Annex J: Meetings of Boards of Examiners

1. Introduction

1.1 This Annex of the Code of Practice establishes the framework and procedures to be followed in operating meetings of Boards of Examiners at the University.

1.2 This guidance is designed to be of particular interest to those acting as Chairs of Boards, module convenors who are members of Boards, Directors of Studies and to Secretaries to Boards of Examiners. Divisions will operate one or more Boards of Examiners and may elect to operate separate meetings of Boards of Examiners by course or courses, by stage, or by stages consistent with the established practices within the Division.

1.3 Divisions will operate one or more committees for the mitigation of extenuating circumstances in line with the structure of its Boards of Examiners. Every Board of Examiners will be serviced by a Mitigation Committee (see the Credit Framework, Annex 9).

1.4 Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges are required to follow the principles and procedures outlined in this Annex. Specific guidance on the application of these procedures can be found within Annex L of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses: Quality Assurance Procedures for Courses of Study at Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges Leading to University Awards.

1.5 Each academic year guidance on the conventions for Boards of Examiners will be made available to support examiners, including Chairs of Boards of Examiners and professional service staff, which collates relevant information from the Credit Framework for Taught Courses, Academic Regulations, and Code of Practice for Taught Courses. This guidance supports the operation of the below procedures.

2. Links to Other University Policies and Procedures

2.1 Other University policies and procedures may need to be consulted when considering the requirements of this Annex:

2.1.1 Annex K of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses: External Examiners.

2.1.2 Annex L of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses: Quality Assurance Procedures for Courses of Study at Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges Leading to University Awards.

2.1.3 Annex 9 of the Credit Framework: Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances.

2.1.4 Annex 10 of the Credit Framework: Academic Misconduct Procedures.

2.1.5 Annex 13 of the Credit Framework: Academic Appeals.

3. Boards of Examiners and Assessment Review Boards

3.1 Each Board of Examiners will:

- review the marking of and confirm the marks to be awarded for all modules;
make recommendations for the award of Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees to students who have successfully completed courses of study;
make recommendations with regard to progression, deferrals, referrals and termination of registration of students taking courses of study;
agree the award of prizes to outstanding students, as relevant.

3.2 Divisions should also operate a corresponding Assessment Review Board for each of its Boards of Examiners.

3.3 Assessment Review Boards are concerned with the review of:
- Data related to course and module trends
- Student attainment and attainment gaps
- Degree outcomes
- Module content and assessment design
- Curriculum development
- Initial External Examiner comments

Further guidance on the operation of Assessment Review Boards can be found in section 15 below.

3.4 Boards of Examiners and Assessment Review Boards should normally be held concurrently over one day. Assessment Review Boards should normally take place prior to Boards of Examiners, though this order may be reversed at the discretion of the Chair of the Board.

4. Membership of Boards of Examiners

4.1 Boards of Examiners should include the following members:
- Chair (normally the Chief Examiner for the courses concerned)
- External Examiners for the courses concerned
- Directors of Studies
- Module convenors for the courses concerned, however, their attendance is not compulsory.

4.2 Chair of Board of Examiners – the Chair of the Board of Examiners will normally be a member of the subject area, and will be appointed by the Director of Division. The duties of Chairs of Boards of Examiners are detailed in section 11 below. The Chair will also act as the Chair of the Assessment Review Board.

4.3 External Examiners – all External Examiners for the courses under consideration should be in attendance at the Board. External Examiner appointments are approved by the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) acting on behalf of Senate and Council in line with the requirements of Annex K of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses. The full duties of External Examiners are detailed in Annex K.
4.4 A minimum of three members of the Board are required for the Boards of Examiners to be considered quorate, including the Chair and at least one External Examiner.

4.5 Where a Board of Examiners has been arranged, but an 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.

4.6 Where an External cannot, on an exceptional basis, be physically present, but requests to attend by other means (such as video conferencing), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience will consider whether this is appropriate on a case-by-case basis. This is because the University recognises the advantages to students, Divisions and External Examiners of External Examiners attending such meetings, including the facilitation of discussions and increased familiarisation with the University.

4.7 Director of Operations for the Division (or nominee) will be responsible for appointing a Secretary to support the Board of Examiners. Secretary responsibilities are outlined in section 13 below. Where applicable it may be appropriate for a Secretary and a note-taker to be appointed to carry out the requirements of the Secretary’s role.

4.8 Where it is considered appropriate to do so members of the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will attend Boards of Examiners to provide advice and guidance in the application of regulations and conventions and their interpretation.

5. **Membership of Assessment Review Boards**

5.1 Assessment Review Boards are concerned with considering a range of data relating to courses, modules and student achievement and should include the following members:

- Chair (normally the Chief Examiner for the courses concerned)
- External Examiners for the courses concerned
- Module convenors for the courses concerned
- Directors of Studies

5.2 Other members of teaching teams may be invited to attend Assessment Review Boards, for example to discuss specific areas of interest or specific modules.

