny or scaling.

9. Boards of Examiners – Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 Each Board of Examiners is responsible for the setting, approval and marking of all items of assessment relevant to the programmes of study or parts thereof under its remit, within the relevant University policy and guidance on assessment matters.

9.2 Each Board of Examiners is responsible for the consideration and final determination of module and year results for all taught programmes of study that are under its remit, for ensuring that the standards of awards are maintained and that all the requirements for assessments that contribute to the gaining of an academic award are fulfilled, as set out in the relevant regulations. All progression and classification decisions must be taken in accordance with the [Regulations and Definitions Applying to Progression for all Credit Bearing Programmes](#); the regulations for [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Programmes](#); or the regulations for [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Postgraduate Master's Programmes](#) except in those instances where Academic Quality and

Standards Subcommittee has approved exemptions and/or variations to these regulations for specific programmes. Approved exemptions and variations are specified in the relevant [programme regulations](#). The Terms of Reference for the Board of Examiners can be found in Appendix A.

- 9.3 At the beginning of the meeting members of the Board of Examiners must declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with any candidate on any module or programme under consideration. The Chair has the right to ask the member to withdraw from the meeting at any point should this become necessary. The declaration of interest, including a 'null return' where applicable should be recorded in the minutes.

Standard Agenda

- 9.4 All Boards of Examiners will follow a standard agenda as set out below. A standard agenda template can be found in the Quality Handbook. Boards of Examiners may, where applicable, consider additional items – for example, issues relating to professional competence.

- Confirmation that the meeting is quorate.
- Declaration regarding confidentiality.
- Declaration of Conflicts of Interest.
- Minutes of previous Board of Examiners.
- Report on Chair's actions taken since the previous meeting, including the outcomes of appeals and academic conduct rulings.
- Action taken in response to previous external examiners' reports.
- Review of current regulations and any changes to regulations for the current academic year.
- Ratification of marks, student progression and awards:
- Receive notes from the Pre-Board (see paragraph 8.8)).
- Receive Assessment Grids setting out marks and results for finalists and continuing students.

- Receive summary report from Special Consideration Board (no individual cases).
- Receive summary report of Academic Conduct cases.
- Receive report on any issues arising from the moderation process.
- Receive report of any errors on examination papers.
- Report on outstanding appeals and academic conduct cases.
- Ratification of marks
- Analysis of Programme Data
- Summary statistics of modules, plus report on any scaling undertaken.
- Report of distribution of degree classifications and trends through time.
- Confirmation of the award of any Prizes etc.
- Receive comments from external examiners (see paragraph 5.4)

9.5 Each Board of Examiners shall ratify the recommended results from the Assessment Grid clearly indicating recommendations for:

- final awards, including any relevant classification
- progression from one stage of a programme to the next
- interim/exit awards where appropriate
- Repeat/Referral where appropriate
- resubmission where appropriate
- termination of programme where appropriate
- any awards/prizes to be made (unless this is the responsibility of School Programmes Committee).

9.6 The external examiner(s) present at the Board of Examiners should confirm that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process but are not required to confirm agreement with every individual

assessment decision. This confirmation should be recorded explicitly in the minutes of the Board of Examiners.

- 9.7 Procedures to be followed in the event that an external examiner is unwilling to provide confirmation that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process are set out in the [External Examiner Procedures](#) document.

Anonymity

- 9.8 All marks, Progression decisions and Awards considered by a Board of Examiners must be considered on an anonymous basis.

Confidentiality

- 9.9 Members of the Board of Examiners must not speak to students about their detailed performance or provide students with results before the official date for the release of marks. Decisions are reached by the Board of Examiners as a whole, and staff should not enter into discussions with students about the details of those decisions. The confidentiality of the meeting should be recorded in the minutes.
- 9.10 If the Board of Examiners meeting is being held virtually, the record function on Microsoft Teams should not be used and care should be taken using the chat function as comments remain online once the meeting has ended and cannot be deleted. The Chair of the Board of Examiners should set out protocol at the beginning of the meeting.

Chair's Action

- 9.11 If a Board of Examiners does not have the appropriate information available in order to come to a fair and robust decision for a student, the Board may agree that the Chair can make decisions on behalf of the Board of Examiners outside the meeting using Chair's action. The number of Chair's actions agreed by the Board should be kept to a minimum and should usually only be taken for individual students. The Board of Examiners should formally empower the Chair to make a decision, or decisions, on its behalf and ensure this is recorded in the minutes.

