

Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards

**Including School, Administrative, External Examiner and
Module Tutor Responsibilities in the Assessment Process**

Issued by the Standards and Enhancement Office

Technical updates of this document are undertaken on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University's organisational and management structures and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations

This document relates to the current year. If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on line, please notify SEO@bolton.ac.uk so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

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Scope

These regulations will apply to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes.

Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout the regulations.

Academic Cycle: The defined period of time it normally takes to complete a stage of study. For example, on a full-time undergraduate programme following the academic calendar, an academic cycle might consist of 120 credits delivered from September to July.

Assessment Board: A committee to agree final student marks, determine progression through a programme and the award of an Intermediate or End Qualification as outlined in these regulations.

Assessment Component: An assessment component is one of the assessments on a module from which the final mark/outcome for the module is derived. This is commonly referred to as summative assessment. Formative assessments (assessments which do not count towards the formal outcome of the module) are not considered to be assessment components for the purpose of this regulation.

Course/Programme regulations: Course/Programme regulations are Senate approved, programme-specific variations to the University's Assessment Regulations.

Programme of Study: The modules pursued by a student in respect of their programme.

PSRB: A Professional, Statutory or Regulatory body. This includes, but is not limited to, accrediting bodies and statutory bodies that deal with legal requirements and immigration.

Senate: Any reference to Senate in these regulations shall be deemed to include a reference to any committee of Senate to which Senate has delegated the relevant authority.

Any reference in these regulations to the Academic Registrar, Head of School, or other specified officer of the University shall be deemed to include a reference to any equivalent officer and to any person designated by that officer for the purpose.

Any reference in these regulations to a School shall be deemed to include a reference to the Off-Campus Division and any equivalent organisational structures of the University.

1. Constitution of Assessment Boards

- 1.1 Senate shall constitute such Assessment Boards as may be required to act with delegated authority on Senate's behalf. For this reason, Assessment Board outcomes are normally referred to as decisions. Formally, however, Assessment Board decisions are always recommendations to Senate, with ratification by that Assessment Board occurring automatically unless a decision becomes subject to appeal.
- 1.2 All Assessment Board meetings and decisions will be conducted in accordance with the University's relevant Academic Regulations and with such course regulations as may have been approved by Senate for a particular programme of study and with relevant PSRB requirements.
- 1.3 No other body has authority to recommend to Senate the conferment of an academic award, nor to amend the decision of a properly constituted Assessment Board acting within its terms of reference and in accordance with the relevant University regulations.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding 1.3, in cases of procedural or other irregularity, or where it is impossible to reconvene an Assessment Board, Senate shall have the power to annul a decision of the Assessment Board without making a prior request for reconsideration. If an error or irregularity is found to have affected more than one candidate, Senate may annul the whole assessment, examination or any part thereof.
- 1.5 When a decision has been annulled, Senate may take action which, if necessary, may include the appointment of new external examiners and the appointment of Senate representatives to a reconstituted Assessment Board.
- 1.6 The Chair of Senate (or their nominee) shall have the right to attend and address any meeting of any Assessment Board of the University.

2. General responsibilities of Assessment Boards

- 2.1 All Assessment Boards will conform to relevant University policies, regulations and procedures. In doing so, Assessment Boards shall ensure:
 - i. that assessment is fair and equitable and;
 - ii. that academic standards are maintained and;
 - iii. that justice is done to individual candidates and;
 - iv. that the assessment process and communication of outcomes is conducted in a timely and effective manner and according to prevailing procedures and;
 - v. that there is opportunity for School oversight of the comparability of candidate achievement and the academic standards of awards in programmes and subject areas within the School.
- 2.2 In exercising their powers, Assessment Boards may use their academic judgement and discretion to make decisions in individual cases in accordance with the principles outlined in 2.1 and the Assessment Regulations

- 2.3 Meetings of Assessment Boards will be held during the periods designated each year in the programme calendar.
- 2.4 All assessment information pertaining to individual students will be treated in such a way as to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and other relevant legislation in force at the time.
- 2.5 All members of Assessment Boards are required to conduct themselves according to the Nolan Principles and relevant University codes of conduct for staff. Any Assessment Board member having a personal relationship or any other potential conflict of interest bearing upon any candidate for assessment, progression or award should make this known to the Assessment Board ahead of any meeting. The Assessment Board will decide whether the member should absent themselves from all or part of the Assessment Board's proceedings and the member shall abide by any decision made.

