

B4. The Operation of Boards of Examiners

B4.1 The Authority and Responsibilities of Boards of Examiners and their Accountability to the Academic Board

- 4.1.1 The Academic Board is responsible for the regulation of the academic conditions for the admission of students to, and their progress within, the Institute. The responsibility for the assessment of a student's performance is delegated to individual Boards of Examiners. All Boards of Examiners must operate within the academic regulations of the Institute and within the specific examination and assessment regulations approved for individual programmes. The constitution and terms of reference of individual Boards of Examiners shall be laid down in those regulations.
- 4.1.2 Boards of Examiners are responsible for ensuring that the standards of awards are maintained and for the fulfilment of all the requirements for assessments that contribute to the gaining of an academic award, as laid down in the programme regulations and in the regulations of any other appropriate awarding or accrediting body. Except as specified in paragraphs 4.1.3 to 4.1.8 below, no other body has authority to recommend to the Institute the conferment of an award, nor to amend the decision of a properly constituted *Board of Examiners* acting within its terms of reference and in accordance with its regulations and the Institute's academic regulations.
- 4.1.3 The Academic Board may in the following circumstances require a Board of Examiners to reconsider its decision(s):
- i. if a candidate requests such a reconsideration and establishes to the satisfaction of the Academic Board that his or her performance in the examination was adversely affected by illness or other factors which he or she was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to divulge before the Board of Examiners reached its decision. The candidate's request must be supported by medical certificates or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Academic Board;
 - ii. if the Academic Board is satisfied on evidence produced by a candidate or any other person that there has been a material administrative error, or that the examinations were not conducted in accordance with the regulations for the programme, or that some other material irregularity relevant to the assessments has occurred.
- 4.1.4 Disagreement with the academic judgement of a Board of Examiners in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a candidate's

performance shall not in itself constitute grounds for a request by a candidate for reconsideration.

- 4.1.5 If after reconsideration, in the circumstances detailed in subparagraph 4.1.3 (ii) above, the Board of Examiners does not modify its decision, the Academic Board is empowered to annul that decision if in its opinion due and proper account has not been taken of the relevant factors.
- 4.1.6 In cases of procedural or other irregularity, or where it is impossible to reconvene a Board of Examiners, the Academic Board shall have the power to annul a decision of the Board of Examiners without making a prior request for reconsideration. If an error or irregularity is found to have affected more than one candidate, the Academic Board may annul the whole examination or any part of it.
- 4.1.7 When a decision has been annulled, the Academic Board may take action which, if necessary, may include the appointment of new external examiners and the appointment of additional Academic Board representatives to a reconstituted Board of Examiners.
- 4.1.8 The Chairman of the Academic Board (or his nominee) shall have the right to attend and address any meeting of any Board of Examiners of the Institute.
- 4.1.9 Delegation of Responsibility for Assessment

Boards of Examiners, including the external examiner(s), are responsible for the recommendations of any subsidiary examiners' committee and for the reassessment or deferred assessment of students. However, it may be appropriate for Boards to agree arrangements for delegating the responsibility for reassessment, deferred assessment or other areas to subsidiary committees.

Boards may delegate to Sub-Committees or individuals such functions as may be appropriate; for example, final decisions on the assessment of Supervised Teaching Practice may be delegated to a Teaching Practice Panel. Similar arrangements may be made for the assessment of other practical placements.

All such arrangements for the delegation of the powers of Boards of Examinations must be specified in the Examination and Assessment Regulations for the programme concerned. The Regulations must make clear how Boards exercise authority and approval in respect of decisions taken by subsidiary bodies and how external examiners are involved in approving any such decisions.

- 4.1.10 The Composition of Boards of Examiners

The membership of Boards of Examiners may vary according to the requirements of particular programmes but shall normally include the following:

- i. a Dean of Faculty or designated alternative who shall be Chair (it is expected that a programme leader would not normally chair the Board for the programme for which he/she is responsible when final awards are being considered).
- ii. other Dean(s) of Faculty with involvement in the programme.
- iii. Appropriate programme or pathway leaders.
- iv. Either all or representative members of teaching staff as internal examiners.
- v. External examiners (ex officio) who shall attend meetings as the regulations prescribe.
- vi. a Secretary to the Board who shall normally be the Faculty Administrator or other designated Administrator.

A representative of the Registry will normally attend meetings of Boards of Examiners to ensure that the proceedings and the decisions on awards are recorded by the Secretary of the Board and to advise on regulations.

