SENATE REGULATION 4 (August 2014 onwards): Assessment of students on taught programmes

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Prefaratory note

For further information about the terms SR2 (pre-2009), SR2 (2009 onwards), SR3 (pre-2006), SR3 2006-2012 and SR3 (2013 onwards) and the groups of students associated with each set of regulations please see the section in the Foreword to the Senate Regulations headed ‘Changes to Senate Regulations relating to Taught Awards’.

The Assessment of students

1. Each student shall be assessed in accordance with the published schedule given in the approved programme specification and associated module or assessment block outlines.

2. Senate approves generic grade descriptors. Departments should refer to these and to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications when developing assessment criteria for student work. Such assessment criteria developed must be published to both staff and students and be made available to External Examiners.

3. All summative assessments shall be subject to the approval of a group designated by the appropriate Panel of Examiners. External Examiners’ views should be sought on all examination papers and other assessments (e.g. proposed coursework titles) at Level 2, 3 and Masters Level, before the papers are printed or other assessments notified to students. Assessment criteria, marking schemes, and/or indicative answers should be provided in order that he/she may consider whether the questions:
   a) are expressed clearly;
   b) adequately assess the intended learning outcomes;
   c) are in accordance with the overall assessment strategy for the programme;
   d) are of an appropriate standard.

4. Changes proposed by the External Examiner under Regulation 4.3 above should only be rejected with good reason after discussion with him/her.

Coursework and other forms of continuous assessment

5. Coursework, which may include practical work conducted under examination conditions, shall be completed by the student in accordance with the requirements published in the programme specification and associated module outlines and to notified deadline(s).

6. Where a programme makes provision for a student to prepare and submit work in collaboration with other students, each collaborator must be able separately to provide the evidence needed for an assessment to be made of his or her individual contribution and achievement.

7. Wherever possible and appropriate, candidates shall be identified on all assessed work by student number, and not name, in order to preserve anonymity.
8. Quality Assurance Committee approves a policy on Late Submission Penalties.

**University scheduled examinations**

9. Examinations shall be held according to a timetable which shall be available to students normally not less than four weeks before an examination period is due to begin. The timetable shall show the date, time, duration and location of each examination.

10. Examination papers and all examination stationery shall be held in a secure environment until the time for their release to the candidates.

11. The authorised member of staff shall be responsible for notifying candidates of any materials and equipment that are permitted in the examination room. This shall also be specified in the rubric of the examination paper. Candidates are required to provide their own writing implements.

12. Examinations shall be supervised. The author(s) of an examination paper shall normally be available for immediate consultation before, and for at least the first half-hour of, the examination.

13. Invigilation arrangements for examinations are set out in the Examinations Policy published by the Registry. Candidates who fail to comply with the instructions given by the invigilator or who otherwise disturb or impede the examination may be required to leave the examination room by the invigilator who shall submit a report to the authorised member of staff. Such a candidate may be subject to disciplinary action under Senate Regulation 6.

14. Candidates shall be identified on examination scripts by student number, and not name, to preserve anonymity.

**College-scheduled examinations**

15. Colleges shall publish a schedule of examinations and other assessment events which are not scheduled within the University examination session. Any such examinations and assessments shall comply with this Regulation and the University Examinations Policy.

**Viva Voce**

16. Unless approved as part of the assessment method for an individual module, a viva voce may not be used during either undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes to determine progression, condonation or classification. A viva voce may be used as part of the procedures for determining whether a piece of work is that of the student.

**Reassessment**

17. The authorised member of staff shall be responsible, in accordance with the decision of the Board of Examiners, for notifying students in good time of the arrangements for any reassessments and for making provision for such arrangements as the setting of questions, location, invigilation and marking of work.
Students with additional needs

18. Students must notify the authorised member of staff in good time and in writing of any disabilities that may require reasonable adjustments to be made for the conduct of any assessment. The advice of a professionally qualified assessor and the University’s Disability Office should be sought where appropriate. The Department should then notify the Registry so that the disability can be recorded.

19. The arrangements to be made in the light of information submitted by students in this manner shall be considered by the authorised member of staff on behalf of the relevant Panels and Boards of Examiners. The nature of the assessment task should be taken into account when determining the arrangements to be made for an individual student. A student should not be disadvantaged by any such arrangements.

Grading / Marking of work

20. Assessors may assign either provisional marks or grades to student work in accordance with University policy, with reference to the standards set out in the relevant grade descriptors. Where provisional marks are assigned by the assessors, Panels and Boards of Examiners shall also receive the corresponding provisional grades as well as (for reference) the original provisional marks.

21. Heads of Departments are responsible for ensuring that Internal and External Examiners are fully informed of relevant grading/marking criteria and standards when assessing or internally moderating work, and that appropriate reference is made to generic or specific criteria. Regulations pertaining to the external moderation of the ‘internal’ assessments of student work at Level 2 or above are set out in the section on External Examiners below.