3. Frequency of Assessment Board meetings

- 3.1 Each Assessment Board shall normally meet at the end of an academic cycle in order to ratify marks, make progression and award decisions and to determine the classification of awards.
- 3.2 An Assessment Board may meet more than once per academic cycle to conduct relevant business or if required to by a PSRB or as the result of exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Assessment Board Chair from time-to-time.
- 3.3 In order to provide students with a set of agreed module marks prior to the end of the academic cycle and following completion of all assessment components on a module, student work shall be marked and moderated in accordance with the University's Assessment and Moderation Procedures. The final mark for the assessment component/s shall then be made available to the student once ratified by the Assessment Board.

4. Assessment Board Terms of Reference

- 4.1 To determine the module assessment marks, grades, results and credit to be awarded to each candidate and the nature and timing of any reassessment, for all those modules within the Assessment Board's remit.
- 4.2 To receive and record the decisions of Mitigating Circumstances Panels and, in accordance with relevant regulations and procedures, to confirm marks, grades, results and (where appropriate) the nature and timing of any reassessment for assessments so affected, for all those modules and programmes assigned to the Assessment Board.
- 4.3 To receive and record the decisions of Academic Misconduct Hearings and, in accordance with relevant regulations and procedures, to confirm marks, grades, results, credit and (where appropriate) the nature and timing of any reassessment for assessments so affected, for all those modules and

programmes assigned to the Assessment Board.

- 4.4 To receive and record the decisions of RPL Panels and, in accordance with relevant regulations and procedures, the award of credit exemption and/or transfer against any modules and programmes assigned to the Assessment Board.
- 4.5 To make progression, award and academic standing decisions for those candidates continuing on programmes assigned to the Assessment Board.
- 4.6 To determine the interim and/or final award and classification (where applicable) for those candidates who are assigned to the Assessment Board.
- 4.7 To keep under review the comparability of assessment results, progression, award, classification and academic standing outcomes for those modules and programmes assigned to the Assessment Board and to take and/or seek such action as the Assessment Board sees fit to address any resultant issues.

5. Assessment Board membership

- 5.1 Assessment Boards (Awards and Progression) membership shall normally be as follows:

Chair – Head of School, School Quality Lead, or their nominee, who will be a member of academic staff with sufficient knowledge and independence and who is not normally the Programme Leader of any programme assigned to the Assessment Board.

Programme Leaders – Programme Leaders and/or other specified staff with designated responsibility for any programme within the Assessment Board's remit. Other staff contributing to assessment may also be in attendance but will not form part of the formal membership.

External Examiner(s) – as appointed to those subject modules and programmes within the Assessment Board's remit.

- 5.2 A Secretary shall be appointed from the Academic Support Services. The Secretary shall be designated as 'in attendance'.
- 5.3 The quorum for all University Assessment Boards (excluding the Assessment Board sub-committee) is normally one half of the prescribed formal membership.
- 5.4 Attendance at Assessment Boards by substitutes who have not been directly involved in the relevant assessment process is not permitted solely for the purpose of achieving quoracy.
- 5.5 An Assessment Board Chair may declare any meeting of the Assessment Board to be inquorate if s/he decides that attendance is such as to jeopardise the soundness of the Assessment Board's decisions.

6 Operation of Assessment Boards

- 6.1 All Boards must have access to all necessary information relevant to the performance of individual candidates in the modules and programmes within their remit.
- 6.2 Each Assessment Board shall normally reach decisions by consensus, taking into account the input and views of any External Examiners who are present. Exceptionally, if it proves necessary to vote on any matter, the outcome shall be determined by a simple majority, each member present has a single vote and, in the case of a tie, the Chair has casting vote.
- 6.3 External examiners should ensure that any reservations which they may have on the academic standards of a programme, the fairness and appropriateness of the assessment, the level of marks awarded, and the procedures followed in the assessment process should, wherever possible, be expressed at the meeting of the Assessment Board, before a final decision on marks is made.
- 6.4 All Assessment Boards, but not the Assessment Board sub-committee, have the authority to require a candidate to terminate their registration on a programme or to transfer to a different programme.

