

# ASSESSMENT POLICIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE AWARDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

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This document summarises current University policies relating to assessment. It is updated at least annually. New policies, procedures or guidance for current academic year are shown highlighted in yellow. Any minor change to wording, which does not alter the substance of the existing text, is not highlighted.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. References in this document to "the University" as a physical location should be taken to mean either the Colchester, Southend or the Loughton (East 15) campus as applicable.
2. Policies covered in this document also apply to schemes delivered by the University's partner institutions
3. References in this document to "programme" or "course" are to be taken to mean "an award of the University with a credit rating of 60 or more".
4. References to departments and schools will be shortened to 'departments' throughout the document.
5. References to specific officeholders at the University of Essex have except where otherwise stated appropriate equivalents at partner institutions.

## KEY

ASC	Academic Standards Committee. (now defunct)
AB	Academic Board (now defunct)
AQSC	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
EC	Education Committee
GSB	Graduate School Board (now defunct)
UGSB	Undergraduate School Board (now defunct)
RPS	Result Processing System
QAEC	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (now defunct)

## 1. PREPARATION OF EXAMINATION PAPERS

### a) Guidelines for the setting of exam papers

Senate has approved guidelines for the setting of exam papers. Information can be found at:

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies/examination\\_and\\_assessment/setting\\_and\\_moderation\\_exam\\_papers.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/examination_and_assessment/setting_and_moderation_exam_papers.asp)

(S April 08)

### b) Replication of Coursework material

(S.MM.45-48/96 - 20 March 1996; S.M.144/00 - 21 June 2000 & ASC.MM.68-74/00 - 22 March 2000; ASC.M.334/01 - 5 December 2001, ASC 265/05 -26 Nov 05, ASC.MM. 121/06 – 31 May 2006)

- i. As a matter of general University policy, responsibility for ensuring that opportunities for students to replicate coursework in unseen examinations are - as far as possible - eliminated, lies with teaching staff and External Examiners when they review draft examination papers. This is one of the reasons for requiring departments to supply their External Examiners with coursework questions used on the scheme or course for which they are responsible. In examination paper rubrics no mention should be made of the need to avoid replication of coursework. ASC reaffirmed this policy in Nov 05 but agreed that guidance on the use, in examinations, of material used elsewhere in coursework or other examination papers, should be included in the Examinations Guide sent to all students. Module External Examiners are asked to review draft examination papers in the light of coursework assignments in order to comment on the effectiveness of the departmental

mechanism. The Module External Examiner should report any apparent cases of overlap to the department.

- ii. Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that in some contexts and disciplines it may be desirable for students to be allowed to replicate coursework material. It is for departments, in consultation with their External Examiners, to determine what constitutes acceptable replication of coursework.
- iii. Except where explicitly permitted as a consequence of extenuating circumstances, students repeating a year (or part of a year) should not be permitted to recycle work from previous attempts at a module. (*Senate – June 04*)

## 2. METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

### (a) General

- i. Departments are permitted to introduce a wide range of assessment methods with the approval of the relevant Faculty Board, or the Dean acting on its behalf. In the case of modes of assessment not previously used in the University, the Academic Board will also be involved in the initial approval process. The University wishes to encourage its departments to broaden the range of assessment methods used. (Group assessment, self assessment, portfolio assessment and online assessment are examples of modes of assessments which might be implemented more widely.)
- ii. In respect of each of their modules, departments are required to inform students in writing of the percentage of the overall marks for the module (coursework plus examination mark) which each form of assessment represents. Normally this will be done through the written introductory information for the module concerned.
- iii. Except in the case of formal examinations and written coursework of a traditional type, departments are required to inform students in writing of the purpose of each form of assessment used. Normally this will be done through the introductory information for the module concerned.
- iv. Departments are expected to provide students with formative practice in each mode of assessment.
- v. Consideration must be given to the needs of students whose disabilities or medical conditions need to be taken into account in implementing any particular method of assessment.
- vi. Marks should be awarded on the basis of academic achievement, not merely attendance or lack thereof. It is acceptable on academic grounds to allocate marks for the manner and quality of participation in class. Marks for participation may contribute no more than 5 percent of the overall mark for a module and the marks should relate to a module learning outcome. (*ASC 26 May 04 - ASC m. 12/04*) and *Senate in 08/09*.
- vii. In February 2005 the Graduate School Board discussed whether there should be a policy on the use of multiple-choice testing at the PG level. Given the fact that there was no evidence to suggest departments were routinely employing this method of testing inappropriately the Board decided not to formulate a policy.