22. The University has adopted the following definitions to assure the consistency of internal assessment of student work at all Levels. These are:

| Blind-double assessment (Internal Examiners) | An assessment scheme and/or model answer must be provided. Two assessors, neither of whom sees the grade/mark or comments of the other, make individual assessments of the work. An agreed grade/mark must be reached for each piece of assessed work by the two assessors. Where the assessors cannot reach an agreement or their individual grades/marks differ beyond an agreed tolerance level, Departments will either
|                                               | • in the case of Masters level dissertations and undergraduate projects, follow the protocol approved by Quality Assurance Committee; or
|                                               | • in the case of other forms of assessed work follow their own published procedures for the resolution of disagreements between assessors. |

| Internal moderation (Internal Examiners)     | A representative sample of work (normally all provisional grades below threshold standard and spread of achievement comprising at least 20% of scripts) is reviewed by a moderator who has access to grading/marking schemes and/or model answers. If the assessor and moderator |
do not agree regarding the grades/marks to be assigned, they shall each make a report to the Chair of the relevant Panel of Examiners who will determine the appropriate course of action and report this to the next meeting of the Panel for confirmation or the agreement of further action required.

23. All work graded or marked by temporary staff, teaching assistants or demonstrators must be either internally moderated by an appropriate member of the teaching staff of the University, or second-assessed (under the procedure for ‘blind-double assessment’ above.

24. All Level 3 projects and Masters Level dissertations must be blind-double assessed in accordance with the relevant protocol approved by Quality Assurance Committee.

25. The College Education Manager shall ensure that the grades/marks awarded to students are correct and are accurately recorded and reported to the Panel or Board of Examiners.

Feedback to students

26. Provisional grades may be released to students once the process for internal moderation or blind-double assessment has been concluded. Students should be advised that such provisional grades are subject to moderation and ratification by Panels of Examiners and as such may change before they are confirmed. Feedback should be provided to all students on any assessed work. Feedback on assessed coursework should be returned to students, within a reasonable period, normally as defined in the programme handbook. Oral feedback should be provided to students on formal written examinations on request.

Mitigating Circumstances, Mitigating Circumstances Panels and the late submission of assessed work

27. A student who fails to submit any required assessment by a defined date, or fails to be present at any test or examination indicated in the published schedule, shall be deemed by the examiners to have failed the assessment(s), unless he / she submits a case for mitigating circumstances which is accepted.

28. A ‘mitigating circumstance’ is a serious or significant event, and its consequences, which have significantly impaired the academic performance of a student in one or more assessed activities possibly over more than one term. Mitigating circumstances may include medical matters or events directly affecting someone other than the student. Actions taken in response to mitigating circumstances by Boards of Examiners should ensure that students are as little disadvantaged as possible as a result of the impairment which occurred, while also preserving the integrity of standards and awards.

29. Submissions from students concerning mitigating circumstances are reviewed by Examiners in a Mitigating Circumstances Panel, which is chaired by the authorised member of staff or his or her nominee and shall normally include the Chair(s) of relevant Board(s) of Examiners.
30. A Mitigating Circumstances Panel shall determine whether a submission made by a student concerning mitigating circumstances should be accepted. Where mitigating circumstances are accepted, the Mitigating Circumstances Panel will make recommendations in a report to the relevant Board/s of Examiners (with the student’s name anonymized) concerning the assessments affected and the severity of the impact on the student.

31. A Mitigating Circumstances Panel may exercise discretion to a considerable extent in determining whether submissions concerning mitigating circumstances should be accepted. In reaching a decision they should take into account the following:

- circumstances which could reasonably have been foreseen by the student will not normally be accepted as mitigating circumstances, i.e., failure to read the examination timetable accurately or ‘pressure of work’ are not normally acceptable as mitigating circumstances;
- both the timing and the duration of the mitigating circumstances presented, and the impact of the circumstances on the student’s ability to undertake that assessment should be consistent with the student having been significantly impaired by the circumstances in the relevant assessment/s;
- the extent to which the impairment claimed by the student has already been appropriately addressed by an adjustment to the method of assessment provided for the student under these Regulations.

32. The adjustment of deadlines for the submission of assessed work affected by mitigating circumstances shall be determined in accordance with the Policy on Late Submission Penalties approved by the Quality Assurance Committee and Senate.

33. All information of a personal nature relating to a student and disclosed to members of a Board or Panel of Examiners, or to a Mitigating Circumstances Panel is confidential to the Board or Panel. Copies of the student’s submission concerning their mitigating circumstances should be held securely on a Department file. Staff may append a covering note to any mitigating circumstances submitted by the student. This also should be placed on the Department file. Following the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, copies of all mitigating circumstances documentation should be lodged separately in the file for the individual student concerned and marked ‘confidential’.

