

External Examiners' Briefing Day

23 February 2017



Presenters

Professor Mariann Rand-Weaver, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Dr Amanda Harvey, Associate Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Health and Life Sciences

Ms Eleanor Wheal, Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Plus: Mr Justin Parsler, Associate Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Briefing outline

1. Welcome from Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement)
2. Overview of External Examiner role
3. Overview of Programme and Award Regulations
4. The role of the External Examiner:
 - ☐ Pre-assessment
 - ☐ During assessment
 - ☐ After assessment



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Welcome



Brunel academic structure

Three large Colleges, each led by a Dean, supported by Vice-Deans Education and Associate Deans Quality Assurance

- Business, Arts and Social Sciences (CBASS)
- Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences (CEDPS)
- Health and Life Sciences (CHLS)

Larger Departments have 'Divisions' for different subject areas – your appointment as an External Examiner will be at the subject level.



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Role overview



Appointment

- [Senate Regulation 4](#) governs the appointment of and role of External Examiners
- At least 1 External Examiner per award bearing Programme
- Appointment normally for 4 years (UG) and 4 years, 4 months (PGT) but may be extended by one further year
- External Examiners nominated by Heads of Department and appointed by Senate

Main functions

- External scrutiny of assessment tasks
- External moderation of summative assessments
- Attendance at Panels and Boards of Examiners which confirm grades and awards
- Other meetings with staff/students as agreed (e.g. project presentations)
- Annual Report on:
 - academic standards and comparability with other UK HEIs;
 - assessment processes;
 - student performance;
 - good practice and enhancement

Brunel's Regulations

All published at

www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/senate-regulations

- **SR2** – Undergraduate programmes/awards (FHEQ Levels 4, 5, 6 and integrated masters)
- **SR3** – Postgraduate Taught programmes/awards (FHEQ Level 7)
- **SR4** – Assessment, Mitigating Circumstances, Panels & Boards of Examiners



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Overview of Programme and Award Regulations



Programme and Award Regulations (SR2 and SR3)

Principles –

- Transparency of standards of awards
- Equity of treatment
- Facilitates “Integrated Programme Assessment”
(separation of Study Blocks and Assessment Blocks)

Grading and marking at point of assessment

- Departments choose whether they are using **marks or grades**
- University Grade Descriptors are the primary reference for academic standards
- Grade points are used to calculate the awards

Indicative Mark Band	Degree class equivalent	Grade	Grade Point
90 and above	1	A*	17
80-89	1	A+	16
73-79	1	A	15
70-72	1	A-	14
68-69	2.1	B+	13
63-67	2.1	B	12
60-62	2.1	B-	11
58-59	2.2	C+	10
53-57	2.2	C	9
50-52	2.2	C-	8
48-49	3	D+	7
43-47	3	D	6
40-42	3	D-	5
38-39	Fail	E+	4
33-37	Fail	E	3
30-32	Fail	E-	2
29 and below	Fail	F	1
Non-submission	Fail	NS	0

Progression and Award rules

- Minimum credit and grade profile requirements for progression and final awards
- “Core” assessments are defined in the Programme Specification (must be passed at threshold level)
- Classification determined by credit profile and Grade Point Average
- Outcomes for “Borderline” students are determined by an algorithm (no BoE discretion)
- No compensation/condonation mechanisms
- Standard reassessment rules across University

UG Final Awards – Honours Bachelors

(Senate Regulation 2)

Class	Maximum credit volume of Grade F	Maximum credit volume of assessment blocks containing core assessments below D-	Maximum (non-weighted) credit volume of non-core Grade Band E (E+, E, E-)			Minimum weighted GPA*
			Level 5	Level 6	Level 5 + 6	
1 st	0	0	0	0	0	14.0
2.1	0	0	20	0	20	11.0
2.2	0	0	40	20	40	8.0
3 rd	0	0	40	40	60	NA

Weighting =

L5 assessment 1/3, and L6 assessment 2/3

PGT Final Awards – Masters

(Senate Regulation 3)

Class	Maximum credit volume of Grades E+, E, E-, F	Maximum credit volume of assessment blocks containing core assessments below C-	Maximum (non-weighted) credit volume of non-core Grade Band D (D+, D, D-)	Minimum Taught Part Weighted GPA*	Minimum Dissertation Grade
Distinction	0	0	0	14.0	A-
Merit	0	0	0	11.0	B-
Pass	0	0	30	NA	C-