9.12 Situations where a Chair's action may be appropriate include:

- Where an issue has been raised at a Board of Examiners and it has been agreed that the Chair may take action on behalf of the Board without further consultation;
- Where a student's mark has been incorrectly recorded, Chair's action may be used to rectify this mistake;
- Where a mark was not available at the meeting of the Board of Examiners (normally where the student has been granted an extension);
- Where a student notifies the University that they do not wish to continue with their studies and they wish to receive an interim award.

9.13 Chair's actions must be monitored by the support staff supporting the Board of Examiners to ensure that any outstanding decisions are not overlooked. The outcome of any Chair's actions must be reported to the next Board of Examiners meeting for ratification. For example Chair's actions taken following the Board of Examiners meeting will be reported to the Supplementary Board for ratification.

9.14 If a Chair's action results in a final award being made or changed, the School must seek approval from the external examiner(s) and a new Recommendation for Awards list must be produced and signed by the Chair of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee and approved by Senate (see Section 12). If the external examiner has been present at the Board of Examiners meeting and has agreed that the decision can be taken by Chair's action there is no need to consult the external examiner again but a new Recommendation for Awards list must be produced and signed by the Chair of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee and approved by Senate.

10. Minutes of the Board of Examiners

- 10.1 All Boards of Examiners are required to keep formal minutes of their proceedings. The purpose of the minutes of Boards of Examiners is to record decisions, to summarise any discussion relevant to those decisions (where this is required to give a context or rationale for the decision, or to establish precedents), and to capture for further consideration any areas of discussion or requirements for future action. Guidance for writing minutes of Boards of Examiners is available in the Quality Handbook.
- 10.2 The minutes of the Boards of Examiners are confidential and should be regarded as restricted documents. All due care must be taken to ensure the security of these minutes/records.
- 10.3 The draft set of minutes must be cleared with the Chair before they are circulated to other members of the Board of Examiners. The version cleared by the Chair is known as the 'unconfirmed' minutes. The 'unconfirmed minutes' should be circulated to members of the Board of Examiners within two weeks of the meeting as the permanent record of assessment decision making processes. Members of the Board of Examiners are required to confirm the accuracy of the 'unconfirmed' minutes within two weeks of receiving the minutes as the minutes may on occasion be required as part of a student appeal. Minutes remain 'unconfirmed' until formally approved at the next meeting of the Board of Examiners, this may be the Supplementary Board.

11. Boards of Examiners for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

- 11.1 The Board of Examiners for Postgraduate Taught Programmes will convene at the completion of the programme to approve the awards. The Board of Examiners may also convene at the end of Semester 2 to consider the taught component of the programme and identify candidates needing to refer or repeat modules from the taught component of the programme. Where this does not take place, it should be made clear to students that marks released at the end of Semester 2

are provisional until the final Board of Examiners held at the end of the programme.

11.2 The expectation is that the external examiner(s) will only be required to attend one Board (in person or virtually). If a Board of Examiners is convened at the end of Semester 2 to consider the taught part of the programme, it is recommended that the external examiner(s) attends the Board of Examiners held at the end of the programme where awards are made. If an external examiner attends the Semester 2 Board they will not be expected to also attend the Board at the end of the programme but must be involved in scrutinising a sample of the dissertations and providing comments prior to the final Board. They must also be involved in verifying marking standards and confirming progression and award decisions. At least one external examiner must be present (in person or virtually) at the Board of Examiners held at the end of the programme for the Board of Examiners to be quorate.

11.3 If an external examiner attends both the end of Semester 2 Board and the end of the programme Board they will only be required to submit one external examiner report following the Board of Examiners held at the end of the programme.

11.4 Procedures for the Postgraduate Taught Board of Examiners should follow the same processes outlined in the other sections of this document.

12. Supplementary Board of Examiners

12.1 This is a meeting of the Board of Examiners convened to determine progression, awards and reassessments for students who have referred in the Supplementary Exam Period. The Terms of Reference and Membership of the Supplementary Board are the same as the Board of Examiners although it may be agreed in advance with the relevant external examiners whether they wish to attend these Supplementary Boards of Examiners (see paragraph 4.8.4). For Supplementary Boards of

Examiners it is recognised that given the timing of these Boards some members may be unable to attend.

