JOB DESCRIPTION
CHAIR OF BOARD OF EXAMINERS

1. Framework

- It is a University requirement that each taught programme of study (undergraduate and postgraduate) has a Board of Examiners which is responsible for decisions about the outcomes of assessment of students on the programme.

- Chairs of Boards of Examiners are appointed by the Head of School (HoS) and their details are reported to Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (FLTSEC). The board of studies shall appoint a secretary who shall be responsible for keeping a record of all decisions reached by the board, and for ensuring that all members of the board examiners (including external examiners) are informed of meetings.

- New Chairs are required to undertake the training provided for this role. Existing Chairs are also encouraged to attend in order to refresh their awareness about the role.

2. Overall Responsibility

- The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for overseeing all School preparations for examinations and the work of staff contributing to these, including examiners, secretary to the board (or examinations convenor) and the School examination contact.

- In appropriate cases, the board may delegate to the chair the right to consider and make decisions. In so doing, the chair should consult as many members of the board as possible (including external examiners). Action taken by the chair must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the board.

3. Contact with External Examiners

The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for:

- Initiating and securing the appointment of incoming external examiners (often in liaison with the Degree Programme Director(s)) and ensuring, annually, that external examiners receive:

  i) Details of any duties additional to those specified in Section 5 of the University’s Policy and Procedure for External Examiners of Taught Programmes;
  ii) Examination Conventions relevant to the degree programme;
  iii) Any instructions issued to examiners and/or boards of examiners;
  iv) Degree programme regulations, programme specifications and programme handbooks (including assessment criteria) for the relevant programme(s);
  v) A full list of modules, module descriptions, including learning outcomes and assessment methods;
  vi) Relevant Fitness to Practise procedures;
vii) Access to programme materials within the Virtual Learning Environment used by the school;
viii) Draft assessment types, including examination papers and coursework instruments, and, if appropriate, a description of the marking schemes for each type of assessment, and, if deemed appropriate by the Board of Studies, model answers for assessments;
ix) A selection of assessed student work (to be sent or made available to external examiners). The principles for such selection should be agreed early in the academic year between the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the external examiner;
x) The arrangements, where appropriate, for the selection of candidates for viva voce examinations where the viva is a formal part of the assessment process (taught postgraduate programmes only);
x) The arrangements for the external examiner to be given adequate opportunity to communicate with internal examiners and, where appropriate, others involved in teaching and assessment (such as placement providers/assessors);
xii) Information concerning the authority and role of the external examiner in the Board of Examiners. (NB This must be consistent with the relevant Examinations Conventions: Undergraduate Examination Conventions: Conventions B2-13 & 18-21; Postgraduate Examination Conventions, Conventions B4-13 & 18-21);
xiii) Early information concerning the dates and times of Boards of Examiners meetings;
xiv) Minutes from meetings of Boards of Examiners which have taken place during the period of their appointment and at which student performance has been considered;
xv) Details of arrangements made, where appropriate, for them to meet with students on the programme they are appointed to examine. The purpose of such meetings should be made clear well in advance. In order to facilitate this, external examiners may claim a small fee for up to two additional visits per year if they are essential to the role. Alternative arrangements, such as the use of Skype and dial-in conferencing, may also be made to maximise the number of interactions between students and external examiners.

- Briefing external examiners prior to the board of examiners’ meeting. Further detail can be found in the Guidance for Boards of Examiners.
- Consulting with external examiners throughout the year as appropriate.
- Ensuring that the final report of the previous external examiner(s), and the responses from the Board of Studies for the previous two years, are made available to the incoming external examiner.
- Ensuring that School colleagues set examination and assessment questions within required timescales (including re-sit questions) and that the external examiner is consulted before the questions are finalised.

4. Arrangements for the Ownership and Return of Module Marks

In advance of the board, and with the assistance of the Secretary, the Chair of the Board of Examiners
is responsible for:

- Ensuring that information on the date/time/location of the board meeting is circulated to all relevant staff.
- Making available such documentation as is necessary to ensure an effective meeting, such as relevant regulations, conventions and prize rules and nominations as well as consistently presented and clear individual results.
- Ensuring that the board has an explicit written policy on moderation and scaling that maps to the University’s core requirements and other standardisation of marks on University scales (see Undergraduate Examination Conventions 27 (b) and Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions 27 (b)). Ensuring that module leaders/markers are aware of key deadlines for the return of marks, and any necessary arrangements for those marks, and arrangements for holding scripts.
- Ensuring that the profile of results for each module is considered (to ascertain whether any scaling is necessary, confirm there is no cohort bias etc.). This should normally be considered at a Module Moderation Board.
- Ensuring that the scaling of marks is carried out in accordance with the University’s core requirements on scaling and moderation practice. Scaling must be considered when the module leader and Chair of Board of Examiners both agree that the raw marks for a module fail to reflect student performance adequately and/or fail to map onto the standard University marking scale. If the module leader and the Chair cannot agree on the scaling of marks, or if the module leader also serves as Chair, the question should be referred to at least one other senior colleague (e.g. the DPD). Scaling should always take place in advance of the Board of Examiners, and all instances of scaling must be reported to the External Examiner(s).
- Ensuring that any Module Moderation Boards held to review performance across modules are held in accordance with the Guidance for Boards of Examiners.
- Having a schedule of activity for the external examiner/s, including arrangements for the sampling of scripts, any meetings with students, and for viva voce (taught postgraduate programmes only).
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to obtain marks from other Schools where necessary. Each module and programme will have an owning School and a primary Board of Examiners which will have ownership of the marks and, once reviewed, will release these marks to other Boards of Examiners.
- Ensuring that marks are collated as soon as possible (ideally 1-2 days in advance), identifying any gaps and areas of concern at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensuring that students who may be required to attend viva voce are aware of the requirement to be available (taught postgraduate programmes only).

