

Edinburgh Napier University

COVID Arrangements for Programme Assessment Boards

Introduction & Context

Responding to COVID-19 disruption, the University has stated that students will not be academically disadvantaged as a result of the emergency. This assurance includes safeguarding the academic integrity and standard of their degree award. To this effect, marks awarded to students must be fair, valid and reliable, in accordance with UK Quality Code expectations (QAA 2020).

It is anticipated that the steps taken by the University in response to COVID-19 to support our students (including additional time to complete coursework and examinations) will have compensated against any potential negative impact on student academic performance. However, it is acknowledged that the disruptions due to COVID-19 and the subsequent changes to assessment approach were unprecedented. It is possible that this could have resulted in anomalies in module marks distributions – ‘a COVID blip’ – for example the marks/grades as a whole appear to be too high or too low when compared to previous iterations of the module assessment.

For June 2020, a module mark normalisation approach has been incorporated into the marks agreement stage which is intended to address anomalies at a module level associated with COVID. Where modules are identified as being potentially anomalous, module leaders will be asked to use their academic judgement and evidence available to them to confirm whether module marks should be adjusted to reflect the historic performance of the module, and bring the overall module mean mark from this diet in line with the average performance achieved during the last three years. Further details are set out below.

The three stages of the Programme Assessment Boards are:

- Stage 1 Marks Confirmation:** an academically led discussion to finalise and agree any normalisation/scaling of marks required. This stage takes place between initial submission of marks to School Support Service by Module Leaders and the pre-PAB meeting.
- Stage 2 Pre-PAB meeting:** Effectively a ‘dry run’ for the Programme Assessment Board
- Stage 3: PAB Meeting:** to confirm and agree awards and progression decisions

This guidance is for staff involved in the Marks Confirmation Process and outlines the purpose of the meeting, the roles and responsibilities of those involved and the paperwork to be retained from the meetings.

1. Roles & Responsibilities

- 1.1 **Head of Learning, Teaching & Assessment (HoLTA)** is responsible for overseeing and ultimately signing off agreed marks on behalf of the Dean of School. He/she will be responsible for ensuring all required records of agreed marks are submitted in a timely manner to the relevant School Support Team.
- 1.2 **Head of Subject (or nominee)** is responsible for liaising with the Module Leaders and/or Programme Leaders to ensure any modules which require discussion and/or action are reviewed according to this guidance
- 1.3 **Module Leader** is responsible for ensuring internal moderation of marks takes place; reviewing the confirmed marks; cross referencing with the relevant dataset (see below) and referring any modules to the HoS for discussion, as per this guidance. Where there are multiple markers on the module, the Module Leader is also responsible for co-ordinating the return of marksheets to the relevant School Support Team (via SharePoint).
- 1.4 **School Support Staff** are responsible for uploading the Marks Adjustment Template to a secure SharePoint site to enable any scaling process to operate effectively.

2. Module Leader Process

- 2.1 Prior to the marks being submitted to School Support Service and as per standard University Guidance, the Module Leader must ensure that marks have been internally moderated and any required adjustment to marks have been confirmed. A robust internal moderation process at this stage, may help to reduce the number of modules which require normalisation.
- 2.2. Once the moderation process has taken place and all marks have been submitted, the School Support Service will process and upload a copy of the marks to SharePoint. The Module Leader should check the module marks, identify any issues or concerns which they are aware of or which have been raised by the External Examiner¹ (where applicable).
- 2.3 Module Leader then runs the relevant COGNOS Report (see section 4 below). Module Leaders should note that the COGNOS reports must be run after the marks have been uploaded into SITS as the data in the reports are populated via an overnight process.

¹ It is good practice, but not a *requirement* for the External Examiner to provide comments at this stage and is recognised that with tight timescales this may be challenging.