12.2 The minimum attendance for a Supplementary Board of Examiners is:

- The Chair of the Board of Examiners
- The Examinations Officer
- The Programme Lead(s) (or Director of Programmes where applicable)

13. Additional Board

13.1 Following the main Board of Examiners meeting it may be necessary to hold an additional Board to ratify any decisions following Chair's action or the outcome of any appeals. These Boards can normally be held virtually and should involve as a minimum the following members:

- The Chair of the Board of Examiners
- The Examinations Officer
- The Programme Lead(s) (or Director of Programmes where applicable)

14. Boards of Examiners and Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittees: Approval of Recommendations for Awards

14.1 Board of Examiners shall make recommendations for the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates and where appropriate recommendations for the re-examination of unsuccessful candidates. The recommendations of the Board of Examiners shall be communicated to the Faculty concerned.

14.2 In the case of recommendations for the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates, the relevant Professional Services team will produce the Recommendations for Awards List based on the Assessment Grid. If

there are no contentious issues following a Board of Examiners meeting, the Recommendation for Awards list shall be signed by the Chair of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee. In the absence of the Chair, Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee may nominate an alternative signatory who is independent of the Board of Examiners that ratified the marks. Where exceptional circumstances have necessitated the Associate Dean (Education) taking on the role of Chair of the Board of Examiners in addition to that of Chair of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee, the Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee must nominate an alternative signatory to sign the Recommendation for Awards list who is independent of the Board of Examiners that ratified the marks. The Recommendation for Awards list and the Chair's action taken must be reported to the next meeting of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee.

14.3 If any of the decisions reached by the Board of Examiners are controversial a meeting of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee must be held to approve the recommendations of the Board of Examiners and the Recommendation for Awards list.

Circumstances where this may be appropriate include:

- Where not all members of the Board of Examiners have agreed with a decision of the Board.
- Where an external examiner is unwilling to provide confirmation that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process.

14.4 There must be at least 24 hours between the meeting of a Board of Examiners taking place and finalising decisions by Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee (or Chair's action).

14.5 The signed Recommendations for Awards list should be sent by the relevant Faculty based Professional Services team to the Examinations and Awards Team (EAT). The EAT prepares the University Awards Memorandum for transmission to the President and Vice-Chancellor, who signs the University Awards Memorandum to signify approval of the awards on behalf of Senate.

14.6 The EAT produces award certificates, diploma supplements and confirmation of award letters for transmission to students. Paper copies of the signed Recommendations for Awards lists are retained in perpetuity, as a historical record and particularly for the purpose of responding to requests for the verification of awards.

14.7 The process set out in paragraphs 14.1 – 14.6 above shall also be followed when decisions regarding Awards are recommended on Chair's action on behalf of the Board of Examiners.

14.8 It is considered good practice for the Chairs of Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittees to meet with the Vice-President (Education) just prior to significant award dates for taught programmes (normally June for Undergraduate Awards and November and December for Postgraduate Taught Awards) to discuss any issues arising from the Boards of Examiners season. The Chair of Senate may call upon this group for advice about making awards.

15. Exceptional Circumstances

15.1 In exceptional circumstances, where the functions of Boards of Examiners and/or Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittees face significant and wide-spread disruption, the Chair of Senate may convene an Exceptional Board of Examiners to undertake the work of one or more discipline level Board of Examiners and/or Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittees.

15.2 Membership will be at the invitation of the Chair of Senate, but as a guide might be expected to include:

15.3 Vice-President Education (Chair)

- A member of the academic staff from each of the disciplines for which the Exceptional Board of Examiners will make decisions
- The Academic Registrar (Secretary)

- An external member with suitable experience as an external examiner, who may be drawn from the University’s existing pool of external examiners

15.4 The Academic Registrar will be responsible for the administration of the Exceptional Board of Examiners prior to, during and following the meeting. Faculty based Professional Services staff in attendance at the meeting for administrative purposes will not be considered members of the Exceptional Board of Examiners.

15.5 The Exceptional Board of Examiners will make recommendations to Senate for awards.

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Appendix A

Board of Examiners: Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board of Examiners is responsible for making recommendations on student awards and progression to Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee for subsequent ratification by Senate.

