

## **VI RULES FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

### **Procedure for Boards of Examiners and Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committees for Taught Programmes**

*These should be read in conjunction with the Assessment Regulations and the Progression and Classification Regulations for Specific Types of Programme.*

#### **A. The Board of Examiners**

1. A Board of Examiners shall be appointed for each award-bearing programme. A Board of Examiners may be responsible for a number of programmes. Membership of a Board of Examiners shall include the relevant Degree Programme Directors, named representatives of the main areas of study involved in the programme and the appointed external examiners. The Board of Examiners for those BA and BSc Joint and Combined degrees specified by the University Education Committee (UEC) shall include an external assessor who is required to report to the University on the reliability and integrity of the processes used in the award of these degrees.
2. The membership of each Board of Examiners shall be agreed by the relevant Board of Studies and names of the Chair and Secretary reported to the appropriate Faculty Education Committee and to the Examinations Office.
3. The relevant Degree Programme Directors and named representatives of the main areas of study involved in the programme shall be present at meetings of the Board of Examiners. The appointed external examiners or assessors shall normally be present at meetings of the Board at which qualifications are awarded.
4. Where it is necessary to call an additional or reconvened meeting of the Board of Examiners, the external examiners shall be notified and, if they are unable to attend, shall be given the opportunity to make known in writing their views on the cases to be discussed, or to take part remotely.

#### **Chair of the Board**

5. The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be appointed by the Head of School and appointment annually reported to the relevant Faculty Education Committee. The Chair is responsible for conducting all meetings of the Board, and for ensuring that all decisions are taken by the Board in the full knowledge of all the results for each student. 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 senior members of the Board as appropriate (including the external examiners). Action taken by the Chair must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the Board. The Chair, in consultation with senior members of the Board, shall exercise discretion in a manner consistent with the normal practices and any additional agreed principles of the Board. All agreed mark sheets, confirming decisions taken by the Board, shall be signed by the Chair. For cross faculty provision, the Chair of the Board is appointed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

### Secretary

6. The Board of Studies shall appoint a Secretary who shall be responsible for ensuring that all members of the Board of Examiners, including the external examiners, are informed of meetings. The Secretary shall also be responsible for keeping a record of all decisions reached by the Board. In all cases of the exercise of discretion, the reason for the decision shall be recorded.

### External Examiners and External Assessors

7. Procedures for appointing external examiners and external assessors are set out in the [Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes](#). The policy is the definitive source on matters relating to external examining and in the event of any conflict between the policy and these regulations, the Policy would prevail. The duties of external examiners are set out in the policy.

### Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee

8. A Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee shall be appointed by each Board of Studies to review and consider medical and mitigating circumstances which may have an effect on a student's performance, as set out in the [Personal Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#). One PEC Committee may cover more than one programme within a school. This Committee shall normally consist of a Chair, Secretary and two other senior members of academic staff. The Chair should be a senior member of academic staff with experience of sitting on a Board of Examiners. If the Secretary is not a member of academic staff then a fourth senior member of academic staff must be appointed to the Committee. The Chair of the PEC Committee shall report the Committee's recommendations, including a summary of action taken throughout the year by the PEC Committee, members and delegated staff, to the Chair of the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners shall, accordingly, be made aware if medical or other circumstances have been put forward by a student for PEC Committee support; however, no more detail than is necessary shall be disclosed, and this shall include no personal or medical details, only whether the request is supported and for which assessments. All personal information shall be handled by the PEC Committee and the Board of Examiners in accordance with the requirements of data protection legislation. Guidance on PEC procedures is provided by the Registry and Education Service (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/student-progress/>).

9. The PEC Committee shall have the power to grant the following, subject to the appropriate evidence being provided for or by the student:

- a) Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Assessment, Feedback and Marking policy;
- b) Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (normally a maximum of 20% of the module in question);
- c) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion (generally August);
- d) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to a later normal occasion;
- e) Extraordinary examinations, including those outside of the regular assessment periods;

- f) Setting aside previous attempt(s) at a module, semester or stage and allowing repeat tuition if required;
- g) Allowing a student to retake a module, semester or stage with tuition (subject to payment of the appropriate tuition fees);
- h) Allowing a student to proceed to the next Stage of a programme carrying modules;
- i) To provide Boards of Examiners with a recommendation of support/no-support for specific assessments depending on the personal circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-h above or where alternative adjustments would unreasonably add to the circumstances (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion where appropriate).

10. A PEC committee may, on occasion, need to consider other adjustments in response to a student's personal extenuating circumstance case, such as an alternative assessment, different to the original set. Alternative adjustments other than those listed in 9.a-i above or outlined as a reasonable adjustment request in a Student Support Plan must be made in collaboration with the Degree Programme Director and where agreement cannot be reached, approval from the appropriate Dean of Education is required.

11. Due to the professional requirements of some programmes not all the above adjustments may be available to the PEC Committee.

12. Students should be reminded annually of the PEC procedure and reminded that applications should be made in a timely manner. If students fail to disclose relevant circumstances to the committee at the time of impact, this may have a bearing on any future appeal.