The proceedings of Boards of Examiners will not be invalidated by the absence of any person designated as a member of the Board.

4.1.11 The Functions and Terms of Reference of Boards of Examiners

The functions and terms of reference of the Board are:

- i. to oversee assessment procedures and to maintain standards of assessment;
- ii. to ensure that the requirements for assessments that contribute to an award are complied with;
- iii. to examine individual student assessment profiles;
- iv. to review and make decisions on the progression of students and on reassessment in the light of overall performance, where necessary taking personal mitigating circumstances into account;
- v. to make recommendations on awards.

Boards of Examiners will normally meet at the end of the summer term or at the end of semesters and at other times to deal with referrals and resits.

4.1.12 Student Membership

In normal circumstances, no student should be a member of a Board of Examiners or attend an examiners' meeting other than as a candidate for assessment. If, however, a person who is otherwise qualified to be an examiner for a scheme (for example, as a member of staff or as an approved external examiner) is coincidentally registered as a student on another programme of study either in the Institute or elsewhere, that should not in itself disqualify that person from carrying out normal examining commitments.

4.1.13 Written Records

Formal written records of the proceedings and decisions of Boards of Examiners will be maintained by the Faculty Administrator or other appointed person. All written records of decisions (including the provisional record of student results) will be subject to confirmation by the Chair of the Board and shall conform to the requirements of the Institute's Conferment Regulations (see Part E of the Academic Handbook). Minuting will be carried out in accordance with the conventions defined in paragraph B4.2.7.

B4.2 The Conduct of Boards of Examiners

4.2.1 Responsibilities of Chairs of Boards of Examiners

- i. Chairs of Boards are responsible for ensuring that Boards are conducted in accordance with the Institute's academic regulations.
- ii. Chairs should initially consult the Head of Academic Affairs or Senior Academic Affairs Officer for advice on matters pertaining to assessment regulations and procedures.
- iii. Boards of Examiners have a quasi-legal function and the determination of results, grades, progression and awards must rest with the Board of Examiners. Any pre-board meeting of internal or external examiners must not pre-empt the decisions of the Board. Boards of Examiners may, however, establish subsidiary committees and Boards to handle particular aspects of assessment provided the responsibilities of such bodies are clearly laid down in the programme regulations and provided that their recommendations come to the main Board for final consideration.

- iv. A meeting of the Chair, Secretary and Programme Leader should take place before the Board to ensure that all evidence pertaining to the meeting is available and that the regulations are understood.
- v. A time should be set aside prior to the meeting of the Board for the Chair to meet with external examiners, brief them on their role and receive their comments on the assessment and examination process in which they have been involved.

4.2.2 Attendance at Meetings of Boards of Examiners

- i. The Secretary to a Board of Examiners (normally the Faculty Administrator) shall be responsible for the circulation in advance of a calendar of meetings of the Board so that internal and external examiners are given sufficient notice of their requirement to attend.
- ii. Members of a Board should normally attend for the entire duration of a Board unless the business for which they are responsible is entirely settled before the end. Part-time tutors may be required to attend as part of their contractual requirements. Attendance is normally required for the entire duration of the Board so that tutors who have previously taught students being considered for an award may contribute their knowledge to the decision-making. Unavoidable absences must be recorded and, wherever possible, covered by written comments or a substitute. At the beginning of the meeting the Chair should remind members of their general obligation to remain throughout the meeting and ask any member who cannot do so to inform the Secretary of the time they intend to depart and the reason for this.
- iii. External Examiners must normally also be present. If any External Examiner cannot attend a Board they should consult as early as possible with the Faculty Administrator and Chair of the Board who will liaise with the Registry Officer about approval of the decisions of the Board.
- iv. If a Dean of Faculty is unable to chair a Board then his/her place may be taken by a senior member of staff who has been designated for that purpose.
- v. There should be a full list of members of a Board of Examiners available to be signed as evidence of attendance at the Board. Boards may specify attendance of other staff as observers of proceedings but such staff should take no part in the decision-making of a Board.

