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Programme Assessment Board (PAB) Guidance

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# 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 (PABs) introduced. In summary, the three stages of the PABs 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-PAB.

**Stage 2: Pre-PAB:** In preparation for the PAB, a pre-PAB is undertaken to:

1. confirm that student module marks can be ratified by the PAB for the trimester by checking due process within stages 4-14 (pp6-7) ;
2. help ensure that Programme Leaders become more familiar with the student profiles that they will present for discussion at the PAB.
3. confirm the academic transcripts to be discussed at the PAB
4. 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 misconduct decisions).

**Stage 3:** **PAB Meeting:** The PAB meeting ratifies module marks and makes decisions on student progression and awards. The full terms of reference of the PAB duties are listed in section 4.2 below. In session 2020/21, the University started operating PABs online. For session 2021/22, PABS can be undertaken using WEBEX or MS Teams.

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 PAB would consider multiple provision. In this model, the PAB 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. Where this results in high numbers of students being considered, the subject areas 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 and can be recorded in compliance with GDPR regulations.

Where possible, typically two Clerks attend the Programme Assessment Board, and thus the membership reads:

* Convenor\*
* Clerk\* – typically this administrator notes the key discussion as needed for Board minutes, annotates the papers using Adobe Acrobat with decisions, support 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 in WebEx/MS Teams.
* Programme Leader of students being considered\*
* External Examiner is responsible for oversight of programme associated with students being considered\*
* Global Online administrator (for relevant part of the PAB)
* Additional teaching staff associated with the students being considered (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).

\* Compulsory PAB members as defined in Regulation A11.2.

There is no requirement for the Module External Examiner to attend the PAB. The Schools can invite the external examiners with module responsibilities to review within the academic year and 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.

# Summary Flowchart





\*Programme Assessment Board Summary

**17. Pre-PAB Preparation\*\***

Checking undertaken to ensure:

* Academic confidence in the process completed to date relating to module assessment.
* That the information presented is complete and accurate, including (where possible) a report identifying which students will not be considered by the Board due to adherence to reporting by exception.

\*\*Depending on the composition of the provision considered at the pre-PAB and PAB, this preparation will not necessarily involve the PAB Clerk and Convenor. The School Support Administrator (SSA) or IO Administrator (IOA) who support the programme, the Programme Leader(s) and members of teaching team will always be involved in pre-PAB preparation.

**18. Pre-PAB Meeting**

The pre-PAB reports by exception with multiple programmes likely to be considered within a single meeting. The role of the pre-PAB is to check due process with regards stages 4-14, further familiarise the Programme Leader with the student profiles, prepare the papers for discussion at, and any actions needed before, the PAB.

**19. Programme Assessment Board (PAB)**

[Regulation A11.8](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/Regulations/Documents/2020_21/SectionA_2020_21.pdf) defines the PAB responsibilities.

# Overview of Stages

## 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 PAB (Activity 5). Further guidance regarding moderation practices is available in Appendix E of the [Assessment Handbook: Code of Practice on Moderation of Marks and Grades](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/resources/Documents/AssessmentHandbook2017revisedOct2018.pdf).

## 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](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/school-support-service/Pages/Key-Dates-Calendar.aspx) (Activity 7). After the submission deadline, a report will be generated and forwarded to the Head of School Support, escalated (where required) to the Dean of School, indicating the modules for which no results have been entered (Activity 8).

## 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 form (often referred to as a *marks verification 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).

## Academic Progression and Award Calculations

At the deadline for agreeing marks, SITS is closed to allow for Calculation of Awards/Results by the Systems Team. After this time, any changes to the module results and those results that the Module Leader has not confirmed will not be included as part of the recommendations for award, progression, or compensation pre-populated on the Academic Transcripts. Consequently, during this time, the academic transcript will not accurately reflect the student’s overall academic profile.

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

## Pre-PAB Preparation (Activity 17)

The pre-PAB 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-PAB meeting.