Main Responsibilities

The Board of Examiners will support Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee by undertaking the following tasks:

- (a) To be responsible for the setting, approval and marking of all items of assessment for the taught programmes of study under its remit, within the relevant University policy and guidance on assessment matters;
- (b) To be responsible for the consideration and final determination of module and year results for the taught programmes of study under its remit;
- (c) To make recommendations on awards and progression in accordance with the University regulations and relevant [programme regulations](#);
- (d) To make recommendations on referrals, repeats and the withdrawal of students as appropriate and in accordance with the University regulations and relevant [programme regulations](#);
- (e) To ensure equity of treatment for students;
- (f) To produce Recommendation for Awards lists for approval by Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee and subsequent approval by Senate;
- (g) To make recommendations for prizes as appropriate;
- (h) To consider module and programme data, identify trends over time, and make recommendations for action as appropriate;

- (i) To receive verbal reports from external examiners on the quality and standards of the programmes and student performance in relation to those standards, the consistent and fair application of policies and procedures ensuring the integrity and rigor of academic practices, and areas of good practice and possible enhancements.

Membership

The Chair of the Board of Examiners

The Examinations Officer

The Programme Lead(s)

The Director of Programmes (where this role exists)

The Deputy Head of School (Education)

The Module Leads

The internal examiners for the programme(s) (including for contributing disciplines to a Joint Honours programme)

The external examiner(s) for the programme(s)

The Chair of Special Consideration Board (or nominee)

The Academic Conduct Officer (or nominee)

For education partnership programmes, the Programme Lead and relevant internal examiners from the Partner(s)

Quorum

The Chair of the Board of Examiners

The Examinations Officer

The Programme Lead(s) (or Director of Programmes where applicable)

At least four other internal examiners

The external examiner(s) in person or virtually (unless, in exceptional circumstances, Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee has approved alternative arrangements for external examiner contribution to the Board, or an external examiner is not required for that particular Board).

The Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee may nominate a member of the Subcommittee to attend the Board of Examiners meeting in an advisory capacity.

The Board of Examiners will be supported by Professional Services colleagues involved in the administration and assessment processes.

Examinations Officer – Role Description

Examinations Officers are appointed by the Deputy Head of School (Education), in liaison with the Head of School and the Associate Dean (Education), to co-ordinate and manage the academic examination procedures for a School or a defined discipline group. They are responsible for ensuring that they run in a smooth, effective and consistent manner, in consultation with the Deputy Head of School (Education), the Director of Programmes, the Chair of the Board of Examiners, and other Faculty based Professional Services staff as required.

Each Faculty will nominate one Examinations Officer who will represent the Faculty at any University wide discussions or events which discuss the operations of assessment and examinations.

The role will take responsibility for:

1. having a thorough and up to date understanding of relevant regulations regarding progression, referrals, and repeats;
2. ensuring consistency of approach to Board of Examiners practices across the discipline(s) for which they are responsible;
3. liaising with Faculty based Professional Services staff to ensure that deadlines for preparation of assessment documentation (exam papers, model answers etc.), and for marking of scripts are communicated to academic staff with adequate notice and by appropriate means;
4. liaising with Faculty based Professional Services staff to ensure that the dates and times for examinations and for Boards of Examiners are communicated to academic staff and external examiners with adequate notice and by appropriate means;
5. organising and overseeing the preparation of exam papers in line with the University's policy for the Proof-Reading of Examination Papers and discipline requirements;

6. ensuring that all comments on examination papers are responded to suitably;
7. ensuring that appropriate nominees of the Associate Dean (Education) are available during the whole of the examination period and remain on campus until each day's examinations have been concluded, including those held on Saturdays. This responsibility includes maintaining a contact list valid during each examination for those responsible for the examination paper and facilitating effective contact with them during examinations;
8. drawing up a schedule of second marking and moderation responsibilities for all relevant examination papers;
9. attending relevant Special Consideration Boards;
10. liaising with Faculty based Professional Services staff to ensure the assessment grids are completed with correct and complete marks, attending relevant Pre-Boards and identifying modules and cohorts of sub-cohorts where student performance is likely to warrant discussion at the Board of Examiners;
11. attending Boards of Examiners and presenting the recommendations of the Pre-Boards to the Board, leading discussion of cohort/sub-cohort performance on identified programmes or modules;
12. acting as a source of advice to the Board of Examiners, including external examiners, on regulatory matters; notifying Boards of Examiners and external examiners of changes to regulations;
13. informing academic colleagues on procedures for communication of marks to students, including issues relating to confidentiality and GDPR;
14. liaising as necessary with other campuses or examination centres (including UoSM) regarding examination matters;
15. contributing to discipline, School, Faculty and University conversations about the enhancement of processes connected with examination.