Principles and Policy on Anonymity in Boards of Examiners
Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught

University Policy

1. In July 2013, ULTSEC agreed that Boards of Examiners must be conducted anonymously, with exemptions approved in advance by the relevant Chair of Faculty Education Committee. This document clarifies the relevant principles of anonymity.

Principles

2. The purpose of anonymity in Boards of Examiners is to eliminate any bias that might otherwise exist, or be thought to exist, on the part of examiners and to ensure that any use of discretion is based purely on the available evidence.

3. Boards of Examiners must apply anonymity to all stages and to all progress and degree classification decisions, unless an exemption has been approved. To ensure anonymity, all members, including external examiners, should refer to candidates only by non-identifying numbers (i.e., numbers that no one on the board will recognise as belonging to a given student, including one repeating a stage). Board members should be reminded not to reference any information that would allow others to identify a given candidate (e.g. name, gender, disabilities, distinguishing characteristics). Even if marking of relevant assessments has not been done anonymously, student marks must be anonymised for the board meeting.

4. Some circumstances may warrant an exemption (e.g. extremely small cohort sizes). If academic units wish to seek an exemption, they must first demonstrate that students are content with the proposal (through consultation at Student-Staff Committee and/or Board of Studies), demonstrate that external examiners support the proposal, demonstrate that there is a sound educational reason for dropping anonymous proceedings (i.e., that it would result in fairer decisions), and demonstrate that arrangements are in place to ensure fair proceedings and prevent inappropriate pleading on behalf of any given students. Only once these four conditions have been met should the unit seek an exemption from the relevant Chair of Faculty Education Committee.

5. Boards of Examiners minutes may contain student names so long as they are inserted after the conclusion of the meeting. The minutes must clearly state that the board was held anonymously.

6. Only the Chair and Secretary of the Board of Examiners should have access during the meeting to students’ names and evidence of mitigating circumstances. It is the Chair’s responsibility to report on personal extenuating circumstances as appropriate, and he/she must take care to maintain anonymity in reporting such information.
7. Both the standard Board of Examiners report on SAP and the NESS system can provide anonymous lists of student numbers and marks. Boards of Examiners must use such anonymised reports, and care must be taken to ensure that individual members do not have access to lists with student names (i.e. on their personal laptops or tablets).

8. The Taught Programmes Sub-Committee will monitor exemptions on an annual basis for quality assurance.

Last updated by LTDS, July 2018

| Intended for:                      | Academic staff, especially members of Boards of Examiners  
|                                  | External examiners  
|                                  | Students  
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