## **B. Board of Examiners Procedures**

13. The Head of Academic Unit will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that assessed work is marked in advance of the scheduled meetings of Boards of Examiners. The Head of Academic Unit in consultation with the relevant Dean (Education or Postgraduate Research), is authorised to adjust normal marking, scaling and moderation procedures if necessary.

14. Members of the Board of Examiners should declare any personal (i.e. non-academic) interest relating to any individual students to the Chair of the Board prior to the meeting. Such declarations are required despite the anonymity of the Board of Examiners meeting.

15. Where the Board of examiners is unable to reach a decision on any issue by common consent, a vote shall be taken and the matter shall be decided by the majority of Internal members then present and voting. The academic members of the Board, including the Chair, shall each have one vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair shall have a casting (i.e. second) vote. External examiners are the arbiters of standards and not a decision maker of an award made by the University.

16. As soon as possible, following the meeting of the Board of Examiners, students will be notified of the decisions by the Secretary to the Board. In the case of final year students, the decisions of the Board will normally be released within 48 hours of the meeting of the Board.

17. The reasons for exercising or not exercising discretion shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings in every case where the exercise of discretion is considered, both those where such consideration is required by the Regulations or where it is considered on other grounds. The minutes shall record the issues raised and the decisions reached, whilst maintaining, wherever possible, the anonymity of board members contributing to the debate. Boards of Studies are required to review annually the exercise of discretion as part of the Continuous Programme Review process. No student shall be identified by name in this report.

18. The exercise of discretion does not set a precedent as cases should be considered individually. However, in any discussion regarding the possible exercise of discretion, the Board shall ensure that no student in similar circumstances has been treated less favourably. Academic grounds for discretion should be considered prior to PEC grounds.

19. For Foundation, Undergraduate and Integrated Masters programmes, the requirements set out in IV.J.31-33 have a particular application in respect of resits at the final stage. Boards of Examiners must not use discretion after the first attempt to deprive a student an opportunity available on resit. Nor must it use discretion to improve a resitting student's opportunities beyond those available to a first attempt student. To this end:

- a) At the end of the first attempt at the final stage, if a Board of Examiners considers using discretion to make a higher level or class of award than a student is entitled to, it must not make an award that is lower than indicated by the final programme average.
- b) At the end of the second attempt at the final stage, if a board of examiners considers using discretion to make the minimum award on the entry programme (i.e. a Pass on a Foundation Degree, a Third Class Honours on a Bachelor's programme and Second Class, Second Division on an Integrated Master's programme), they may take account of performance in any second attempts at final stage modules and of any PEC recommendations relevant to the first and second attempts.
- c) At the end of the second attempt at the final stage, if a Board of Examiners considers using discretion to make a higher level or class of award than indicated by the first attempt final average (and higher than the minimum award on the entry programme), grounds are limited to PEC recommendations relevant to consideration at the first attempt meeting of the board, and the Board of Examiners must ensure that decisions are consistent with those made at the first attempt meeting of the board. The Board must not use performances in second attempts or PEC recommendations relevant only to the second attempts as grounds for making a higher award.

### **C. Releasing and Adjusting Marks**

20. Marks awarded for course work shall be disclosed to students as soon as they are available and within 20 working days. It should be made clear to students that such marks are provisional and will be subject to review and possible moderation. ([Policies - Educational Policy and Governance Service - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#) )

21. Semester 1 examination marks should be returned within 20 working days

of the end of the examination period. However, the provisional semester 1 module marks should be released within two weeks after this. It should be made clear to students that the marks are provisional and will be subject to review and possible moderation.

22. Any adjustment of marks of a cohort shall take place prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Once marks have been returned to the Board of Examiners they shall not be adjusted, except that the correction of errors in the transcribing of marks is permitted. It should be noted that the regulations governing the award of classes of degrees and particularly the use of discretion by the Board of Examiners, shall not result in any adjustment of marks.

23. Any sanctions imposed under the Academic Misconduct Procedure take precedence over the Board of Examiners' decisions, and therefore cannot be overturned.

#### **D. Module Marks after Reassessment, Compensation or Discretion**

24. Where a passing mark is achieved following reassessment at any stage, including the final stage, or where modules have been deemed to have been passed by the exercise of compensation or discretion, the actual (uncapped) module mark achieved will be shown, using the normal University scale, on the transcript, with an appropriate note if compensation or discretion has been applied, and a statement that a mark of 40 (or 50 for level 7 modules) will be used in any calculations. However, the Board of Examiners may, in its ultimate discretion, have regard to the actual module mark obtained at resit. For non-modular programmes this section refers to individual assessment marks rather than modular marks.

#### **E. Retention of Data**

25. Student data relevant to student assessment should be retained as follows:

- i Component marks, and Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee and Board of Examiners minutes to be retained for six years after graduation.
- ii Personal Extenuating Circumstances information (including Stage 1 Personal Extenuating Circumstance information for Board of Examiners' discretion usage) to be retained for two years after graduation.

#### **F. Retention of Assessed Work**

26. All material for assessment, which contributes to 30% or more of a final module mark, should be retained for a minimum period of the current academic year plus one year. All work will be retained for non-modular programmes. Further information can be found in the [Policy on Assessment, Feedback and Marking](#).