Entitlements to reassessment

Where student fails to achieve at threshold, the following reassessment is normally permitted:

- FHEQ 4 = 60 credits
- FHEQ 5, 6 and Integrated Masters = 40 credits
- FHEQ 7 (Masters) = 60 credits from taught element, plus dissertation (if student achieves E- or above at first attempt)
- Reassessments are normally capped at threshold (unless Mitigating Circumstances are accepted)



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The Role of the External Examiner

- 1. Pre-assessment:** Comment on examination papers and other assessment tasks in light of assessment criteria, marking schemes, and/or indicative answers
- 2. During assessment:** Attend live assessments, and observe students on placements if required
- 3. After assessment:**
 - Review samples of assessed work; attend and contribute to Panels/Boards of Examiners
 - Contribute to enhancement of the University's provision by identifying issues and opportunities
 - Submit completed report form

External moderation arrangements

Arrangements for moderation of student work will be made by the Department.

Samples of assessments will be:

- available electronically or sent by hard copy *and/or*
- available for scrutiny at Brunel

External Examiners have access to **all** assessed material

Panels and Boards of Examiners – overall role

Common purpose is to ensure:

- Fairness to all students and each student
- Rigour of assessment
- Robustness of the results and decisions
- Maintenance of academic standards

Panels of Examiners – purpose

Panels of Examiners are where collective academic judgement is employed and EEs have a vital role to play

- Key role: to verify and confirm the marks/grades for each module/block
- Do not look at individual students (unless error or additional information is presented)
- May make specific recommendations to Boards concerning particular assessments

See Senate Regulations 4.52 to 4.56

Issues for Panels of Examiners

- Potential assessment design errors
- Appropriateness of marking
- Internal moderation effectiveness
- Extraordinary factors/events
- Re-marking/adjustment of results (see next slide)
- Justification of actions

... and ensure recording of decisions at all stages!

If a Panel identifies a problem

If the Panel is not satisfied with the fairness or integrity of assessments/marking, it should not confirm grades/marks

- Appropriate action to take is normally for the assessors to reconsider grade/marks for an entire module
- Only in very exceptional circumstances may the Panel scale grades/marks for a particular assessment; if so it must record the justification
- Grades/marks may not be adjusted for individual students (unless wrongly recorded, or additional information is presented)

[SR4.55]

Boards of Examiners (BoE) – purpose

- To receive confirmed marks/grades from Panels of Examiners
- To consider individual student profile of achievement
- To take into account mitigating circumstances and determine appropriate actions
- To decide on progression and re-assessment
- To recommend appropriate awards

External Examiners

- assure that due process has been followed and appropriate consideration and decisions have been made
- are invited to provide verbal feedback to the Board

Vice-Chancellor's Representative (VCR)

- Award Boards must have a VCR present in order to make awards
- VCR is an experienced member of University professional staff with a good understanding of the Regulations
- VCR has authority to stop the Board should any irregularities come to light, and reports back to the VC on any issues
- VCR (and Deputy VCR, where present) take formal record of BoE decisions – which must be signed by the EE – for release to students

Issues for Boards

- Decisions on mitigating circumstances and exercise of discretion
- Progression and re-assessment
- Awards
- Extraordinary decisions – discretion
- Justification of decisions

... and recording of decisions at all stages!



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The Role of the External Examiner: Reporting

Report submission

- All External Examiners submit a report by the 31st of July each academic year
- Request for reports and reminders sent out by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office
- Pro-forma/web form provided for the report
- You will be sent a formal response detailing how the University is following up if you raise any concerns
- External Examiners may also write in confidence to the Vice-Chancellor at any time during their period of appointment about any matter relating to their duties

Response and publication

- Colleges are required to respond to the comments made in the External Examiners Report both directly to the External Examiner and in their annual monitoring reports
- University will provide a central response to broader issues, particularly regarding regulations
- External Examiner reports and University responses published to current students and staff. Web page also available to External Examiners.
- Fees paid once EE reports are received

Your questions?



Further support resources

Guidance and resources about all aspects of these processes are available at

www.brunel.ac.uk/about/quality-assurance/external-examiners

and

www.brunel.ac.uk/about/quality-assurance/assessment

The formal Regulations are published at

www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/senate-regulations

Thank you

Please fill out one of the feedback sheets about today's event