4.2.3 Determination of Results

The discussion and determination of results should be handled as follows:

- i. The mark sheet of marks arrived at by internal examiners should be tabled as a confidential paper. The marks as moderated by the external examiners may also be tabled providing both marks are shown where there is a discrepancy. Any student on whom further evidence will be presented to the Board and/or has failed a component should be indicated by a ring or asterisk. The layout of the marksheet should make the reading of marks and the assessment of the students' overall performance clear and have space for amendments and the recording of results.
- ii. The Programme/Course Leader or designated member of staff should have prepared a single set of evidence (letters, medical notes, tutors' reports) pertaining to the student so indicated. It is important that tutors are asked for reports before the meeting rather than relying on oral comments at the meeting itself. It is also advised that students are told in writing (via the Programme Handbook) to submit any mitigating circumstances to the Board and the procedure for doing so. Where students have asked for mitigating circumstances to be brought to the Board's attention or where a tutor has information which might affect the consideration of a student's case, the information should be noted and minuted as evidence of the Board's consideration.

Great care is required to ensure that all information is available. Most appeals arise out of mishandling of claims of mitigating circumstances.

- iii. The marks of each student should be considered together with any written evidence pertaining to that student. Any amendment to the marks should be agreed, recorded on the mark sheet and the overall result for that student agreed. Internal and external examiners may comment on the performance of students at the invitation of the Chair during the course of considering results.
- iv. It is recommended that Chairs initially pass over students who require further consideration and then take all such students together in the interests of consistent treatment. Similarly, it is recommended that degree classification is determined for all students after the marks have been determined. Chairs might also consider the merit of dealing with final results before first and second years if a lengthy meeting is in prospect and the Board has not been divided for this purpose.

- v. Chairs are reminded of the possible decisions on students that may be made at stage or final assessments. Within these categories, Boards may also determine the precise decisions to be made in respect of individual units or elements of a programme/course.

Pass and Complete	-	with award of class/grade
Pass and Proceed	-	proceed to next stage of the course
Interim Award and Proceed	-	Stage result awarded and to continue
Proceed with Result Outstanding	-	Continue to next stage with an extra requirement to fulfil
Conditional Award/Result	-	award to be confirmed by the Chairperson and reported at a subsequent meeting (for example where there is uncertainty over information before the Board which needs verification)
Result Withheld	-	student result withheld until a regulation is satisfied (for example, in the case of students in breach of Institute General Regulations, the Board should make their academic judgement of the result to which the student is entitled but note its withholding until outstanding issues relating to the breach of Institute General Regulations are resolved). The result may subsequently be released by Chair's action
Defer	-	assessment of components to be taken within a specified period as if for the first time (for bona fide reasons)
Refer	-	re-assessment of component(s) by resit and/or resubmission of work (normally the same academic year) within a specific period
Retake	-	to take the assessment only again in next academic year/period
Repeat	-	repeat any or all of the elements of the stage of the programme with attendance and any specified assessments
Exemption	-	award accorded on basis of previous achievement

Offer of an Aegrotat Award	-	offer of award under special circumstances (student to have the right to accept or reject the award)
Offer of an Award based on existing achievement (in the light of valid reasons)	-	student to have the right to accept or reject the award
Fail	-	not to proceed or submit to any re-assessment
Exclusion	-	to recommend that a student is excluded from the course or from the Institute (subject to Academic Board approval).

The above decisions may be qualified where appropriate by the following statements:

Results for an assessment may be amended by the following process:

To Condone	-	Adjust the result upwards to better reflect student ability otherwise affected by mitigating circumstances
To Compensate	-	alter the result which is out of line with others for that student
To Moderate	-	change marks which are out of line in comparison with others of the cohort.

NB The result of a student who withdraws from a programme should not appear before a Board.

- vi. In considering mitigating circumstances (which must be fully documented and available before the Board meets) a Board should seek to satisfy itself that the student's under performance was due to mitigating circumstances, and that, but for the circumstances, the student would have been expected to pass. The evidence for this would be the mark achieved and its closeness to a pass and/or expectations based on the student's performance during the year and/or on other components of the assessment. If the mark is condoned or compensated it should be raised to at least the pass mark to avoid confusion if final marks are disclosed to students in any form.

NB In cases where the mitigating circumstances are deemed by the Chair to be of a nature which are better not revealed to the whole Board the Chair should discuss them with the Programme Leader and the External Examiners and they should then make a recommendation to the Board. This is to ensure that students are not inhibited from presenting mitigating circumstances for consideration.

