

Programme Assessment Board Processes

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1 Introduction and Overview

The introduction of a single tier board process and reporting by exception was approved by the Quality & Standards Committee for implementation in session 2019/20. As a result, the Board of Examiners were disbanded, and Programme Assessment Boards introduced. In summary, 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 the initial submission of marks to administration by Module Leaders and the pre-Programme Assessment Board.

Stage 2: Pre-Programme Assessment Board: In preparation for the Programme Assessment Board, a pre-Programme Assessment Board is undertaken to:

- i) confirm that student module marks can be ratified by the Programme Assessment Board for the trimester by checking due process within stages 4-14 (pp6-7) ;
- ii) help ensure that Programme Leaders become more familiar with the student profiles that they will present for discussion at the Programme Assessment Board.
- iii) confirm the academic transcripts to be discussed at the Programme Assessment Board
- iv) identify any additional information required for the board members to be able to make decisions (typically checking engagement, confirming periods of suspended studies, chasing up missing extenuating circumstances/ academic integrity decisions).

Stage 3: Programme Assessment Board Meeting: The Programme Assessment Board meeting ratifies module marks and makes decisions on student progression and awards. The full terms of reference of the Programme Assessment Board duties are listed in section 4.2 below. In session 2020/21, the University started operating Programme Assessment Boards online and continue this practice.

In May 2021, the Emergency Approvals Groups (Convened by VP L&T) and the Heads of Learning & Teaching (Head L&T) agreed that, in order to help ensure technical resilience, robust academic discussion, and to aid consistency of decisions, each Programme Assessment Board would consider multiple provision. In this model, the Programme Assessment Board combines programmes, subjects and/or levels of study as appropriate to the individual School as agreed by the School Head of L&T/School Executive/ Management Group. Where combining provision to be considered results in high numbers of students being presented at the Board, the subject area members and External Examiners have clearly defined timeslots to enable them to join for discussions at the appropriate time. Meetings are convened by a small pool of approved Convenors approved by the Dean of School and can be recorded in compliance with GDPR regulations.

Where possible, typically two administrators attend the Programme Assessment Board. The compulsory membership of a Programme Assessment Board is defined in defined University Academic Regulation (indicated with * below).

Programme Assessment Board membership:

- Convenor*
- Clerk* – typically this is the administrator who supports the programme. The Clerk notes the key discussion for Board minutes, annotates the papers using Adobe Acrobat with decisions, supports the PL throughout the Board by advising on points of regulation or decision codes and works with the Convenor to ensure the admin tasks needed can be undertaken as the Board progresses.
- Secretary (where required) – This 2nd administrator controls the board papers for all members of the Board. This is done through the screen sharing function.
- Programme Leader of students being considered*
- External Examiner - responsible for oversight of programme associated with students being considered*
- Global Online administrator (for relevant part of the Programme Assessment Board)

- Additional teaching staff associated with the students being considered (typically nominated by the PL and usually to a maximum of 2 or 3 unless the Convenor has approved more necessary due to nature of the programme – example of when year tutors/ cohort leads are needed).

There is no requirement for the Module External Examiner to attend the Programme Assessment Board. The Schools can invite the external examiners with module responsibilities within the academic year to consider examination scripts and/or to meet with teaching teams. It is the responsibility of the School to ensure that they communicate with the Module External Examiner following appointment, outlining how they propose to interact and seek feedback.

2 Summary Flowchart

This [summary flowchart of the Board process](#) has been created here for those preferring a visual representation of the process. The numbered activities referenced below relate to that summary flowchart.

3 Overview of Stages

3.1 Module Marking (Activities 1 – 5)

Academic staff ensure that assessment briefs are internally or externally moderated before issuing to the students. This helps ensure transparency for students and staff and instils the confidence that the assessment is at the appropriate level. The assessments will then be marked/graded in line with marking criteria (Activity 4).

Assessment briefs and the scripts are internally and/or externally moderated before presentation at the Programme Assessment Board (Activity 5). Further guidance on assessment, including moderation, can be found on the DLTE [Assessment Policy and Guidance](#) page.