5. Programme Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee
The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the PEC Committee operates in accordance with University regulations ([UG Exam Conventions B14-17; Exam Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees B14-17](#)).
- In advance of the PEC Committee, and with the assistance of the Secretary, ensuring that students are aware of the mechanisms and deadlines for notifying mitigating circumstances affecting performance.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place for the PEC Committee to consider cases, in advance of the board of examiners but with sufficient time to allow for a suitable report to be made available to the board.
- Ensuring that all personal information is handled by the PEC and the Board of Examiners in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
- Ensuring that minutes are made of the deliberations of the PEC Committee, and that these provide Boards of Examiners with an assessment of the scope and severity of mitigating circumstances affecting students, where the PEC Committee recommends the use of discretion.

6. Procedure for Boards of Examiners

The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for:

- Ensuring that candidates are considered anonymously, unless a case for an exception has been granted by the Chair of FLTSEC (subject to educational reasons being provided for how the board would run better with fair outcomes through not being anonymous), or unless a case is referred back to the board via the Academic Appeals Procedure).
- Ensuring that all decisions are taken by the board with full information about the performance of each candidate being available to the board of examiners (both external and internal members) including:
  
  i) marks in all assessments for which the board is responsible;
  
  ii) all marks achieved by those students whose overall performance or degree classification is to be determined by the board;
  
  iii) recommendations from the PEC Committee concerning mitigating circumstances which may have affected a student's performance.
- Formally giving notice that any member of the board with a personal interest in or connection with a candidate shall declare that interest in advance and take no part in any deliberation on and the decision determining the results of that candidate. Any such declaration shall be formally minuted together with the procedure followed in the particular case. [NB. Personal or Senior Tutors on the board should not provide any additional information about a candidate other than that provided by the PEC Committee.]
- Investigating any reported assessment irregularities in accordance with the University’s
procedure.

- Ensuring that discretion is exercised appropriately, and that reasons for the exercise of discretion are recorded by the secretary to the board (including, in appropriate circumstances, the reason why discretion has not been exercised). [In appropriate cases, the board of examiners may delegate to the chair the right to consider and make decisions outside the meeting. In so doing, the chair should seek to consult as many members of the board as possible and the external examiner(s). Action taken by the chair must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the board of examiners. The chair shall only exercise discretion in a manner consistent with the normal practices and any agreed principles of the board of examiners.]

- Signing all agreed mark sheets confirming decisions taken by the board of examiners, and ensuring that the external examiner(s) sign(s) the final list of degree results.

- Ensuring that minutes are made of the deliberations of the board, which accurately reflect the meeting. [NB. Minutes are often required when a student submits an appeal.]

- Ensuring that results are communicated promptly to the Examinations and Congregations Office and entered onto Student Lifecycle Management and other marks databases.

### 7. Appeals

The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for:

- Providing a response if a candidate lodges an Appeal against a decision made by the board of examiners and, if appropriate, reconsidering the student’s case. [Appeals are invariably received within 14 days of the publication of results (i.e. the date of the pass list). If accepted, an appeal will be sent to the School (the Chair of the Board of Examiners, the Degree Programme Director, the tutor and the Head of School) for comment. In some cases a collective response is made, however, a response from the Chair of the Board of Examiner or nominee is essential.]

- Including an assessment of the appeal, commenting as to its merit. [Ordinarily, the Chair should indicate whether the matters were known to the examiners (or the PEC Committee) and should also append extracts from minutes. It may also be helpful to indicate arrangements for seeking student notices of mitigating circumstances affecting their performance in advance of the board of examiners and whether the matter has already been allowed for (e.g. by extensions).]

- Some appeals may be successful and shall be referred back to the Board of Examiners and / or PEC Committee for reconsideration of the student’s case in light of the information provided in the appeal. [This does not require a full meeting of the Board, but key colleagues should be consulted and the external examiners must be consulted on final awards. Virtual meetings of the Board / PEC Committee may be held to consider appeal cases.]

### 8. Links to key further information
• University Regulations - especially UG and Taught Masters Examination Conventions
  [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs]

• Information for Chairs of Boards of Examiners
  [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/examiners/] including:-
  o Personal Extenuating Circumstances
  o Academic Appeals
  o Assessment Irregularities

• University Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes
  [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-extexam-policy.pdf]

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