Responsibilities of students relating to mitigating circumstances

34. Responsibility for notifying the Board or Panel of Examiners of possible mitigating circumstances lies with the student, who should make their submission in written form to the authorised member of staff as prescribed in the relevant student handbook. Such evidence must be submitted to the authorised member of staff, normally not later than 7 days after the assessment event or assessment submission deadline to which it pertains.
35. Students should not wait until grades or marks have been issued to them before submitting a case for mitigating circumstances as neither the Appeals Committee nor the Board of Examiners is bound to take into account mitigating circumstances submitted more than 7 days after the assessed activity to which they refer.

36. Submissions by students concerning their mitigating circumstances should, wherever possible, be supported by documentary evidence which can be verified by the University through contact with a third party. This evidence might include a medical certificate or letter from a counsellor or other professionally-qualified person.

37. The University may routinely determine to confirm the authenticity of documents submitted as evidence of mitigating circumstances by contacting directly the organisation which issued the document concerned. The student should indicate in their submission any conditions of confidentiality which they ask to be observed by the University in making such enquiries.

38. Students whose mitigating circumstances are private and sensitive, are encouraged to discuss them in the first instance either with their Tutor, the Department Senior Tutor or Head of Department, who may advise on the nature of the note to be addressed to the Board. Information disclosed will be treated in confidence by each member of the Board and/or Panel.

39. Students should be advised that reluctance to disclose information in a timely manner, or the inability of the University to verify the authenticity of documents submitted as evidence of mitigating circumstances may mean that the Board has insufficient information either to accept mitigating circumstances or judge correctly their severity.

Procedures of Boards of Examiners relating to Mitigating Circumstances

40. Full consideration shall be given to reports on accepted mitigating circumstances referred by a Mitigating Circumstances Panel at the meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners. Where a student's performance was affected in a range of subjects, the Board of Examiners for the award is also responsible for ensuring that due account has been taken of the student's situation overall in determining any decision on progression or recommendation for an award.

41. Where a Board of Examiners is aware of accepted mitigating circumstances, it should take them into consideration. The anonymised report of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel relating to each accepted instance of mitigating circumstances shall be available to the Board. Full details of all student submissions concerning mitigating circumstances shall be available to the Chair and the External Examiners (in attendance) at the meeting of the Board.

42. The existence of mitigating circumstances for a student must be clearly shown on the grade/mark sheet presented to the Board (for example by the letters MC). Instances of mitigating circumstances at all previous Levels of study leading to the award must also be indicated to the Board of Examiners when making recommendations for award.
43. The Board of Examiners may determine to take any of the following actions in respect of accepted mitigating circumstances:

a) The Board may set aside any provisional grade / mark already assigned, and allow the student a new attempt in the relevant assessment/s according to an appropriate schedule to be determined by the Board. The student will be eligible for an uncapped grade or mark if the assessment affected was a first attempt;

b) The Board may assign grades to elements of assessment where mitigating circumstances have been accepted. The grades assigned are to be used in the calculation of grade point averages (in the case of undergraduate awards) and in grade profiles in the normal manner. Grades will not normally be assigned in this manner unless there are result/s available in at least one other element of assessment in the same assessment block to guide the Board. Grades will not normally be assigned by Boards in this manner in assessment blocks totalling more than one third of the credits at any given Level;

c) Where a student is discontinuing with a programme and neither a new attempt nor the assigning of a grade is appropriate or possible, the Board may assign a grade P in element/s of assessment in order to enable a student to achieve an aegrotat award of a CertHE, DipHE, PGCert or PGDip, or an unclassified degree award. Proceeding in this manner should reflect the judgement of the examiners that, on the basis of the evidence available to them, the student would have achieved at least a threshold standard in the relevant elements of assessment had these not been affected by mitigating circumstances. Credit assigned a P grade will normally not be recognised by the University as part of an application for admission with accreditation of prior learning. Aegrotat awards shall be clearly presented as such and will not be assigned a classification where this is normally available.

44. In extreme cases, where a Board considers that, in the light of the mitigating circumstances, the constraints set out in the previous Regulation are not appropriate the Board should present its recommendations to the Chair of Quality Assurance Committee for consideration and approval on behalf of Senate.

45. Grades assigned due to mitigation or credits assigned to enable an aegrotat pass shall be indicated as such in student transcripts.

For students studying under SR2 (pre-2009) and SR3 (pre-2006) only (4.46)

46. The Board of Examiners may

a) defer consideration of the student’s performance and require him/her to be assessed or reassessed; the student will be eligible for full marks if the assessment attempt is deemed a 'first attempt' or 'late-sit';
b) deem the student to have been absent/have failed to submit/have performed badly with good cause; the student will be awarded full credits for the module and a grade P will be assigned;

c) on the basis of the marks available to it (eg where the student has submitted coursework, but not sat the examination) assign marks and a grade to the module; provided the mark/grade awarded is of pass standard, the student will be awarded full credits;

d) for students who would otherwise be eligible to graduate recommend the award of an aegrotat pass; provided the mark/grade awarded is of pass standard, the student will be awarded full credits.