3.2 Entering Marks (Activities 6 – 8)

The module results are entered by the Module Leader onto an excel marksheet by the agreed submission deadline (Activity 6). The marksheet will have been generated from SITS and stored on SharePoint site by S3/IO staff. The use of SharePoint as a

mechanism for uploading results is to ensure alignment with GDPR. The completed marksheet is then uploaded into SITs by S3/IO staff by the deadline specified in the [key dates calendar](#) (Activity 7). Module leaders with an appropriately set up gradebook may choose to use the IS *Add On* shown in Moodle to upload their marks. After the mark submission deadline, PASS report to the Head of School Support on any modules for which no results have been entered (Activity 8).

3.3 Confirming Marks (Activities 9 – 16)

Module Leaders review marks alongside module marks stats from Cognos (Activity 10). Before agreeing marks/grades, Module Leaders should, where appropriate, liaise with the external examiner with module responsibility, including reviewing assessed work and providing oversight of module marks/grades distribution (Activities 11 – 12). The precise method by which this occurs and details of how External Examiner feedback is received is local to each subject group. However, it is important that External Examiner feedback is responded to, acted upon and incorporated as part of the module evaluation report (Activity 13). Discussions with the external examiners should take place before the marks are agreed.

A module results checklist (usually referred to as a *marks verification or marks confirmation sheet*) is generated from SITs and uploaded onto SharePoint by S3/IO staff for the Module Leader to review and agree (Activity 9). When undertaking this task, Module Leaders are encouraged to work alongside an academic peer who is removed from the module delivery. This sense-check of the aggregated marks will help identify where marks are on the borderline. The inclusion of this peer support has been introduced following feedback from academic colleagues across the institution (Activity 14).

When agreeing marks/grades, Module Leaders are confirming:

- Assessments have been subject to internal moderation, and the moderator's feedback is recorded.
- Marks/Grades for each component of assessment have been checked and confirmed as accurate.

- Overall module results (Merit or Distinction/Pass/Fail) are checked and noted as accurate.
- Assessments have been subject to external moderation, where appropriate (*primarily, but not exclusively at levels 9, 10 and 11*), and the feedback has been recorded to inform annual monitoring and future deliveries.
- Any concerns raised either by the internal moderator/external examiner and, where appropriate, responded to and addressed.
- Any instances of students under ACO investigation or other professional body regulatory requirements have been highlighted.

It is recognised that in exceptional cases scaling may be required. Details of the definition of scaling and the process/timings, including authorisation steps, are noted in Appendix A (a note to the VP L&T once the School Head of L&T has approved).

Once the Module Leader has confirmed the aggregated results (and, where appropriate, the associated reassessment instruments), these will be agreed or amended to reflect the agreed mark by the administrator in SITs (Activity 15). Details of module results that have not been confirmed will be forwarded to the Head of School Support in the first instance and ultimately escalated to the Dean of School (Activity 16).

3.4 Academic Progression and Award Calculations

At the deadline for agreeing marks, SITS is closed to allow for Calculation of Awards/Results by the Academic & Student Lifecycle Team. Any changes to already submitted module results or late submission of marks will have missed this central calculation. As a result the transcripts impacted by the module mark change/submission will not reflect the update and thus not accurately reflect the student's overall academic profile. Where possible PASS teams work to update the papers to account for the module changes made however this relies on module leader communicating the update to the PASS team and the timing of the change being made. Where possible we work together to avoid module mark changes/ late mark submission as the resulting manual updates can risk error.

The calculations and progressions process differs for programmes managed by the IO team.

3.5 Pre-Programme Assessment Board Preparation (Activity 17)

The pre-Programme Assessment Board preparation involves the Programme Leader(s), some members of the teaching team and the SSA / IO Administrator. Module Leaders are involved as they are responsible for bringing any individual student issues to the attention of the Programme Leader prior to the pre-Programme Assessment Board meeting.

