

## **BOARDS OF EXAMINERS : Terms of Reference, Constitution, Process & Procedures**

Board of Examiners has the sole authority to release module marks to The Open University's Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (MRAQCP)

### **A. Terms of Reference**

1. Determine the appropriate outcome for each registered student in each module and ratify the grades assigned. All decisions on grades remain provisional until they have been ratified at a meeting of the Board attended by the relevant external examiner(s).
2. Recommend progression to the next stage of the programme, as well as the conferment of Awards to students who have fulfilled the objectives of an approved program of study and achieved the standard required for the award.
3. Review processes and procedures for the approval of assessment tasks, examination papers and project titles both for the initial assessment of students and any subsequent reassessments, when necessary.
4. Ensure that assessment tasks, examination papers and project titles are moderated by appropriate external examiners.
5. Review the progress of students, ensuring that they achieve the required learning outcomes taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Standards and Policies regarding students with mitigating circumstances.
6. Determine the form of assessment that should be offered to those students who have failed or were unable to take the assessment for acceptable reasons.
7. Receive and approve recommendations from the Committee on Disability and Learning Differences for the assessment of students with special requirements.
8. Act in accordance with the outcome of any appeals made through the Appeals Procedure.
9. BoE will recommend awards, which will include any exit awards, to the OU MRAQCP committee.

### **B. Constitution**

#### Subject Boards

1. Examination Board Chairman (Program Director)
2. Program Leader
3. Module Leader
4. External Examiner (Physically or via Skype)
5. A representative of The Open University (Optional)
6. Secretary to the Board

#### Progression and Award Boards

1. Chair to the Board (Head of Institution)
2. Controller of Examination
3. Program Director
4. Program Leader

5. Secretary to the Board
6. A representative of The Open University

### **C. Process**

1. Each Board of Examiners is divided into two sessions: the Subject Board and the Progression and Award Board.
2. Subject Boards convene by programme/pathway and examine student grades by module.
3. Award and Progression Boards convene by School and examine student progression and confer awards by programme.
4. Boards of Examiners are directly accountable to the Academic Governance Council, which assures The Open University, that the standards of its awards are being upheld. Boards function according to Institution's Regulations.
5. Board of Examiners takes place twice during the academic year in the month of June and December.
6. All members of the Boards should be present from the beginning to the end of each meeting to safeguard fair processes for all students.
7. All Boards of Examiners discussions are confidential.
8. Student attendance is strictly prohibited.
9. The Chair safeguards the regulations and bears the responsibility for the integrity and correctness of the process and results.

### **D. Procedures**

1. The Board of Examiners meeting schedule will be published 6 months in advance by the Head of Institution after approved by the Open University.
2. Module leaders will submit samples of second-marked assessments to External Examiners prior to the Board of Examiners meeting. Samples may be sent to electronically in password protected files and/or folders to External Examiners.
3. Module grade sheets, program regulations and specifications, specific marking criteria, statistical analyses of grades, pass rates for each module and policies will be available to the External Examiners and the Board of Examiners. The module grade sheet will include all assessment grades and the final module grade for each student in the module as well as indications of Committee decisions affecting the students' grades. Sheets with student grades per programme and individual student progress reports for graduating students will be available to the Award and Progression Boards.
4. The Secretary of the Board keeps minutes of the meetings including the comments of External Examiner(s).
5. The Secretary ensures that all members of the Board are present and that the agenda for each meeting is followed. Following the Board of Examiners, the Chair reviews the minutes for accuracy and submits then distributed to all board members.
6. The accuracy of the minutes is confirmed by the Board at its next meeting.
7. The Secretary of the Board ensures that the External Examiner in the Subject Boards and the Controller of Examiner in the Award & Progression Boards sign the ratified grade sheets as well as the progress grade reports of the students who have been conferred an OU Validated Award.

8. The Secretary collects the signed grade lists and delivers them to the Validation Office immediately after the conclusion of the Board of Examiners.
9. The Secretary also ensures that the minutes of the previous Board are signed by all the members of examination board. Once approved in the following Board of Examiners, the minutes are placed in the official records of each Program and copies must be sent to the Validation Office.

