Annex J: Meetings of Boards of Examiners

1. Introduction

This section of the Code of Practice provides guidance to all examiners, and particularly those acting as the Chair or Secretary of a Board of Examiners, on the conduct of meetings of Boards of Examiners and draws together information with which Boards of Examiners need to be familiar. Reference should also be made to Annex K: External Examiners.

2. Duties of Boards of Examiners

Each School will have a Board or Boards of Examiners which will:

2.1 review the marking of and confirm the marks to be awarded for all modules for which the School holds responsibility;

2.2 make recommendations for the award of Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees to students who have successfully completed programmes of study for which the School holds responsibility;

2.3 make recommendations with regard to progression, referrals and termination of registration of students taking programmes of study for which the School holds responsibility.

3. Membership

3.1 Each Board of Examiners which considers work that contributes to the award of a certificate, diploma or degree shall include one or more External Examiners whose appointment has been approved by the Vice-Chancellor acting on behalf of Senate and Council.

3.2 Other members of the Board of Examiners shall be appointed by the appropriate Faculty Board on the recommendation of the School. These members shall include an internal marker for each module for which the Board of Examiners holds responsibility. One of these members shall be appointed by the Faculty Board as Chair of the Board of Examiners. Faculty Boards shall be authorised to appoint representative Boards of Examiners to consider referral results. These Boards may be smaller than the full Boards of Examiners and will hold delegated authority from the full Boards of Examiners. The membership of each representative Board may be decided at the meeting of the full Board of Examiners, when the scope of modules implicated in referral arrangements will be known, and must be approved by the Dean on behalf of the Faculty Board.

3.3 Faculty Boards may establish procedures to facilitate appropriate input from Schools or subject areas which are not represented on a Board of Examiners.

3.4 Decisions concerning students taking joint degrees or programmes of study which are delivered by more than one School should normally be made by the appropriate Board of Examiners within the School of which the student is a member. This Board of Examiners should liaise with other Schools as appropriate. However, Faculties may appoint special freestanding Boards of Examiners for joint degrees where they consider that there are special circumstances which make this appropriate.

3.5 All members of a Board of Examiners are required to attend meetings of the Board except that External Examiners are only required to attend meetings at which decisions are to be made about recommendations for awards. Where a Board of Examiners has been arranged, but the External Examiner then advises that they are no longer able to attend on that date, that absence may only be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
Education and Student Experience, and only under exceptional circumstances. Where such absence is not approved, the Board of Examiners must be re-arranged for the earliest date possible. External Examiners should be invited, but are not required, to attend meetings of Boards of Examiners convened to consider referral results and deferral results. Boards of Examiners will have considered students’ cases following the initial assessment and will set out provisional decisions in each student’s case pending the results of the referrals and the deferrals. External Examiners should nevertheless be involved in consideration of all referral and deferral students and in decisions concerning awards. External Examiners should be invited, but are not required, to attend meetings which will only consider the work of Stage 2 degree students (unless Stage 2 constitutes the final stage of the programme, as would normally be the case for foundation degree students). External Examiners should nevertheless be involved in consideration of all students and in decisions concerning progression. Other members may only be absent for good reason and with the approval of the Dean of the Faculty.

3.6 All discussion at meetings of Boards of Examiners shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed to students except where such disclosure is authorised by the Academic Registrar.

4. Mitigation Committee

Before each meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Chief Examiner will convene a meeting of a small number of internal members of the Board of Examiners (i.e. normally no more than three members, to include the Chief Examiner, the Senior Tutor, a third member and, typically, with the Student Support Officer in attendance) to assess the severity of the impact on student performance of relevant extenuating circumstances. The procedures and conventions for considering such applications are set out in Annex 9: Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances of the Credit Framework.

5. Pre-meeting of the Board

Before each meeting of a Board of Examiners, and separate to the Mitigation Committee meeting, the Chair may convene a pre-meeting to consider other matters as it deems appropriate. Such matters might include deciding, based on the profile of marks, which candidates should have a viva voce examination, which candidates should be drawn to the attention of the External Examiner, recommendations to be made regarding borderline candidates, reviewing the range of marks awarded for each module and identification of other issues requiring discussion by the Board of Examiners. The identities of candidates shall not be made known to examiners during the course of this meeting.

6. Chairs of Boards of Examiners

6.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the Board is arranged in good time for a date that allows the attendance of the External Examiner(s).

6.2 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that a Secretary to the Board, who shall be someone other than the Chair, is appointed. The Secretary to the Board shall be responsible for recording the decisions made by the Board.

6.3 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that proofs of examination question papers are checked for level, spread, accuracy, clarity and appropriateness, that where questions are divided into parts the marks allocated to each part are shown on the paper, and that all draft examination papers are sent to the appropriate External Examiner for comment and approval. The Chair shall also ensure that the External Examiner receives the relevant module syllabus.
6.4 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring liaison with the External Examiner about all the arrangements relating to the examination and for co-ordinating arrangements for the examination with the Registry and all other staff concerned.

6.5 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that all marking of examination scripts by Internal Examiners is satisfactorily carried out.

6.6 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for informing candidates selected for a viva voce examination of the time and place of the viva, and its purpose.

6.7 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that where the Board of Examiners considers the work of students who have not, at that point, completed their programme of study, such examination scripts, extended essays and dissertations are deposited with the appropriate School Office for storing and for confirming the number of scripts, extended essays and dissertations so deposited for each module. Such examination scripts, extended essays and dissertations will be available if required for re-reading by the Examiners in the light of the final year performance of candidates.

6.8 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall not permit any mitigation case to be re-opened during Board proceedings.

6.9 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the identities of candidates shall not be made known to examiners at any Board during the proceedings for confirming marks and awarding credit, or when determining the progression or classification of candidates. Only when such proceedings have been completed in full may the identities of candidates be revealed to the examiners, if required (to facilitate, for example, the award of prizes). Decisions on candidates, however, may not be revisited after their identities have been made known to the Board.

6.10 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the reasons for awarding a student a higher class of degree than indicated by their marks should be recorded on or appended to the official record of decisions made by the Board of Examiners.

Note: The Chair of the Board of Examiners may nominate another member of the School, for example a School Examinations Officer, to undertake some of the above responsibilities on behalf of the Chair.

7. Conduct of Meetings

7.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for ensuring that all members of the Board are notified in good time of the time, date and location of the meeting (refer to 7.1 above).

7.2 All members of the Board should, either in advance or at the meeting, receive:

- An agenda for the meeting (an example of an appropriate agenda is attached)
- Conventions for the awards under consideration
- Appropriate assessment data

7.3 The Secretary to the Board is responsible for:

- advising the Board with regard to regulations and conventions and their interpretation;
- keeping a record of the decisions made by the Board and for ensuring that these decisions are acted upon;
• where the Board makes a decision other than that indicated by the conventions, recording the reasons for so doing on the official record of results;
• keeping a record of the consideration given to borderline cases and to mitigation cases;
• confirming with the Chair the accuracy of the official record of the decisions of the Board;
• asking the External Examiner(s), where present, to sign the official record to endorse the decisions made by the Board.

8. Any member of a Board of Examiners who has a particular interest in a student or students to be considered by the Board must declare such interest at the start of the meeting or in advance to the Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Board shall decide whether it would be appropriate for such a member to withdraw for part or all of the meeting.

9. Individual members of academic staff should not take on a formal role of representing or advocating the interests of an individual student (see Annex G paragraph 2).