3.6 Pre-Board Meeting – “pre-Programme Assessment Board” (Activity 18)

The composition of a pre-Programme Assessment Board meeting will vary. At a minimum, the Programme Leader/Team and member of the S3/IO administrative staff will meet prior to the Programme Assessment Board to review academic transcripts and provide complete and accurate information. In the Business School the default is for the Head of Subject to Convene their pre-Board.

Outputs of the pre-Programme Assessment Board meeting include confirming the academic transcripts to be presented to the Programme Assessment Board as defined by reporting by exception and identifying any additional information required to facilitate decision-making at the Programme Assessment Board. Although a full set of papers will not necessarily form part of the detailed pre-Programme Assessment Board or Programme Assessment Board discussions, it is good practice to have them readily available electronically for the Board.

3.7 Programme Assessment Boards (Activity 19)

The Programme Assessment Boards take place at the end of each trimester and after the reassessment diet. Programme Assessment Boards consider the performance of students on all approved programmes of study, leading to an award of the University ([Section A, University Regulations](#)).

The Programme Assessment Board includes general discussion and feedback from the Programme External Examiners, including reflections on the previous trimester/academic year of the programme. The Clerk must capture these discussions

in the minute of the Board. Should the External Examiner be unable to attend, it is expected that they have access to the required Board information prior to the meeting taking place to enable them to agree the awards, provide comments on overall quality/standards and any specific student issues.

A schedule of Programme Assessment Board meetings should be agreed, published and all members invited by S3/IO staff at the start of the academic year in line with the [University Key Dates Calendar](#).

Should any online meeting connection issues arise during a board that might threaten the integrity of academic standards this concern will be escalated to the HoLT/ SAL Quality for onward escalation to the Vice Principal for Teaching & Learning.

4 Programme Assessment Board Documentation to be taken

4.1 Documentation available at the Programme Assessment Board through a secure SharePoint link

- Agendas and Previous Minutes
- Ideally, a summary table outlining the number of students awarded, passing, failing, proposed prizes and medal winners
- Names of students and associated award
- Copies of Academic Transcripts for those students whose academic profile will be discussed at the Programme Assessment Board
- A full set of the papers, including those profiles not been identified for discussion
- University Academic Regulation

It is advisable to check that the External Examiner has access to the SharePoint site prior to this access being required. SharePoint access needs to be given (it is not automatic on appointment). On occasion an external examiner has found that their host institution firewalls have prevented access to the SharePoint information. It is best to establish if this is an issue prior to the Board so corrective action can be taken.

4.2 Terms of Reference

- To ensure that the rules and regulations relating to progression are consistently applied and standards maintained.
- To review overall programme by performance and by year/cohort.
- To ratify the module marks of the students being considered at the Board.
- To identify those students for whom there are extenuating circumstances that could have a bearing on their degree classification or progression to the next stage of study.
- To make decisions regarding students eligible for compensation.
- To determine progression issues, with reference to the Academic Regulations.
- To determine award decisions for students who are at the end of their programme of study.
- To approve recommendations on the award of prizes/medals.
- To make recommendations on exit qualifications for those students who wish to leave/are unable to continue with their studies.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Programme Administrator

The School Support Administrator (SSA) and International Operations Administrator (IO) with programme responsibilities provide information to aid the preparation of the Programme Leader (PL). This may include clarifying what the [decision codes](#) mean and providing advice on the next stages if helpful. Part of this involves an initial marking of papers, noting extenuating circumstances etc. This process requires the SSA and PL to work collaboratively on each of the individual student transcripts, agreeing the student profiles and the documentation to be considered by the Programme Assessment Board for consideration. Some schools will refer to this work as a pre-pre Programme Assessment Board.

5.2 Clerk

Programme Assessment Boards are administrated by staff from S3 or IO. Administrators at the Board will have undertaken the University's mandatory Clerk & Convenor training. In preparation for the Programme Assessment Board, the Clerk or Secretary must:

- I. Circulate the meeting invitation to the Programme External Examiner.
- II. Produce an agenda and circulate in advance to all members, including Programme External Examiner.
- III. Collate the annotated papers following discussion held/ actions agreed at the pre-Programme Assessment Board. Where available, this will include the summary table of data relating to those students who will be considered through reporting by exception.
- IV. Have a full set of academic transcripts available (provided by the Programme Administrator) to the Programme Assessment Board in case of query.
- V. Notify the Programme Assessment Board (usually through the papers presented) of any students with extenuating circumstances as part of preparatory activities.
- VI. Have a copy of the University Regulations and Decision Codes available to the Board.
- VII. Confirm professional body accreditation with the Programme Leader.