47. Panels and Boards of Examiners may NOT adjust marks for individual assessed activities in the light of mitigating circumstances submitted. In the light of mitigating circumstances, Boards of Examiners may exercise discretion (i) in their decisions in respect of condonation, substitution or progression and/or (ii) in their recommendations for an award and/or its classification for an individual student.

Meetings of Panels and Boards of Examiners

48. Each meeting of a Panel or Board of Examiners shall have a formal agenda which should normally be circulated in advance, together with the minutes of the previous meeting. The relevant Senate Regulations and any regulations approved by Senate for individual programmes, shall be available at the meeting.

49. The Chair of the Panel or Board of Examiners, shall be responsible for ensuring that the Panel or Board has available to it full and clear documentation to allow the meeting to conduct its business effectively. Grade/mark sheets should identify individual students by student number only; the names of students shall not be included on the paperwork for either Panels or Boards. The Chair and the Vice-Chancellor’s Representative may have grade/mark sheets that contain student names.

50. All papers giving grades/marks or recommendations or other information about a student’s performance shall remain confidential, unless the Chair authorises otherwise, and shall be returned at the end of the meeting. The Vice-Chancellor’s Representative shall retain a set of all relevant papers.

51. A record of the decisions and/or recommendations of a Panel or Board of Examiners shall be made by the Chair or his/her nominee.

52. A meeting of a Panel or Board shall be adjourned if it is established that the members present at the meeting collectively do not have sufficient expertise to enable the Panel or Board to discharge all of its duties, as set out in these Regulations. All such adjournments shall be reported to the Head of Registry (or equivalent officer) by the Chair of the Panel or Board.

53. Where none of the External Examiners appointed for a subject or programme is able to attend a scheduled meeting of a Panel or Board, the Chair may, subject to the agreement of the External Examiner(s) concerned and, in the case of a Board, the Vice-Chancellor’s Representative, allow the meeting to
proceed, provided that full moderation of the assessments by the External Examiner(s) has taken place.

54. Where an External Examiner is unable to be present at a meeting of a Panel or Board he or she shall normally be required to submit written comments on the performance of candidates and the overall standard of the programmes or modules, prior to the relevant meeting, so that his or her views may be taken into account. The paperwork for the meeting shall be sent to the External Examiner for information after the meeting.

Panels of Examiners

55. The Dean of College shall be responsible for establishing appropriate Panel(s) of Examiners for each subject grouping or cognate group of modules or assessment blocks contributing to a programme leading to an award of the University. The relevant Panel is responsible for determining the grades/marks to be assigned to individual students who have attempted the assessment for each assessment block.

56. There shall be a Chair and Deputy Chair of each panel appointed by the Dean of College from among the academic staff. The members of each Panel shall be nominated by its Chair, but shall include at least one External Examiner appointed by Senate, appropriate staff responsible for the teaching and assessment of the relevant part of the programme, and such other members of the academic staff as the Chair deems appropriate.

57. The Panel of Examiners shall be responsible to Senate for:

a) notifying all relevant Boards of the date by which recommended grades/marks will be available;

b) considering the academic performance of students on each module/assessment block within its purview;

c) confirming the integrity and fairness of the assessment process, including the marking/grading and moderation, for the assessment blocks within its purview, taking into account records and reports of the assessment process;

d) submitting to the appropriate Board(s) of Examiners confirmed grades/marks for each student in each module or assessment block, together with such other information, as the Board(s) may require by the due date.

For students studying under SR2 (2009 onwards), SR3 (2006-2012) and SR3 (2013 onwards) only (4.58)

58. The Chair of the Panel of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the Panel has available to it full and clear documentation on each assessment block under consideration, including the grades/marks agreed by the assessors for each students and relevant statistical information concerning group performance in the assessment block. The grade/mark sheets shall also indicate where a student was absent from an assessment or failed to complete assessed work. Cases of
suspected cheating or plagiarism should also be identified and decisions regarding
the grading of the affected assessments will be deferred subject to the outcome of
investigation under Senate Regulation 6.

For students studying under SR2 (pre-2009) and SR3 (pre-2006) only (4.59)

59. The Chair of the Panel of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that
the Panel has available to it full and clear documentation on each module under
consideration, including the agreed marks for each candidate and the mean and
standard deviation for the group taking the module. The mark sheets shall also
indicate where a student was absent from an assessment, failed to complete
assessed work, was repeating or substituting a module or modules and where
mitigating circumstances have been received. Cases of suspected academic
disciplinary offences should also be identified and decisions regarding the grading
of the affected assessments will be deferred subject to the outcome of
investigation under Senate Regulation 6.