- vii. When a student is referred the Board should make clear what the student must do to redeem the position and by when, and the student must be so informed in writing by the Chair of the Board. Boards should also recommend who should be responsible for providing tutorial guidance to the student. Tutors should take care not to disclose the confidential proceedings of the Board and should guide the student on what (s)he now has to do, referring the student to the Chair of the Board or the Programme Leader if there is need for further guidance.

Programme Leaders should note that students offered the opportunity to repeat examinations without attending further classes must be informed about the arrangements for the examinations and sent all information given to students in attendance together with details of access to any facilities they may expect from the Institute and any fees they must pay.

- viii. Following the Board the Secretary should go through the results sheet with the Chair of the Board as a final check of its accuracy. The results sheet will be signed by the Chair and the External Examiners present in order to indicate their agreement with the decisions reached. If an External Examiner is not present, the Secretary of the Board and the Chair should ensure that the Examiner has been party to the original determination of the marks awarded and is in agreement with the decisions made. The Examiner should sign a copy of the results list to confirm agreement.

4.2.4 Powers of External Examiners (**see also Introduction/Academic Quality: a working definition/The**

Institute's Approach to Quality Assurance: a brief outline (within the Red Book)

No recommendation for the conferment of an award of the Institute will be made without the written consent of the External Examiner(s). On any matter which the External Examiner(s) has declared to be a matter of principle, the decision of the External Examiner(s) will either be accepted as final by the Board of Examiners or upon direction from the Chair of the Board be referred to the Academic Board, as will any unresolved disagreement between the External Examiners. The Academic Board will refer the issue of principle or point of disagreement between External Examiners to a Review Committee. The Committee will make a recommendation to the Chair of the Academic Board who will then consult with the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the External Examiner(s) and seek to resolve the matter. If the matter cannot be resolved, the Chair of the Academic Board may exceptionally recommend the appointment of a new External Examiner(s) and require the Board of Examiners to reconvene in order to come to a decision.

4.2.5 Discussions and Decision-making

Discussions and decision-making should be conducted as follows:

- i. Votes should be avoided where possible.
- ii. Chairs should identify clearly the courses of action open to the Board (for example, if the course of action is in contradiction of the programme regulations)
- iii. Where necessary, External Examiners should be asked to declare if they object to any of these courses of action as a matter of principle. If so, then this course of action should not be discussed. If the External Examiners are in disagreement about a matter of principle the Chair should call a short adjournment to give them a chance to resolve their disagreement. If this proves impossible the matter should be reported immediately after the meeting to the Chair of the Academic Board; no decision can be taken on the specific matter but the Board can resume its deliberations. Other than where they declare a matter of principle external examiners do not have an automatic veto over the decisions of a Board.
- iv. If a vote is taken then all voting members of the Board may vote; the Secretary is a non-voting member. The Chair has a casting vote.

4.2.6 Referrals and Resits

- i. The main Board should determine who should attend a Referral or Resit Board. If a final award is to be determined then External Examiners or the Senior External Examiner must either attend or signify in writing to the Chair of the Board that they have been consulted and support the recommendation being made. If a student's award cannot be finally determined at the main Board, whenever possible a conditional award should be made (for example award subject to passing the placement/ teaching practice and so on). In these circumstances it is not necessary to reconvene the whole Board. However, if degree classification is undertaken at a referral Board then the External Examiners or Senior External Examiner must either be present or confirm in writing their support for the recommendation being made.
- ii. Papers set for referred or deferred students should be approved by the appropriate External Examiner. Resit papers should be sufficiently different from the original paper so as not to give candidates an unfair advantage.

4.2.7 Minuting

Minuting of the proceedings of Boards of Examiners will normally be undertaken by Faculty Administrators or other administrative staff in the following manner:

- i. Minutes should record the confidential discussion of evidence where it relates to the performance of individual students as well as the formal decisions relating to their results. The non-confidential comments of internal and external examiners and any other discussion relating to assessment should also be recorded.
- ii. Draft minutes should be prepared by the Secretary, checked with the Chair and then circulated to the Chair and Programme/Course Leader inviting comments within two weeks. The minutes will then be finalised, circulated to the Chair and all internal and external examiners and copies sent to the Registry and the Academic Affairs for conferment and record purposes. Any amendments to decisions recorded in the minutes consequent upon action after the Board should be noted formally by the Secretary or Chair of the Board and copies sent to the two Units noted above. The original minutes should not be amended.
- iii. Decisions in relation to student results should be recorded clearly and accurately, specifically in relation to resit requirements and referral/deferral where the precise

details of the conditions (and the timescale in which they are to be fulfilled) attached to individual decisions should be accurately noted.