5.3 Where it is considered appropriate to do so, members of the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will attend Assessment Review Boards to provide advice and guidance.

6.1 All discussion at meetings of Boards of Examiners shall be confidential and all data shall be held in accordance with the University’s Documentation Retention and Archiving Policy.¹

6.2 Identities of candidates shall not be made known during Boards of Examiners or Assessment Review Boards. Only when Boards of Examiners proceedings have been completed in full may the identities of candidates be revealed, if so required (to facilitate, for example, the award of prizes). Decisions on candidates, however, may not be revisited after their identities have been made known.

6.3 No mitigation case shall be re-opened during Boards of Examiners or Assessment Review Board proceedings.

6.4 No individual member of academic staff should take on a formal role of representing or advocating the interests of an individual student at Boards of Examiners or Assessment Review Boards.

6.5 Any member of a Board of Examiners who has a particular interest in a student(s) to be considered by a Board of Examiners must declare such interest at the start of the meeting or in advance to the Chair of the Board, so they can decide whether it would be appropriate for such a member to withdraw for part or all of the meeting.

6.6 Boards of Examiners will follow the requirements of the University of Kent’s Credit Framework for Taught Courses² when awarding credit, or recommending progression and academic awards to Senate.

6.7 Boards of Examiners should consider the outcomes of all students. However, discussion of individual mark profiles need only be carried out where the profile indicates it is required (for example where a referral decision is to be made, where intermission or withdrawal has occurred or where application of mitigation of extenuating circumstances has taken place - the list is not exhaustive).

6.8 All Chairs of Boards, External Examiners, Directors of Studies and module convenors will be required to undertake Boards of Examiners induction and training and will be offered refresher opportunities on an annual basis.

¹ This policy sets out approved document retention periods in order that Kent may meet its obligations to students; comply with quality assurance requirements; reduce burdens on space and storage; and comply with data protection legislation by not retaining documentation longer than is justifiably necessary. See https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/guidance/pdf/qaco2020-retention-policy.pdf

7. Mitigation Committee

7.1 Before each meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Chair of the Board (normally the Chief Examiner) will convene a Mitigation Committee to assess the severity of the impact on student performance of relevant extenuating circumstances.

7.2 The membership of the Mitigation Committee will consist of a small number of internal members of the Board of Examiners (i.e. normally no more than three members, to include the Chair (or nominee), the Senior Tutor, a third member and, typically, with the Student Support Officer in attendance).

7.3 The Mitigation Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Examiners or by a nominee of the Chair. Any such nominee must also be a member of the relevant Board of Examiners.

7.4 The procedures and conventions for considering Mitigating Circumstances applications are set out in Annex 9: Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances of the Credit Framework.

7.5 Identities of students shall not be made known during Mitigation Committee proceedings.

8. Pre-meeting of the Board of Examiners

8.1 Before each meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Chair may convene a pre-meeting to consider other matters as it deems appropriate.

8.2 Such matters might include deciding, based on the profile of marks, which candidates should be drawn to the attention of the External Examiner(s), reviewing the range of marks awarded for each module to ensure that these are accurate and identification of any other issues requiring discussion by the Board of Examiners.

8.3 Membership of the pre-meeting of the Board of Examiners should be consistent with the Assessment Review Board, however no External Examiner representation is required.

8.4 Should an External Examiner wish to meet with a module convenor(s) to discuss particular modules, such opportunity should be provided by the School or Division.

8.5 The identities of candidates shall not be made known during the course of this meeting.

8.6 Pre-meetings of the Board of Examiners are not the same as Assessment Review Boards.

9. Referral Boards of Examiners

9.1 Referral Boards may be smaller than the full Boards of Examiners and will hold delegated authority from the full Board of Examiners.

9.2 The Director of Operations for the Division (or nominee) will be responsible for appointing a Secretary to support the Referral Board of Examiners. The Secretary shall hold the same responsibilities as for the Board of Examiners (see section 13 below). Where applicable it may be appropriate for a Secretary
and a note-taker to be appointed to carry out the requirements of the Secretary’s role.

9.3 Membership of Referral Boards of Examiners should mirror the requirements of full Boards of Examiners, with the exception at 10.4 below.

9.4 External Examiners should be invited to, but are not required, to attend Referral Boards of Examiners. This is because consideration of student outcomes will have already taken place at the Board of Examiners.

9.5 Where an External Examiner does not attend a Referral Board they should be provided with the recommendations of the Referral Board to consider and should confirm by correspondence (i.e. email) if they agree.

9.6 Referral Boards of Examiners may meet in person, be carried out by correspondence (i.e. email), or by other appropriate means (i.e. video conferencing).

9.7 The Secretary to the Referral Board of Examiners should ensure that a record of recommendations is kept, in line with the requirements for a Board of Examiners meeting, with the outcomes reported at the next full Board of Examiners meeting.