## Pre-Board Meeting – “pre-PAB” (Activity 18)

The composition of a pre-PAB 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. Outputs of the pre-PAB meeting include confirming the academic transcripts to be presented to the PAB as defined by reporting by exception and identifying any additional information required to facilitate decision-making at the PAB. It is considered good practice for a full copy of the papers to be available on SharePoint for colleagues to review. Although this full set of papers will not necessarily form part of the pre-PAB or PAB discussions, it is good practice to have them readily available electronically should a member of the Board wish to query a student.

## Programme Assessment Boards (PAB) (Activity 19)

The PABs take place at the end of each trimester and after the resit diet. PABs consider the performance of students on all approved programmes of study, leading to an award of the University ([Section A, University Regulations](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/Regulations/Pages/Regulations.aspx)).

The PAB 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 PAB 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](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/school-support-service/Pages/Key-Dates-Calendar.aspx).

Where connections issues during a board might threaten the integrity of academic standards concerns should be escalated to the HoLT/ SAL Quality for onward escalation to the Vice Principal for Teaching & Learning.

# Programme Assessment Board (PAB) Documentation to be taken

## Documentation available at the PAB 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 (available on SharePoint), including those profiles not been identified for discussion
* Academic Regulations

## 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.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## 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](https://livenapierac.sharepoint.com/sites/iservices/teamareas/SST/pmb/Current%20Board%20Decisions/Forms/AllItems.aspx?viewpath=/sites/iservices/teamareas/SST/pmb/Current%20Board%20Decisions/Forms/AllItems.aspx) 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 PAB for consideration.

Following the University decision to streamline the membership of each PAB, the programme administrators are not necessarily members of the PAB. Please note that where the Clerk to the pre-PAB or PAB is the same person as the programme administrator, they are a member of that Board as a Clerk undertaking the duties outlined in 5.2.

## Clerk

Programme Assessment Boards will be clerked by administrative staff from S3 or IO. The Clerk will have undertaken the University’s mandatory Clerk & Convenor training. In preparation for the PAB, the Clerk must:

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

The Clerk to the Programme Assessment Board must:

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

After the Programme Assessment Board, the Clerk must:

1. Communicate the outcomes of the Board promptly to the SSA, who provides the programme administration for the provision. The SSA then processes the PAB decisions in line with the University key dates calendar and publications deadlines. Results will be available to students via e-Student Records/e-vision.
2. 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.*
3. 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.

## Convenor

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

The Convenor of the Programme Assessment Board will:

1. Ensure the meeting is properly conducted and fulfils its responsibilities as defined in [Academic Regulation A11.8](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/Regulations/Documents/2020_21/SectionA_2020_21.pdf).
2. Provide an overview of reporting by exception to explain why not all students will be discussed in detail at the Board.
3. Highlight any issues identified during the pre-board preparation which could impact on the Board’s confidence in ratifying the marks/grades.
4. Ensure the appropriate academic decisions (award/progression/resit/repeat) are fair, consistent and in line with University Regulations.
5. 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.

## The Programme Leader / Year Tutor

1. Meets with the relevant administrator with programme admin responsibilities to review papers in advance of the PAB to ensure:
   1. any information pertinent to the progression decision-making process is brought to the attention of the PAB,
   2. clear paper mark up to aid the PABs smooth running.
2. Provides an overview of performance and presents students for consideration on the programme / year of programme.
3. Is aware of the University Regulations and Programme Board decisions available.
4. Confirms professional body accreditation with the Clerk

Importantly, responsibility for decision making lies with the PAB collectively.

## 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 PAB.

# Student Route Visa - PAB

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

## 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.

## Module Review

After the PABs, 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 LTA/SEC Committee or at a separate meeting - the outcomes and proposed actions will be reported to and monitored through the School LTA/SEC 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-PAB and PABs. 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 PAB 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 |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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 PAB 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 of Credit |  |
| 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 |
|  |  |  |  |