When at the Programme Assessment Board the Clerk or Secretary must:

- I. Be fully conversant with the University Regulations and Academic decisions available to the Programme Assessment Board.
- II. Notify the Board of any students with approved Extenuating Circumstances.
- III. Take minutes that clearly record key discussion points, including an overview of the programme and feedback from the Programme External Examiner.
- IV. Record the final actions and agreed decisions of the Board for each student.

After the Programme Assessment Board, the Clerk or Secretary must:

- I. Communicate the outcomes of the Board promptly to the SSA, who provides the programme administration for the provision. The SSA then processes the Programme Assessment Board decisions in line with the University key dates calendar and publications deadlines. Results will be available to students via e-Student Records/e-vision.
- II. Promptly produce and circulate minutes, normally within two working weeks following approval from the Convenor and subsequently confirm at the next

meeting of the Board. *The minutes should be available within this timeframe, as they may be required as part of an academic appeal.*

- III. Monitor and report on Convenor's Action. These decisions, including the rationale, must be documented in a manner that makes them easy to access and distribute. The document recording Convenor's Actions must be presented at the next meeting of the Programme Assessment Board.

To help manage the numbers considered at Boards the Business School (TBS) operates with the Clerk and a Secretary model of administrative support. Within TBS there is clear process and training provided to ensure the Clerk and Secretary are aware of their respective duties at the Board.

5.3 Convenor

Each School has a small number of senior academic staff who have been approved to Convene a Programme Assessment Board. The Convenor will have undertaken the University's mandatory Clerk & Convenor training.

The Convenor of the Programme Assessment Board will:

- I. Ensure the meeting is properly conducted and fulfils its responsibilities as defined in the University's [Academic Regulations](#).
- II. Provide an overview of reporting by exception to explain why not all students will be discussed in detail at the Board.
- III. Highlight any issues identified during the pre-board preparation which could impact on the Board's confidence in ratifying the marks/grades.
- IV. Ensure the appropriate academic decisions (award/progression/resit/repeat) are fair, consistent and in line with University Regulations.
- V. Take Convenor's Action on decisions outstanding, on the permission of the Board and External Examiner, agreed at the meeting. This is only be used in exceptional circumstances where new information has been produced.

5.4 The Programme Leader / Year Tutor / Cohort Lead

- I. Meets with the relevant administrator with programme admin responsibilities to review papers in advance of the Programme Assessment Board to ensure:

- a. any information pertinent to the progression decision-making process is brought to the attention of the Programme Assessment Board,
 - b. clear paper mark up to aid the Programme Assessment Boards smooth running.
- II. Provides an overview of performance and presents students for consideration on the programme / year of programme.
 - III. Is aware of the University Regulations and Programme Board decisions available.
 - IV. Confirms professional body accreditation with the Clerk

Importantly, responsibility for decision making lies with the Programme Assessment Board collectively.

5.5 Programme External Examiner

A Programme Assessment Board which does not include an approved programme external examiner is not authorised to confirm awards. The external examiner should be present at the Programme Assessment Board meeting, which agrees awards. If, for exceptional circumstances, the external examiner is not able to attend the meeting, they should confirm in writing that they have been involved in the assessment process and that they agree with the decisions made at the Programme Assessment Board.

6 Student Route Visa - Programme Assessment Board

For students who are studying on a Student Route Visa, the consequence of the academic decision agreed at the Programme Assessment Board will be reviewed to ensure compliance with UKVI Legislation. Programme Leaders will be kept up-to-date on any amendments, which may be necessary. Programme Assessment Board decisions will not be released to students prior to the publication date.