60. A Panel of Examiners shall not confirm grades/marks for an assessment
block until it is satisfied with the integrity and fairness of the assessment(s) leading
to the grades/marks. Where the Panel of Examiners has insufficient confidence in
the integrity and fairness of the outcomes of an assessment, it shall take
appropriate action in order to achieve sufficient confidence. The Panel of
Examiners may require the reconsideration by assessors of the grades/marks for
the complete cohort of students taking an assessment. Only in exceptional
circumstances may the Panel directly adjust the grades/marks for a particular
assessment and must then must record the justification and rationale for the
adjustment. Grades/marks for an individual student may not be adjusted, unless
they have been wrongly recorded or additional information is presented.

For students studying under SR 2 (2009-onwards), SR 3 (2006-2012) and SR3
(2013 onwards) only (4.61)

61. The Chair of the appropriate Panel(s) of Examiners shall be responsible for
publishing the schedule for the release of grades/marks to each appropriate Board
of Examiners and for presenting all recommended grades/marks and other
paperwork, and an account of the proceedings of the Panel which shall indicate
how and whether special circumstances were taken into account by the Panel in
relation to particular students or particular assessments. The Chair is also
responsible for ensuring that an appropriate record of the proceedings is promptly
placed on file.

For students studying under SR 2 (pre-2009) and SR 3 (pre-2006) only (4.62)

62. The Chair shall also indicate to the Board whether the Panel would support
the condonation of a failure in a module.

Boards of Examiners

63. A Board of Examiners shall be constituted by the Dean of College for each
programme leading to an award of the University to consider the progress of
students, actions to be taken in respect of accepted mitigating circumstances,
undergraduate progression between Levels and recommendations for award.
Separate Boards may be established for consideration of the performance of
students on completion of each level of an undergraduate programme or for the completion of the taught components of taught postgraduate programmes.

64. The Chair of a Board of Examiners shall not normally be responsible for the delivery of the programme(s) under consideration. The Chair shall nominate the members of the Board. The members of a Board of Examiners shall include one or more External Examiners appointed by Senate, at least one internal examiner, such other members of the academic staff as the Chair deems appropriate, and the Vice-Chancellor’s Representative, normally a member of the administrative staff of the University. The Chair of each Panel of Examiners involved in the assessment process leading to the award(s) shall be de facto members of the Board.

65. At least one External Examiner shall normally be required to be present at meetings of Boards of Examiners where a final award of the University is under consideration and the business of such a Board of Examiners may not be transacted in the absence of the Vice-Chancellor’s representative.

66. The Board of Examiners shall be responsible to Senate for decisions to be taken about the academic performance and progression of students, including, where appropriate, recommendations to Senate for awards and their classification in accordance with relevant Regulations and approved programme specifications. Senate, or its Academic Appeals Committee or a Misconduct or Professional Suitability Panel may require a Board of Examiners to reconsider a decision or recommendation in respect of a student or students.

67. The Board of Examiners shall meet as required, but at least annually, to consider the progress of all students registered for its programmes and, as appropriate, their progression reassessment and award.

68. The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the Board has available to it full and clear documentation on each student under consideration, including the agreed grades/marks for each student in each module or assessment block relevant to progression or the determination of the award.

69. A Board of Examiners may, in the light of the report of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, take action under Regulation 4.43 or 4.46 above in respect of accepted mitigating circumstances.

70. A Board of Examiners may not adjust the grade/mark assigned to any student by a Panel of Examiners, except where assigning grades in the case of accepted mitigating circumstances under Regulation 4.43 or 4.46 above.

71. The Board of Examiners may defer making a progression decision or award recommendation if it has insufficient evidence about a student’s performance available to it.

72. The Vice-Chancellor’s Representative shall ensure that the proceedings of a Board of Examiners are carried out in accordance with Senate Regulations and the approved programme specification. The Vice-Chancellor’s Representative shall report to the Head of Registry (or equivalent officer) in any case where irregularities occurred in the Board’s procedures and which were not remedied at the time, or where the External Examiner was absent, or where one or more External Examiners expressed dissatisfaction with the proceedings or decisions or recommendations of the Board, as soon as possible after the meeting of the Board.
73. The recommendations to Senate for an award shall be recorded by the Vice-Chancellor's Representative and this list shall be the definitive record against which results are entered into the Student Record, and notified to students. A record of the meeting of a Board of Examiners shall be lodged with the Chair of the Board and the Department and must be presented to members at the next meeting.

74. Recommendations to Senate, or other decisions about the performance and progress of students, may normally only be made at a meeting of the Board, but the Board may empower the Chair, in consultation with the appropriate External Examiner(s), to take such action as he or she sees fit at a later date where decisions are deferred in accordance with these Regulations.

75. Where a student is eligible for an intermediate award, the decision to make such a recommendation to Senate may, if no meeting of the Board is scheduled within a reasonable time, be made by the Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners and reported to the next meeting of the full Board.