- 2.4** The COGNOS Report will show the average marks over the last 3 year period and will highlight where the marks for June 2020 deviate by +/- 5% or more from the average (UG) or by +/- a grade (PG) or more and provide additional evidence relating to the performance of the module. **The accuracy of the COGNOS report relies upon all marks being submitted on time.**
- 2.5** Module leaders are asked to reflect on potential anomalies in the actual marks/grades achieved for students this trimester based on evidence presented within the COGNOS data available to them, and informed by their own academic judgement. However, where the module marks deviate by +/- 5% (UG) or more or +/- a grade (PG) or more, University Guidance is that **all marks/grades** in the module should be *normalised (adjusted to the norm)*. To provide an example, if the historic average of a module was 65% and the average achieved this year was 58% - then a recommendation would be made to apply an adjustment factor to all marks to elevate the marks achieved by the cohort to result in a revised module average mark of 65%.
- 2.6** Where modules are identified as requiring to be *adjusted to the norm*, an adjustment factor² will be applied equally to all students in the cohort and to all components of the module which were undertaken in trimester 2. This formula will be applied to marks by colleagues in the School Support Service prior to the marks being uploaded back into SITS.
- 2.7** Although standard practice will be for modules comprised of two components to have both component marks scaled equally, there may be cases where the recommendation will be to only scale a single component – for example for modules where all elements within the component were completed and submitted prior to week 10. In such cases a clear rationale should be provided for this.
- 2.8** In order to complete the marks normalisation stage of the process, the Module leader should go to the SharePoint site and complete COVID Marks Normalisation Template, for their module indicating clearly if the marks for the cohort require adjustment or not.
- 2.9** Where marks deviate by +/-5% or more (UG) or +/- one grade (PG) or more and the decision of the Module Leader is NOT to *adjust to the norm*, a clear academic rationale should be added as to *why* this decision has been taken. It is recommended, where possible, that this is discussed and agreed with the Head of Subject (or equivalent) and other members of the module/programme team
- 2.10** Module Leader should ensure the normalisation template is completed by the relevant deadline (provided by School Support Staff), to enable sufficient time for review by Head of Subject/Head of LTA, where required.

² The adjustment factor will be the equal to the historic module mean divided by the module mean

- 2.11 If the original marks do not require any *adjustment to the norm*, the Module Leader must still indicate on the spreadsheet that normalisation is not required. This is to ensure a full record of all modules is recorded for this diet.
- 2.12 Once normalisation has been approved and actioned by the relevant School Support Team, the final, confirmed marks will be uploaded to SharePoint and Module Leaders should undertake a final check for accuracy, where time permits (see 3.5 below).

3. HoLTA and HoS Process

- 3.1 Following the Module Leader deadline, the HoLTA and HoS (where applicable) should arrange a suitable time to review the completed COVID Marks Normalisation Template on SharePoint.
- 3.2 Where the relevant information has not been submitted the HoS is responsible for following this up with the relevant Module Leader.
- 3.3 HoLTA/HoS review the information and identify any concerns with regard to the recommended decisions from Module Leaders. Where appropriate, HoLTA/HoS may choose to meet with Module Leaders/Team to discuss any issues, before reaching a final conclusion.
- 3.4 HoLTA is responsible for approving the COVID Marks Normalisation Template and confirming he/she is content with the actions outlined in the template. HoLTA then emails the relevant School Support Team to advise the decisions on the pro-forma are final and any agreed normalisation can then be applied.
- 3.5 On receipt of confirmation from HoLTA, the normalisation process will be undertaken by School Support Staff. Final (confirmed) marks will then be uploaded to SharePoint and Module Leaders are responsible for carrying out one final check on the agreed marks to ensure accuracy.

4. COGNOS Reports

The Cognos Analytics *pre-board Module Report* for module leaders can be accessed directly [here](#), while the *Pre-Assessment Board School Module Report* is available [here](#).