10. Boards of Examiners for Stand-Alone Modules

10.1 Where a student studies towards completion of a module that does not form part of a course or an award of the University (a ‘Stand-Alone’ module), the recommendation to award credit can be made either:

At the Board of Examiners that most closely aligns with the module content and level.

Or

By a representative Board of the Board of Examiners that most closely aligns with the module content and level.

10.2 The minimum membership of a representative Board of Examiners for Stand-Alone Modules will be the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the relevant module convener(s). A Secretary should be appointed to support the Board.

10.3 The Secretary shall hold the same responsibilities as for the Board of Examiners (see section 13 below), as amended to reflect that stand-alone credit is being considered, rather than an award being recommended.

10.4 A representative Board of the main Board of Examiners can consider marks and make recommendations to award credit by correspondence (i.e. email), or by other appropriate means (e.g. video conferencing) with the outcomes reported at the next appropriate full Board of Examiners.

10.5 No External Examiner sign-off is required for Stand-Alone Modules, as no award is being recommended.

11. Role of Chair of Boards of Examiners

11.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for the following:
• Ensuring that the Board is arranged in good time for a date that allows the attendance of the External Examiner(s).

• 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.

• Ensuring liaison with the External Examiners about all the arrangements relating to the examination and for coordinating arrangements for the examination with all other staff concerned.

• Ensuring that all marking of examination scripts by internal examiners is satisfactorily carried out.

• Ensuring that where the Board of Examiners considers the work of students who have not, at that point, completed their course, such examination scripts, extended essays and dissertations are deposited with the appropriate Divisional Office 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 examiners in light of the final year performance of candidates.

11.2 The Chair of the Board of Examiners may nominate another member of the Division, for example an Examinations Officer or equivalent, to undertake some of the above responsibilities on their behalf. Those responsibilities should be related to the examination process and not to academic matters.

12. Role of the External Examiner

12.1 External Examiners are expected to attend Boards of Examiners meetings at which decisions may be taken about awards to students, and should be involved in consideration of:

12.1.1 decisions concerning awards;

12.1.2 all referral and deferral decisions;

12.1.3 decisions concerning progression (other than between Stage 1 and Stage 2 of a UG course of study).

12.2 External Examiners should be invited to attend meetings which will only consider the work of Stage 2 degree students. However they are not required to attend such meetings unless Stage 2 constitutes the final stage of the course (as would normally be the case for Foundation Degree students).

3 Scripts, extended essays and dissertations should be stored in line with the University’s Documentation Retention and Archiving Policy, see https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/guidance/pdf/qaco2020-retention-policy.pdf
12.3 The full role requirements of External Examiners can be found in Annex K of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses.

13. Role of Secretary to the Board of Examiners

13.1 All members of the Board of Examiners should, either in advance or at the meeting, receive from the Secretary to the Board:
- an agenda for the meeting (an example of an appropriate agenda is provided in Appendix A);
- conventions for the awards under consideration;
- appropriate student achievement data.

13.2 The Secretary to the Board is responsible for:
- 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 mitigation cases;
- confirming with the Chair the accuracy of the official record of the decisions of the Board;
- asking the External Examiner to sign the official record to endorse the decisions made by the Board.

14. Appeals

Appeals against decisions of Boards of Examiners should be made in line with the requirements laid down in Annex 13 of the Credit Framework.

15. Assessment Review Boards

15.1 Assessment Review Boards should be established by course or courses, by stage, or by stages, consistent with the practice for Boards of Examiners within the Division.

15.2 Assessment Review Boards can meet either prior to, or after Board of Examiners, and will normally meet on the same day as the relevant Board of Examiners.

15.3 The Chair of the Board of Examiners should act as the Chair of the Assessment Review Board. The Director of Operations for the Division (or nominee) should ensure that a Secretary is appointed to the Assessment Review Board to keep a record of discussions, issues and actions.

15.4 Assessment Review Boards should discuss and consider:
• Data trends in relation to modules and courses (such as assessment results, progression and achievement over a period of time, i.e. three years).
• Attainment and attainment gaps.
• Degree outcomes.
• Module content, assessment and feedback practice, teaching practice, and curriculum development.
• External Examiners comments in advance of their annual report and responses to the previous year’s External Examiner reports.
• Any common issues that will need action during the subsequent academic year.
• Any issues that need to be raised at the Board of Examiners meeting.
• Any other matters of relevance to the design and delivery of modules and courses and the maintenance of quality and standards.

15.5 Where applicable, sections of the Assessment Review Board may be carried out through break-out meetings, for example to discuss specific modules with specific teaching team members and External Examiners.

15.6 External Examiners should be provided with samples of work in line with the requirements of Annex K of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses. There is no prescribed method of providing such samples and the Assessment Review Board may, if the External Examiner is in agreement, present an opportunity for facilitating this.