76. The proceedings of a Board of Examiners shall be confidential to members of the Board, the Senate and other members of staff permitted to attend the meeting concerned. The Academic Appeals Committee, appointed by Senate and the Misconduct and Professional Suitability Board appointed by Senate in accordance with Senate Regulation 6 may require that any material presented to the Board, or any notes or record of its proceedings, be made available to their members to assist in the academic appeals or the misconduct and professional suitability processes.

Publication of results

77. The authorised member of staff shall notify each student of his or her results for each module or assessment block considered at the Board and the decisions or recommendations of the Board, as soon as possible after the meeting of the Board.

78. Where the timing of the next meeting of a Panel would result in unreasonable delay in the notification of results to students, the Chair of the Panel shall be responsible for notifying individual students of their provisional grades for the relevant assessments.

For students studying under SR 2 (pre-2009) and SR 3 (pre-2006) only (4.79)

79. Students should be notified that a decision to condone any failure will be taken by the Board of Examiners in the light of overall performance.

External Examiners

Appointment

80. Senate shall appoint at least one External Examiner for any award-bearing programme or any credit-bearing programmes above Level 1 offered by the University under the Senate Regulations.

81. An External Examiner shall normally be appointed for a period of four years, but the appointment may be extended by Senate for one further year. An extension would be appropriate if, for example:
a) the programme is new;
b) the programme has alternate year intakes;
c) some overlap between incoming and outgoing External Examiners would be helpful.

82. The Head of Department shall be responsible for submitting to Senate nominations for the appointment of External Examiners in the subjects offered and for each programme leading to a named award nominated by Departments.

83. The number of External Examiners appointed to a programme or a subject shall be determined by the need to provide adequate quality and standards assurance across the range of subjects within a programme. A diverse subject or a programme with many and/or varied elements of assessment, which may be time-consuming to moderate, may warrant additional appointments.

84. A Chief External Examiner may be appointed in some circumstances. These might include for large programmes; for programmes where coherence is critical to the aims and outcomes specified; or where programme content is diverse. A Chief External Examiner is expected to have sufficient understanding of all main areas in an academically diverse programme to be able to comment on the overall standards and coherence of the programme.

Criteria for appointment

85. Each External Examiner shall normally be a senior member of the academic staff of another higher education institution, member of a professional body with appropriate standing, or member of another recognised authority in the appropriate discipline. External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the University's programmes benefit from wide-ranging external scrutiny.

86. All External Examiners should have recent, relevant, assessment experience and an understanding of academic standards in other institutions sufficient to enable them to assist with national comparisons of standards. If the nominee is an expert who, although highly versed in his/her own field, may be unaware of up-to-date university procedures and standards, an additional External Examiner may be required.

87. Nominees for appointment as External Examiners for undergraduate or taught postgraduate awards should:

a) have an appropriate level of academic expertise and experience sufficient to command the respect of colleagues;

b) have appropriate professional expertise and experience.

88. For work at a level below that of a first degree, an External Examiner should demonstrate recent appropriate academic and/or professional expertise and experience in the relevant discipline appropriate to the level of the programme.
89. Recommendations to Senate for the appointment of an External Examiner should contain such biographical information about the proposed Examiner as is necessary to demonstrate that these criteria have been met.

90. In considering nominations for appointment as External Examiners, Senate shall also have regard to the following criteria:

a) External Examiners may not be current students or members of staff of the University nor lecturers at the University for the subject(s) or programme(s) to which they are appointed. Former staff of the University may not be appointed as External Examiner for the University within a period of three years (five years for External Examiner appointments made on or after 1 August 2014) immediately following the cessation of their contract of employment with the University. Former students of the University may not be appointed as External Examiner for the University within a period of five years from completion of their studies at the University.

b) Examiners should not be over-extended by their external examining duties. The examiner should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two major external examinerships;

c) If the proposed examiner has no previous External Examiner experience at the appropriate level, the application should provide evidence of external examining experience at another level, extensive internal examining experience, or other relevant and recent experience likely to support the External Examiner role;

d) If the proposed External Examiner is retired, s/he should have recent relevant experience of examining at this level. Alternatively, the proposal should present evidence of relevant current expertise in the subject and a current understanding of quality and standards issues in higher education which is commensurate with the role;

e) An interval of at least three years must separate any two periods of appointment as an External Examiner to the University.

91. Normally Senate will not approve a nomination where it would result in:

a) there being more than one examiner from the same institution in the team of External Examiners. An exception may be made for a complex programme, involving a very large number of discrete subject areas;

b) reciprocal external examining between programmes or Departments in two institutions;

c) the replacement of an outgoing External Examiner by an individual from the same institution or an External Examiner from an institution which has been the source of Examiners for taught programmes in the Department in the recent past (normally five years).
Process for appointment

92. The proposed External Examiner should be consulted informally by the Head of Department before a nomination is submitted, or an extension to a period of service is proposed.