7 Delegation of Functions

- 7.1 In order to expedite specific categories of business or decisions on individual cases which an Assessment Board agrees need to be dealt with outside the scheduled meetings, an Assessment Board may delegate any of its functions either to the Assessment Board Chair, on an exceptional basis only, or to an *ad hoc* Assessment Board sub-committee.
- 7.2 In order to deal with issues as outlined in 3.3 above an Assessment Board sub-committee shall be constituted to determine results for students. An Assessment Board sub-committee shall be constituted as follows:
- Chair* – Head of School, School Quality Lead (or their nominee)
- Programme Leader* – The Programme Leader from the relevant programme.
- Secretary* – Identified by the Academic Support Service.
- 7.3 In order to expedite the decisions outlined in 4.4 above, an Assessment Board Chair may ratify the decision of an RPL Panel on behalf of the Assessment Board. The decisions taken by the Chair in respect of RPL will always be reported to the full Assessment Board.
- 7.4 In all cases, decisions taken under 7.1 and 7.2 should be ratified by the relevant External Examiner(s). Further, these decisions and approvals should be reported at the next full meeting of the Assessment Board.

8. Record of Proceedings

- 8.1 Formal written records of the proceedings and decisions of Assessment Boards will be maintained by the Secretary or other appointed person. All written records of decisions will be subject to confirmation by the Chair of the Assessment Board. The minutes of the meeting shall be presented at the next meeting of the Assessment Board.
- 8.2 The complete record of Assessment Board proceedings shall consist of the following:
- i. The agreed marks, grades and results for each candidate.
 - ii. The decisions and/or recommendations made in respect of each candidate.
 - iii. The outcome of any vote taken at the Assessment Board.
 - iv. A note that any claims made by candidates for mitigating circumstances have been considered by the relevant body, whether or not the relevant module, progression/academic standing, or award outcome was affected thereby.
 - v. A note that any formal, final and proven outcome of an investigation of alleged use of academic misconduct by candidate(s) has been considered through the Academic Misconduct process, whether or not the relevant module, progression/academic standing, or award outcome was affected thereby.
- 8.3 Any candidate who has been considered by an Assessment Board is entitled to see a copy of the minutes and other records which refer to them only, in accordance with relevant UK legislation.

9. The Interpretation of Assessment Regulations

- 9.1 Where academic judgment is concerned, interpretation of University policy or regulations shall only be made by the Assessment Board acting collectively or, in exceptional cases, where the Assessment Board has delegated its authority, by the Chair of the Board or the Assessment Board sub-committee, in accordance with the principles outlined in 2.1.
- 9.2 Informal interpretation of Senate policy or regulations by any member of staff shall have no formal authority and shall not commit the Assessment Board.
- 9.3 Assessment Boards may exceptionally exercise discretion in a candidate's favour where it appears to the Board that strict interpretation of the regulations would cause injustice to the candidate, in accordance with the principles outlined in 2.1.
- 9.4 The Assessment Board Chair must consult and agree with the Standards and Enhancement Office if the Board wishes to modify the interpretation of an assessment regulation and an appropriate entry must be made in the written record of the Assessment Board meeting.

10. Rights and Responsibilities of External Examiners

- 10.1 External Examiners shall be expected to comply with the duties outlined in the University's document 'The Nomination, Appointment and Duties of External Examiners'.
- 10.2 External Examiners appointed by the University have responsibilities encompassing both subject module and award standards and aspects of the quality of provision. They are expected to attend the relevant Assessment Board.
- 10.3 The primary roles of all External Examiners approved by the University are to ensure that:
- i. The standard of awards is maintained (with particular reference to standards in UK higher education, to national benchmark statements and qualifications frameworks, to programme specifications and, where relevant, to PSRB requirements).
 - ii. The assessment and examination process is fair, reliable and valid.
 - iii. Justice is done to the individual student.
- 10.4 External Examiners are also invited, as a secondary element of their duties, to comment on the quality of provision (curriculum content, learning and teaching, assessment processes, quality of learning opportunities, overall student achievement) insofar as they are able to make such comments from the evidence with which they are provided.
- 10.5 They may also be asked to comment from time to time on new, revised and reconfigured curricula, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and methods.
- 10.6 They may also be consulted by the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board about requests from students for reviews of the Assessment Board's decisions and about any investigations undertaken by the Assessment Board during the External Examiner's period of office which relate to students' alleged or proven use of unfair means in assessment.
- 10.7 The above responsibilities encompass all provision leading to University awards, whether delivered at the University or through collaborative arrangements.
- 10.8 In order to carry out these responsibilities, External Examiners will
- i. Have the right to request access to and to approve all assignment tasks and examination papers and associated assessment criteria and marking schemes.
 - ii. Be able to judge each student impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment, without being influenced by any previous association with the programme, the staff, or any of the students.
 - iii. Be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on equivalent or comparable programmes delivered through the