- iv. Minutes should be available at the Referral or Resit Board for information and confirmed formally at the next full meeting of the Board. Any actions taken subsequent to the original Board meeting which will affect the results of students should be confirmed on the basis of the presentation of a 'List of Actions taken subsequent to the meeting of the Board of Examiners on.....' to the Board for approval. Copies of this list should be deposited with the Registry and Academic Affairs for conferment and record purposes.

4.2.8 Publication of Assessment Results

- i. Following a Board of Examiners' meeting, results will be available in the form of a provisional results list which must be signed by the Chair of the Board after checking with the Secretary. The list will also record those students who have been referred or deferred but individual details will be provided in confidence to the students concerned, by the Programme Leader after thorough checking of the decisions of the Board of Examiners. The list will be displayed on the appropriate notice board(s) and copies will normally be sent by post to students whose names appear on the list.
- ii. Results are not normally given over the telephone. Any result so given cannot be considered to be official.
- iii. Unless authorised by the Registrar, assessment results will not be released to students whose tuition fees remain unpaid or who are in breach of Institute General Regulations and subject to disciplinary procedures. Their names should not appear on any published pass lists but the minutes will record the Board's academic decision on their performance together with the decision: result withheld.
- iv. Provisional results lists (which include the results of referred/deferred students) will be prepared by the Faculty Administrator, checked by the representative of Registry and signed by the Chair of the Board, and normally be posted on the appropriate notice board at a time to be notified in advance to students. The lists will take a standard form viz,

Provisional Results List for the Programme Title/Year
Assessment Results: Academic Session
Surname, Forenames: Pass/Referred/Deferred (include details as necessary)

Classifications: First, Upper Second etc.
Gradings: Distinction, etc.

At the foot of each page of the list:

The results are provisional and subject to confirmation by the Academic Board.

Signature of Chair of the Board

(Modification may be required for modular/unit based courses).

- v. A transcript of performance may be made available to students who have successfully completed any elements of a programme of study leading to an award of the Institute. The transcript will record:
 - a. the full name of the student
 - b. the dates of registration and their programme of study
 - c. the elements of study successfully completed and their level
 - d. the grade achieved (in literal or classification form)
 - e. the credit points accumulated
 - f. the award achieved and the date.

4.2.9 Disclosure of Marks or Grades

Disclosure of marks or grades is now governed by the Data Protection Act and resulting Institute policies.

- i. Students have the right (upon individual application) to be informed of their final marks or grades ie. the marks as adjusted and agreed by the Board both overall and for individual components for all stages of a course. No distinction is made between marks/grades held manually or on a computer.
- ii. Disclosure must be of the marks/grades of an individual student to that student only by an authorised tutor, in person, or by an official letter. Marks/grades must not be given out in a general way and clerical/secretarial staff should not normally be asked to give out marks/grades. Chairs of Boards of Examiners should consider sending

official transcripts to all students at intermediate or final stages.

- iii. Marks awarded for assessed course work at any stage prior to consideration by a Board of Examiners should be disclosed to students but it should be made clear that the marks are subject to moderation by External Examiners and the final decision of the Board of Examiners.
- iv. Mark/grade sheets may be retained by the Chair, External Examiners, the Course Leader and any other staff authorised to disclose results. All other sheets must be collected at the end of the meeting.

4.2.10 Draft Agenda for Boards of Examiners

The business of the Board of Examiners meeting should be in accordance with the following draft:

- i. Attendance and apologies.
- ii. Reminder of the confidentiality of proceedings and statement by the Chair on procedure to be adopted.
- iii. Minutes of previous meetings of the Board.
- iv. Report by Programme Leader on any matters affecting student assessment or performance (including invigilation reports).
- v. Discussion and determination of individual results cohort by cohort (special cases normally to be discussed after uncontentious cases have been dealt with).
- vi. Confirmation of arrangements for deferred/referred students including deadlines for submission of work.
- vii. Arrangements for Referral/Resit Board.
- viii. Date of next full meeting of Board.
- ix. Comments of External Examiners.
- x. Any Other Business.
- xi. Collection of confidential papers (by the Secretary).

4.2.11 Conferment of Awards

The Conferment of Institute Awards is subject to the regulations and procedures defined in Part E of Volume One of the Academic Handbook.