93. Formal recommendations for the appointment of External Examiners, or for the extension of a period of service, should be submitted by the Vice-Dean (Education) on the appropriate nomination form to the Quality and Standards Office not less than three weeks before the date of the meeting of Senate at which the recommendations are to be considered.

94. The endorsement of at least two members of Senate will be sought for the nomination. The members of Senate are required to advise Senate on the suitability or otherwise of a nominee, and to provide a supporting case for nominations which fall outside the normal criteria. Reasons for rejecting a nomination must also be given. The scrutiny process is 'blind' i.e. neither member of Senate is informed of the recommendation of the other before recommendations are made.

95. In cases of disagreement between the two members of Senate, the advice of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality Affairs) shall be sought before any recommendation is made to Senate.

96. Following Senate approval of a nomination, the Quality and Standards Office will write on behalf of Senate formally appointing the External Examiner, enclosing all relevant Senate Regulations. The nominee is asked to respond to confirm acceptance of the appointment.

97. Departments are required to provide newly appointed External Examiners with subject and programme-specific information, to include:

a) information about the Department e.g. staff roles and responsibilities, list of programmes, noting those that are accredited, students numbers etc.;

b) the student handbook;

c) the programme handbook;

d) programme specifications and module or assessment block outlines;

e) the most recent annual review for the programme and Department;

f) the name, details and responsibilities of the Chief Examiner, if appointed, and other external examiners appointed to the programme if applicable;

g) a set of examination papers and coursework titles for previous session;

h) generic assessment criteria and mark schemes;
i) policies and procedures for the quality assurance of assessed work (e.g. blind-double assessment) to include details of any arrangements on moderation reached with previous External Examiner;

j) schedule of examinations and other assessments, meetings and dates when work will be sent out for the first year.

k) A copy of the University regulations.

Resignation or dismissal

98. An External Examiner may resign at any time by writing to the Vice-Chancellor.

99. The Vice-Chancellor may terminate the appointment of an External Examiner at any time. Premature termination of the appointment may take place if the External Examiner fails to fulfil the contractual obligations and/or the responsibilities of the role of the External Examiner as defined by the University. A letter terminating the appointment will be sent by the Head of Registry (or equivalent officer), following consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and the appropriate Head of Department.

100. Resignations and dismissals will be reported to Senate at the next opportunity.

Emergency appointments

101. The Vice-Chancellor may take Chair's action wherever appropriate to appoint a replacement External Examiner in cases where the approved External Examiner is unable to act through, for example, illness or accident.

Roles and responsibilities

102. The roles, powers and responsibilities of an External Examiner and Chief External Examiner shall be as specified by Senate from time to time.

103. The role of the External Examiner is to assist with the quality assurance of programmes including the review of: (i) the standards of student performance in those programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine, and (ii) the comparability of standards with those of similar programmes or parts of programmes in other United Kingdom higher education institutions. External Examiners report on: (i) whether the standards set by the University are appropriate to its awards with reference to published material including national subject benchmarks, the national qualifications framework, institutional programme specifications and guidelines of relevant professional and statutory bodies (ii) the extent to which the University's processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.

104. External Examiners should normally have access to any available material they deem necessary to reach the judgments required by their position, except in special circumstances, for example, where issues of confidentiality are involved. External Examiners are requested to discuss the type of information or materials
they would need with the authorised member of staff in the Department at an early stage.

External moderation of examination papers and assessment tasks

105. A sample of assessed student work should be made available to External Examiners by the Department responsible for the relevant module(s) or assessment block(s) as soon as possible after the examination or submission date. The grades/marks of the individual assessors should be made available, together with a full set of provisional grades/marks for all students attempting the assessment, and profiles of grades/marks from all assessors. External Examiners are not required to study each piece of work in detail, but are required to satisfy themselves that the work is of the appropriate standard, comparable with that of other United Kingdom higher education institutions and that the marks assigned reflect the published marking criteria and intended learning outcomes.

106. Departments must make clear in advance to the External Examiner(s) whether, following consideration of the profile of grades/marks and relevant statistical information, adjustments are proposed to the grades/marks.

107. The size of the sample of for each module or assessment block sent to the External Examiner(s) should not be less than 10% of the students who have taken the module. Where the number of students attempting an assessment is 10 or fewer, all the scripts should be sent to the External Examiner for external moderation.

108. An External Examiner should be sent no more than 40 scripts for any one assessment, and not more than 320 sample pieces of assessed work in total in any year.

109. Samples of work sent to the External Examiner for a module should represent the full range of student achievement. External Examiners should be consulted by the authorised member of staff about the size and nature of samples and about access to any other work that they may wish to see.