- University's collaborative partners or elsewhere.
- iv. Have the opportunity, on request, to communicate with students about the conduct of the assessment;
 - v. Approve the assessments that count towards the award, in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the programme curriculum documents and regulations and in such a way that External Examiners will be able to judge whether they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the programme and reached the required standard.
 - vi. Be consulted about and agree to any proposed changes to the approved, programme-specific course regulations which will directly affect those students currently on programme and be asked to comment upon other proposed changes.
 - vii. Attend meetings of the Assessment Board and have access to all assessed work and associated feedback commentary and outcomes of consideration by first/second/double markers, etc.
 - viii. See the work of all students proposed for the highest available grading category of the assessment and for failure, and samples of the work of students proposed for each category of assessment grading, in order to ensure that each student is fairly placed in relation to the rest of the cohort. This shall include all types of assessment and all locations of assessment, including placement activity and assessed performances, etc.
 - ix. Have the right to moderate the marks awarded by internal examiners, whether for a particular student's individual assessment(s) or for any specific assessment(s) taken by a number of students, according to a rationale to be made known to the Assessment Board and subject to the Assessment Board's agreement; **note that External Examiners do not have an automatic veto over the decisions of an Assessment Board.**
 - x. Ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved University and course regulations and to request additional marking of students' work.
 - xi. Attend any meeting(s) of the Assessment Board at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made and ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means according with normal practice in higher education.
 - xii. Be involved as required by the Chair of the Assessment Board or the Chair of Senate or nominee in any reviews of decisions about individual students' awards or in any investigations undertaken by the Board during the External Examiner's period of office which relate to students' alleged or proven use of unfair means in assessment.
 - xiii. Report back to the University on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them.
 - xiv. Report in confidence to the Chair of Senate or nominee on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments, which put at risk the standard of the award.

10.9 The manner in which the above responsibilities are implemented may vary in the case of the external examination of students undertaking periods of teaching experience or other forms of practical placement or of students

following University programmes in partner institutions in the UK or overseas. In such cases additional guidelines for the responsibilities of External Examiners will be agreed with the appropriate School/Division.

- 10.10 In general, External Examiners will act as moderators of the assessment process and of assessment marks and decisions. They may sometimes find it appropriate to make judgements separately from internal examiners. Only in exceptional cases should they be required to act as additional markers to settle unresolved disagreement between internal examiners. In such cases the External Examiner should receive an acceptable justification for the request and is entitled to refer the case back to the internal examiners for resolution.
- 10.11 Should an External Examiner be unwilling to endorse the outcomes of the assessment process then both the External Examiner and the Chair of the Board should immediately bring the matter to the attention of the Chair of Senate or nominee for resolution.

11. Responsibilities of Module Tutors

- 11.1 The responsibilities of Module Tutors include the following:
- i. To prepare and submit all required assessment task material in a timely manner, for purposes including internal and external moderation, printing, collation, and distribution to students.
 - ii. To attend all meetings of the Assessment Boards of which they are a member and to give attendance at such meetings priority over other commitments.
 - iii. To ensure that accurate and genuine marks for the assessed work for which they are responsible, as moderated (where applicable) by internal and external examiners, and (where appropriate) the assessed work itself, are available to the Assessment Board in the agreed format by the due date as published in the academic calendar for the programme(s) concerned.

12. General Responsibilities in the Assessment Process

- 12.1 It is the responsibility of Schools:
- i. To ensure that they are aware of the implications of the relevant assessment and other regulations for the assessments for which they are immediately responsible and that these regulations are fairly applied.
 - ii. To ensure that adequate notice of the details of assessment arrangements is given to each student.
 - iii. To advise students who find themselves in difficulties about their rights or obligations under the assessment regulations and, where necessary, to inform students about the range of options open to an Assessment Board in a particular case where the regulations permit discretion to the Assessment Board.
 - iv. To investigate any cases of alleged injustice in the assessment of