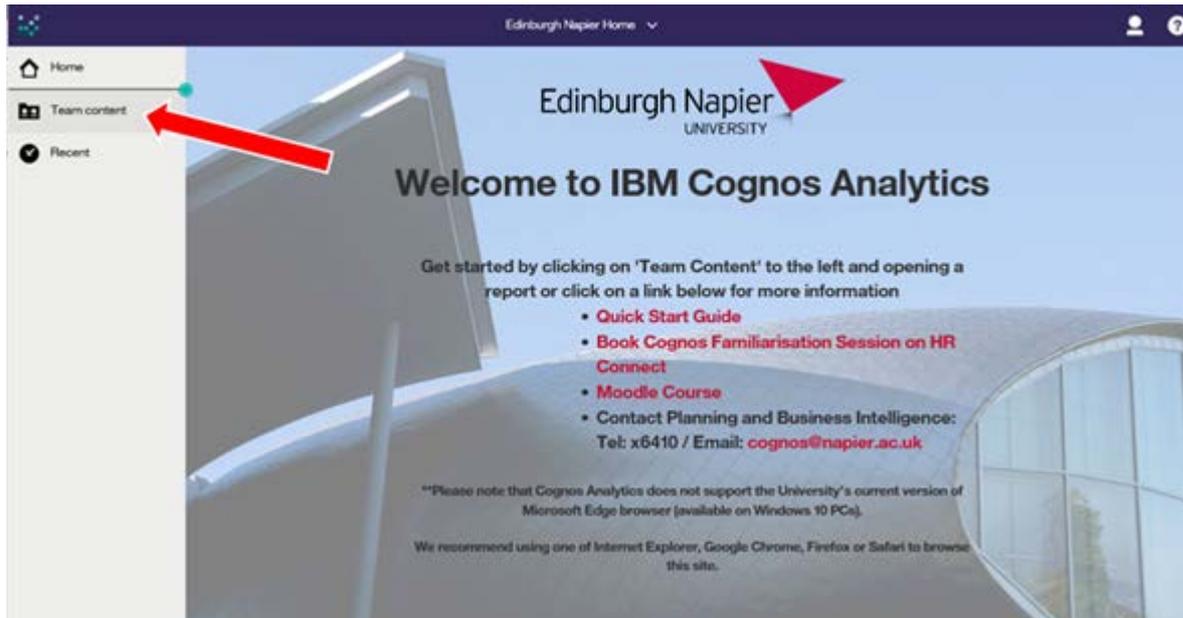
The data reports are populated via an overnight process so the data will only be displayed where your marks were submitted and uploaded to SITS the previous day. **It is therefore essential that all marks are submitted by the 3rd June deadline**

****Please note that Google Chrome or Firefox are the most reliable browsers for accessing Cognos Analytics****

On opening, each report will prompt you for response. Once the selection process is complete the report will run – this may take up to a minute. Your browser will tell you once the report has been run and downloaded.

If for some reason those direct links don't work for you then the reports can be accessed as follows:

1. Open Cognos Analytics in your web browser – click (or copy and paste into your browser) <https://businessintelligence.napier.ac.uk/ibmcognos> (again, Google Chrome or Firefox are recommended browsers)
2. Click the Team Content button signposted below.



3. Click through the folders Student Performance and Module Results Analysis

Team content > Student Performance > **Module Results Analysis**

4. Both reports referenced above can be found in this folder. Please note reports will only run and display the required data, if the marks were submitted and uploaded the previous day as the report is populated via an overnight process.

Additional information on accessing Cognos Analytics is available in our [Quick Start Guide](#). For any additional queries please email planning@napier.ac.uk

Marks Confirmation Process Diagram

Marks Upload Complete by School Support Staff (by Friday 5 June). COGNOS reports run overnight to populate COGNOS reports for Module Leaders to review



Module leader reviews/checks marks, consults internal moderator and reviews COGNOS report and discusses with Module Team/External Examiner (if time permits)



If module average deviates by +/-5% (UG) or more or +/- a grade (PG) or more compared with previous 3 year period, marks *adjustment/normalisation* should take place. Module leader should note on COVID Marks Normalisation Template, if a module does or does not need to be adjusted to the norm. ALL Module Leaders must complete this template even if no adjustments are required, to ensure a full audit trail of decisions is available.



Where the module average deviates by +/-5% (UG) or more or +/- a grade (PG) or more with previous 3 year period and it is decided by the module team that marks normalisation should NOT be applied, an academic rationale for this decision should be stated on COVID Marks Normalisation Template.



HoLTA and HoS (where appropriate) review the COVID Marks Normalisation Template, discuss any issues with Module Leader/Team and approve the Proforma decisions, confirming this to the relevant School Support Team. HOLTA are asked to start this process and approve individual modules on an ongoing basis as soon as the template starts to be populated by Module Leaders. This will enable School Support Staff to confirm the final agreed marks in SITS as soon as possible.



School Support Staff upload the final (confirmed) marks to sharepoint for module leaders to carry out a final check - final deadline for this FRIDAY 12th JUNE