

## **04.9**

# **GUIDANCE ON CHAIRING EXAMINATION BOARDS**

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## CHAIRING EXAMINATION BOARDS - GUIDANCE NOTE

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Examination Boards fulfill an important role in both maintaining the standards associated with qualifications achieved within the University and in establishing fairness and consistency of approach, including the interpretation of governing rules and regulations.
- 1.2 Fairness in regard to the decisions taken by Examination Boards cannot exist, in an institutional context, unless there is a common approach to the issues, and to solving the problems, faced at Board meetings.
- 1.3 The Chair of an Examination Board has a crucial part to play in guiding the Board, ensuring that prepared information is presented to its members, providing knowledge and expert interpretation of rules and regulations, ensuring consistency of decisions, and in ensuring the completion of all pre- and post-Examination Board procedures.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Guidance Note is to assist Chairs in their tasks and thus to promote greater consistency in the treatment of student performance assessment across the University.

### 2 Relevant Documents

- 2.1 Chairs of Examination Boards should be familiar with the following documents, and should have them available at the meeting (as appropriate): -

- The University's [Assessment Regulations](#)
- The relevant generic regulations for the programme\* (such as [Regulations for Modular Initial Degrees](#), [Regulations for Modular Master's Degrees](#) etc).
- The [Unfair Practice Procedure](#)
- The [Appeals Procedure](#)\*
- The Definitive Programme Document

(\*Available in the Academic Handbook).

In addition the Chair should be in possession of any documentary evidence pertaining to individual students regarding ill health or exceptional personal problems (see 4.10) and any written comments from external examiners who have indicated that they cannot be present at the Examination Board (where appropriate).

2.2 The Examination Board meeting should also receive appropriate documentation on the assessment performance of each student being considered by the Board.

### **3 Before the meeting of the Examination Board**

3.1 Prior to the meeting of the Examination Board, Chairs should ensure that: -

- problems/queries are identified and advice sought, as necessary, through the Academic Registry;
- the procedures to be adopted, in particular with regard to "special cases" are known;
- results are prepared in a format which assists the Board to make decisions, which are fair and appropriate. The format of information provided for final Examination Boards should be consistent across the University and taken from current corporate MIS systems; recommended outcomes may be appropriate, but the Board must not be used as a "rubber stamp".
- reports of placements, clinical practice, etc should likewise be made available;
- any pre-Examination Board meeting should not be used to make decisions or adjust marks and should not normally, therefore involve External Examiners. Such meetings might be used to finalise the material to be presented to the Examination Board, to identify areas for clarification at the Examination Board and to prepare advice in regard to potentially problematic decisions.

### **4 During the meeting of the Examination Board**

4.1 Certain areas of the regulations governing programme assessment, etc, are discretionary. Such discretion may in some instances be covered by specific programme regulations and in other instances the programme document may require limits (for example on compensation for assessment or module marks, to be applied). The Chair should be aware of these discretionary areas and advise the Board as appropriate. In other areas of discretion, no guidance may exist in the programme document, such that the Board must make reasoned and consistent decisions.

4.2 In taking such decisions, and in other areas, the Chair should take into account the weight of opinion expressed by the External Examiner(s).

4.3 If the opinion of the External Examiner(s) is such that no firm decision emerges, (either because the Examiner(s) are not committed either way or because there is an even and opposing

view amongst the Examiners), then the Chair, taking all evidence and opinion into account, should make a final decision on behalf of the Board.

- 4.4 For Examination Boards at which no External Examiner is present, (e.g. non-final Boards which the External Examiner(s) is not required to attend), the Chair of the Examination Board should, taking all evidence and opinion into account, be responsible for arriving at final decisions.
- 4.5 If an External Examiner, without prior explanation, does not attend the final Examination Board, then:
- (i) if other External Examiners are present the Chair should hold the meeting and compensate for the missing External Examiner as appropriate;
  - (ii) if no other External Examiner is present, or if an external examiner whose comment is deemed crucial to the discussion is absent, then advice should be sought from the Assistant Registrar (Student Administration Services) and/or the Dean of Quality and Standards.

The Notification of Results Form (NORF) for Cardiff Metropolitan University, and Conferment of Award list for other programmes (e.g. HNC/HND) will not be accepted by the University without the signature of at least one external examiner.

- 4.6 The Chair's role is such as to ensure that the Examination Board, within the regulatory framework governing programmes, reaches sensible decisions on the progression of students, or the classification of awards of graduates, which do not compromise the University's academic standards. At the same time, the Board should not take decisions, which give advantage/disadvantage to any student compared to any other student who might be deemed to have performed similarly in assessment.
- 4.7 In order to uphold the above, the Chair should insist that the Board justifies decisions to move any student across boundaries described in the regulatory framework (e.g. from a 2.2 award to a 2.1 award, from a marginal fail to a pass, etc).
- 4.8 The movement of students across assessment boundaries within limits is normal academic practice for Examination Boards and reflects the view that marks awarded are indicative of performance as opposed to being an absolute measure. The conventions for raising the overall mark into the progression or next classification category are described in '[Assessment Regulations](#)' (paragraphs 10.1 and 10.16).
- 4.9 Justification for such movement might include evidence from outside the marks presented, such as placement reports, accepted mitigating circumstances or the opinion of External

Examiners in their perceptions of over/under marking in subject(s) for which they have responsibility.

4.10 Hearsay reports of a student's condition at the time of an examination/assessment should not count as justification for moving a student across an assessment boundary. Only pre-known, documented evidence should be accepted for such purposes. Instances where evidence of a student's condition emerges after the Board's meeting will be dealt with by the Academic Registry under the verification stage of the *Verification and Appeals Procedure*.

4.11 In the context of 4.7 to 4.10, the Chair should refer to '[Assessment Regulations](#)' paragraphs 13.1 and 13.2 (undergraduate degrees). Where such compensation is inappropriate, a reassessment is mandatory.

## **5 After the meeting of the Examination Board**

5.1 The Chair should ensure that all required forms as supplied by the Academic Registry are completed properly, including signatures of external and internal examiners, as appropriate.

5.2 He/she should also ensure that full documentation in the instances of any special cases, which need to be reported, is prepared within the required timescale.

5.3 The above should be returned to the Academic Registry without delay.

## **6 Examination Board Quoracy**

6.1 Paragraph 8.7 of '[Assessment Regulations](#)' relates to the Quoracy of Examination Boards.

6.2 It is recognized that on occasion internal examiners will be required to attend other Examination Boards held at the same time and may therefore be present at the Examination Board for only part of its business. For guidance, provided that an internal examiner attending for only part of the meeting is present during that part which gives consideration to his/her subject of examination, then he/she may count towards the quoracy of the meeting.