- students and to ensure that such cases are dealt with fairly by internal examiners (excluding matters of academic judgment).
- v. To ensure that any particular arrangements agreed in advance for the assessment of students with special needs are provided as agreed.
 - vi. To decide, subject to University regulations and agreement by the Assessment Board, what authorised material and equipment may be brought into an examination room.
 - vii. To ensure that a report is made of any incident of alleged academic misconduct, according to the University's published regulations and procedures.
 - viii. To ensure that deadlines for the submission of coursework of all kinds are fairly applied.
 - ix. To keep records of coursework submitted for assessment and to make these available as required.
 - x. To ensure that the reassessment tasks set for students being reassessed are appropriate for the programme of study as taught to them and that they have access to appropriate facilities and support to prepare themselves for reassessment.
 - xi. To ensure that students have access to adequate advice and guidance on the range of choices available to them under the assessment regulations.
 - xii. To be responsible for assessing eligibility for aegrotat awards and to ensure that such offers, together with supporting evidence, are brought to the attention of the Assessment Board.
 - xiii. To ensure that for any given assessment the composite module marks for each student are generated from the component marks in a consistent and transparent manner in accordance with the relevant assessment regulations.
 - xiv. To ensure that students are informed, in a manner to be determined and managed by the Chair of the Board, should there be any delay in finalising and communicating the results of assessment.

13. Administrative Responsibilities for Assessment Information

Administrative responsibilities for assessment information are distributed in agreed ways between the academic Schools and the various branches of the University's Office for Students, currently comprising: the Academic Support Service; Student Data Management; and the Standards and Enhancement Office. These responsibilities encompass, *inter alia*:

13.1 Overall planning and co-ordination of the assessment process, including:

- i. Planning the timing of all Assessment Boards.
- ii. Inviting External Examiners to Assessment Boards in a timely manner.
- iii. Agreeing and publishing a schedule for the collation and input of assessment data.
- iv. Helping to ensure that all Assessment Board information is prepared and published in standard format.
- v. Publishing appropriate guidelines and protocols to help ensure a standard approach.
- vi. Managing appropriate access to the student record system.

- 13.2 Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of assessment records, including:
- i. Ensuring the accuracy of student, module and programme assessment records.
 - ii. Managing the calculation of, and amendments to module results and student profiles for the Assessment Boards.
 - iii. Ensuring that rules for awards are specified and kept up to date on the student records system.
- 13.3 Ensuring that appropriate information is available and accessible to all legitimate users, including:
- i. Coordinating the output of data for the Assessment Boards.
 - ii. Helping to ensure that results from the Assessment Boards are appropriately prepared and processed.
 - iii. Making results and award certificates available according to the agreed formats and timescales.
- 13.4 Carrying out the assessment process in accordance with the agreed timescales, including:
- i. Organisation of the Assessment Boards in accordance with the agreed schedule.
 - ii. Liaison with External Examiners for the programme(s) and modules.
 - iii. Collation of assessment marks from tutors and input of marks within agreed timescales.
- 13.5 Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of assessment records, including:
- i. Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of student, module and programme assessment records.
 - ii. Ensuring that all entries to student, module and programme assessment records derive from accurate and genuine data and are made using agreed protocols within agreed timescales, and that no amendments to such are made without the explicit and written approval of an authorised person, particularly (but not only) after results have been 'agreed' following an assessment board.
 - iii. Ensuring that rules for awards are correctly specified and kept up to date on the student records system.
- 13.6 Ensuring that appropriate information is available and accessible to all legitimate users, including:
- i. Managing the output of data for the Assessment Boards.
 - ii. Publishing results to students according to the agreed format and timescales.
 - iii. Ensuring that results from the Assessment Boards are appropriately prepared and recorded to enable Student Data Management to complete preparation for awards.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

- 14.1 The University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to age, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.

15. Monitoring and Review

- 15.1 These regulations will be monitored by the Standards and Enhancement Office.
- 15.2 These regulations will be reviewed every three years.

16. Dissemination and Access

- 16.1 These regulations will be available on the University's website (Policy Zone).

REGULATIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION AND CONDUCT OF ASSESSMENT BOARDS	
Policy ref: SEO/2	
Version number	03
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Name of Developer/Reviewer	Dr Paul Birkett
Policy Owner (Group/Centre/Unit)	SEO
Person responsible for implementation (postholder)	Assessment Board Chairs
Approving committee/board	Senate
Date approved	
Effective from	January 2024 (see also 'scope' in main document)
Dissemination method e.g. website	Website
Review frequency	Every three years
Reviewing committee	Senate
Consultation history (individuals/group consulted and dates)	A draft of the amended regulations was discussed with the Acting Academic Registrar and Head of the Academic Support Service.
Document history (e.g. rationale for and dates of previous amendments)	October 2014 version was a major re-write of the previous Assessment Board regulations. Minor additions following revision of the RPL regulations in May 2016. Technical changes and updating in November 2023.