110. At Masters level, unless the cohort size is 10 or fewer (in which case all dissertations should be sent to an External Examiner for verification of the marking standards), a minimum sample (normally not less than 20%) of dissertations representing the full range of student achievement should be sent to an External Examiner for verification of marking/grading standards.

111. Where only a sample of dissertations is made available to the External Examiner(s), all dissertations under consideration for an award should be available to the External Examiner(s) and the Board not later than the day of the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners. External Examiners are expected to attend Boards of Examiners meetings where the dissertations for award of a Masters degree are under consideration.

112. External Examiners should be consulted about their moderation of non-written assessments. They should be invited to attend any live assessment events, displays etc., or should be offered the opportunity to see video recordings. Proper briefings and explicit marking criteria/schemes will give the External Examiner more confidence in this area.
113. An External Examiner may be required to moderate the assessment of students’ performance during their assessed school experience, clinical or other professional work-placement, irrespective of the location.

114. All assessed material should be available to the External Examiners on the day of the meeting of the Panel/Board, or on request.

*The role of the Chief External Examiner*

115. The additional duties of a Chief External Examiner are:

a) to coordinate the comments of all the External Examiners appointed for a subject or a programme;

b) normally to represent the Panel of which he or she is a member at the meeting of any relevant Boards of Examiners;

c) to provide to the authorised member of staff an agreed statement and overview of the appropriate External Examiners’ views;

d) to assist in the briefing of new External Examiners.

116. It may be appropriate to assign to the Chief External Examiner some of the following tasks:

a) induction meeting/discussion with new External Examiners;

b) to be consulted about proposed changes to the curriculum or within the Department;

c) to be invited to visit the Department to talk to the staff and students outside the examination periods (research seminars etc. may provide a useful focus for such visits);

d) to participate in a number of placement visits and/or to attend some placement debriefing sessions;

e) to advise on any exceptional adjustment of the marks/grades.

*The role of External Examiners at Panels and Boards*

117. Each External Examiner shall be notified in advance of, and have the right to attend and vote at, any meetings of any Board or Panel of Examiners of which he or she is a member. In reaching its decisions and recommendations, the Board or Panel shall pay particular regard to the views of the External Examiner(s) in any discussion regarding grades/marks or awards. Final responsibility for any decisions or recommendations rests with the Panel or Board as a whole.

118. The responsibilities of an External Examiner at a meeting of a Panel of Examiners shall include:

a) to participate in the assessment processes for individual modules or assessment blocks leading to a named award of the University;
b) the moderation of assessments;
c) the quality assurance of the assessment process as it relates to individual modules or assessment blocks.

119. The responsibilities of an External Examiner at a meeting of a Board of Examiners shall include:

a) to participate in the consideration of decisions as to whether individual students should be permitted to progress with or without conditions in view of their overall performance;
b) to participate in the Board’s determination of the recommendations to Senate for named awards of the University and their classification;
c) to comment authoritatively on the academic standards expected in higher education for academic awards in their subject area;
d) to comment and give advice on the structure, content and assessments of programmes as they deem appropriate;
e) to comment on the overall conduct of the assessment process, the performance of candidates and matters relating to the programme as a whole.

120. External Examiners may not seek to raise or lower the grades/marks assigned to individual students. They should however, raise any concerns concerning the integrity or fairness of the assessment process and/or outcomes with, and make any recommendations to, the Panel or Board of Examiners as appropriate.

121. Each External Examiner present at a meeting of a Panel or Board of Examiners shall append his or her signature to the formal paperwork recommending to Senate the granting of an award of the University. The signature of the External Examiner is taken to indicate the External Examiner’s agreement that (i) the outcomes of assessment are appropriate, (ii) processes have been carried out according to the conventions of the institution. The approval of the relevant External Examiner must be sought by the Chair of the Board of Examiners where a change is proposed to any award recommendation previously endorsed by the External Examiner.

122. Where an External Examiner is unwilling to endorse the recommendations of a Panel or Board, he or she should make the reasons for concern clear to the Chair and write to the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor’s Representative shall also notify the Vice-Chancellor in such circumstances.

123. Departments are expected to provide External Examiners with opportunities for meetings with staff. External Examiners have the right to meet groups of students by request. Student attendance at such meetings is optional.

Reporting

124. External Examiners are required to submit a report annually to the Vice-Chancellor in respect of programmes or modules/assessment blocks for which
they have responsibility. The Quality and Standards Office will determine the format and process for submitting the reports.

125. A scale of fees for External Examiners' duties is issued periodically by the Senate. No payment of fees due shall be made until the annual report has been received by the Vice-Chancellor.

126. Departments are required formally to respond to External Examiners reports through the process for response determined by the Quality and Standards Office and in their annual monitoring reports.

127. An External Examiner may also write in confidence to the Vice-Chancellor at any time during his or her period of appointment about any matter relating to his or her duties.

(1 August 2014)