6.1 Terms of Reference

- To ensure that the consequence of academic decisions agreed at the Programme Assessment Board comply with UKVI regulations.
- To identify those students for whom there may be a change in decision to comply with UKVI Legislation.

6.2 Module Review

After the Programme Assessment Boards, the School Head of Learning and Teaching, together with associated key staff (e.g. SAL Quality, SAL Student Experience) within the School, will review the overall performance of the modules, taking into consideration the module evaluation reports from staff and the module survey feedback (through Eva Sys) from students. This review of modules can take place as part of the School ESEC Committee or at a separate meeting - the outcomes and proposed actions will be reported to and monitored through the School ESEC Committee (Activity: Module Review).

Appendix A – Scaling

Definition

Scaling is the adjustment of marks/grades for an entire student cohort, based on academic judgement, and may be used when the marks/grades are impacted (positively or negatively) from an issue relating to a module assessment, resulting in a higher or lower expected level of student achievement. Scaling is the exception, not an automatic process, and should be used where there have been acknowledged problems in the assessment process, any action should be applied consistently to all students. It must not unfairly benefit or disadvantage student groups/cohorts.

Process and Timing

Scaling is a stage in the marking process. Before scaling is applied, the original marks, together with the rationale, approved by the Head of Learning & Teaching and then forwarded to the Vice Principal (Learning and Teaching) for information. Following agreement internally, the External Examiner (if appropriate), should be consulted before being actioned. The rationale for the scaling and the action taken must be highlighted to the relevant administrator and recorded in SITs and a note, signed by the relevant parties, kept with the original scripts (for audit purposes). The decision must be transparent and available to the relevant Programme Assessment Boards if required.

Ideally scaling should be applied before assessment marks are agreed but must take place prior to final Programme Assessment Board as regulations do not permit grade/mark changes once these are confirmed by the Board.

Appendix B – Example Template: Summary for Programme Assessment Boards

As the summary report is produced manually the format and consistency with which it is produced can vary across pre-Programme Assessment Board and Programme Assessment Boards. Originally the intention had been that the summary reports display the summary information by year as shown in the second table below. Where time does not enable this level of detail the administrator supporting the programme will produce a higher-level summary as illustrated in the first table below.

Summary for Programme Assessment Boards (UG)									
Programme Codes: XXXXXBH/XXXXXBH									
BA Business Management					Session entered		Date entered		
Occurrence A									
	Passed All Modules	Awards	Presented to the Programme Assessment Board for Discussion and Decision			Total Students			
Programme	25		20			45			
TOTAL	85	3	69			154			
Profile of Awards									
Summary of Awards									
Intake	1st	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class	Degree (Dist)	Degree	Dip HE	Cert HE	Cert of Credit
Year One									
Year Two									
Year Three						1			
Year Four		2							

TOTAL	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
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Summary for Programme Assessment Boards (UG)
Programme Codes: XXXXXBH/XXXXXBH

BA Business Management Enter session Enter date

Occurrence A

Intake	Passed All Modules and Progressed to next year	Awards	Presented to the Programme Assessment Board for Discussion and Decision	Total Students	Highest Year Average
Year One	25	2	29	54	77.65
Year Two	29	2	31	60	77.75
Year Three	31	2	42	75	76.97
Year Four	N/A	31		0	74.88
TOTAL	85	33	102	187	

Profile of Awards

Summary of Awards									
Intake	1st	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class	Degree (Dist)	Degree	Dip HE	Cert HE	Cert Credit of
Year One									2
Year Two								1	1
Year Three						1	1		
Year Four	7	16	7	1					
TOTAL	7	16	7	1	0	1	1	0	0

	Student Matriculation No.	Student Name	Programme
Programme Medals	34567891/1	A N Other	BA (Hons) Accounting
	45678912/1	J Smith	BA (Hons) Accounting with Corporate Finance
Elizabeth Howie Dissertation	23456789/1	K Jones	BA (Hons) Accounting with Corporate Finance
Craiglockhart Prize	12345678/1	C Jackson	BA (Hons) Accounting