## **E. External Examiners Roles**

1. To approve the form and content of all assessments contributing to an award, so as to ensure that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme are being tested fairly and to the standards required.
2. A timeline should be agreed with you as to when you will receive questions and marking scheme for comments and approval.
3. To monitor any amendments to assessment tasks to accommodate any disabilities to ensure they are fair and that there is parity in the level of assessment.
4. To sample students' work (usually anonymously) in order to ensure that assessment criteria have been interpreted correctly and that there is parity of assessment across the cohort. Where cohorts are very small and mark distributions may seem unusual, you can ask to see all the work. For larger cohorts, it is usual for EEs to look at a cross section of work, including fails and all borderline cases.
5. To attend board of examiners meetings. Please reserve the dates as soon as they are communicated by the partner institution. If you cannot attend a meeting, it may have to be reconvened.
6. To ensure that all recommendations for awards are made in accordance with the approved programme regulations – sent to you by the partner institution at the time of your induction - and any other relevant institutional or OU requirements.
7. To inform The OU if the standards of its awards are judged to be at risk. Your insight into the programme is critical to the ongoing quality assurance of its academic standards.
8. If you notice anything that might be impacting on the quality of the programme or the experience of those studying on it, you should raise this with the partner institution at the first opportunity. If the issue cannot be resolved in a timely and satisfactory manner, please contact OUVF immediately (contact details found at the end of the document).
9. To sign pass lists and to write a timely report on outcomes in the required format. For chief external examiners this may include a summary report. Final external examiners' reports should be received no later than two months after the final meeting of the board of examiners at which awards are decided. The University has a specimen format for the submission of reports, which external examiners must use – see [open.ac.uk/ouvp](http://open.ac.uk/ouvp) (external examiners pages). The OU reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an EE who fails to fulfil their obligations, e.g. where they fail to produce reports in a timely manner or to an appropriate standard or fail to attend an exam board without justifiable reason.
10. To advise on any proposed changes to the validated programme, particularly where these affect the assessment requirements. Where there is good cause for it, it is allowed to change an assessment format, or the weighting of assessment elements, but this must be on the recommendation or with the support of the EE. Such proposed changes are then put through a formal approval process by OUVF. Once approved, the EE should receive the

amended module specifications and/or programme specification. EEs may also be consulted by the programme team on content or structure changes.

## **F. Board of Examiners for Programs**

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For every programme of studies approved as leading to a validated award of the OU, there must be a Board of Examiners whose constitution and terms of reference accord with the approved regulations for the programme and which includes external examiners approved under the OU regulations for validated programmes.

The Board of Examiners is appointed by the Academic Board of the institution to which it is responsible for the fulfilment of its terms of reference. The Academic Board is required to agree the membership of the boards of examiners annually at the start of the academic year.

Board of Examiners will recommend awards, which will include any exit awards, to the OU Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (MRAQCP)

The following essential characteristics are common to all boards of examiners:

- All programmes leading to an OU validated award must have a Board of Examiners.
- No other body has the authority to recommend the conferment of an award.
- External examiners must attend.
- The OU can cancel a Board meeting if any of the EEs approved for that programme is absent.
- An OU member of staff must be present at each board of examiners meeting where award and/or progression decisions are made.
- The composition should remain the same for each meeting, although membership may change.
- All tutors responsible for teaching or assessment would normally be expected to attend.
- The partner institution's Academic Board or equivalent body shall appoint a person to chair the Board of Examiners.
- The Chair should be independent and not involved in the delivery of the programme or the assessment of the students in that programme or curriculum area.

Meeting dates should be agreed with external examiners at the earliest opportunity – usually at an annual meeting – for the coming year and not changed after that except by agreement of all parties involved. The constitution of the Board of Examiners may include provision for the appointment of subsidiary boards of examiners and the same Board may be responsible for more than one programme of study. This will often be appropriate in modular or combined studies programmes where cognate groups of units or subjects may be assessed as discrete entities and/or as elements of more than one named award.

### **Information to be provided Before Exam Boards**

EE should have received all the relevant information and documentation by the time they attend first Board meeting. Please note, the terms of reference and composition of the Board of Examiners are provided by the partner institution following OU approval.

### **Documentation required at a board of examiners' meeting**

The OU requires that institutions have a system in place to accurately record and verify marks. The partner institution is responsible for providing all the Board documentation. Typically, this will include: an agenda; minutes from previous meeting/s; mark sheet; statistical analyses of marks; the regulations of the programme, as approved by the University; institutional-level assessment policies, as approved by the University; and reports from subsidiary boards.

### **Role of the board of examiners in relation to appeals and complaints**

It is imperative that the boards are conducted in accordance with their terms of reference and that all decisions are recorded clearly and accurately. While students do not have a right to appeal against academic judgement they can appeal on the grounds that the judgement may not have been reached in a fair manner. It is essential that final decisions are clearly documented in board minutes, so that the partner institution can deal with any student complaint or appeal in a timely and transparent manner. Where students have exhausted the partner institution's process and are not satisfied with the outcome/s, they can escalate their complaint/appeal to the OU.