**(b) Take-home Exams**

Where a department has approval to use take-home exams as one of the assessment methods for a module, these assessments will count as coursework not an exam.

**(c) Invigilated examinations and tests organised by departments**

*(Revised policy approved by Senate 20 March 2002, following a recommendation by ASC 23 January 2002: ASC.MM.17-22/02)*

This policy applies to any written assessment organised by a department in the form of a closed, time-constrained examination or test, the marks from which contribute (or may contribute) to the decision on the end-of-year progression or degree result of the students taking the test, whether through the coursework or the examination mark.

Where departments wish the marks from assessments not organised by the University Examinations Office to contribute to the mark designated as "examination mark" on a grid received by a Board of Examiners (or comparable body in a partner institution), they must not only apply this policy, but also obtain the permission of the relevant Dean, and ensure that the designation as "examination" is clearly indicated in the assessment arrangements as described in the relevant Student Handbook and (for modules delivered within the University) the Module Directory entry.

The requirements approved by Senate for the organisation of examinations and tests by departments are as follows:

- i. Attendance during any test/examination should be accurately recorded. (Mere retrospective inspection of the scripts is not sufficient.)
- ii. Scripts should be collected from candidates before giving them permission to leave the examination room.
- iii. A sufficient level of invigilation should be arranged, involving: invigilators with adequate experience and/or training (who may or may not be involved in teaching the course under assessment); the presence of at least one invigilator in the examination room throughout the examination; the presence of more than one invigilator for examinations with large numbers of students or students in close proximity.
- iv. Written rubrics should be provided for all examinations.
- v. Students should be informed through the relevant departmental Student Handbook (or equivalent document issued before the start of the academic year) of the consequences of absence from any examination or test covered by this policy, and the fact that normal University regulations apply to such examinations and tests in the same way as to those organised centrally.
- vi. The needs of students with disabilities who have been assessed as requiring individual examination arrangements by the Student Support must be provided for in consultation with the Student Support as appropriate.

#### **(d) Correction and Translation of Assessed Work before Submission**

In submitting any piece of work (e.g. dissertation, thesis, essay or report) a student shall acknowledge any assistance received or any use of work of others. (Regulation 6.22) "Assistance received" is interpreted in this context as including assistance given to non-native users in the correct use of English (ASC.MM.55/96), as well as assistance regarding content.

Although formally speaking the onus is on the student to declare that help has been received, it would be sensible for members of the University who give assistance with English, or who recommend the use of linguistic correction services, to draw to students' attention to their obligations under this regulation.

The same applies to specific help obtained by dyslexic students. Student Support has details about the Confirmation of Dyslexia Sheets which are issued to students as appropriate.

#### **(e) The Introduction of New Rules of Assessment**

Where rules of assessment have been amended, candidates who had been admitted under the previous rules should be assessed under the most recent set of rules except where this would disadvantage them. This resolution should only be invoked where it is unambiguous that it would be advantageous for all candidates to be assessed under the most recent rules. (ASC 26 Oct 05 & 23 Nov 05)

### **3. SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS**

#### **(a) Approval of individual examination arrangements**

*(S.M.181/97 – 10 December 1997 & ASC.MM.183-87/97 - 22 October 1987; see also the University Examination regulations)*

- i. Individual examination arrangements will be made for good cause, provided that the student concerned has requested such arrangements by the published deadline in the Spring Term, and that the arrangements have been approved by the relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor. At partner institutions this responsibility will be delegated to an appropriate senior office holder.
- ii. If, notwithstanding this provision, an individual student believes that they have been disadvantaged because of disability or illness, then the student should submit a completed extenuating circumstances form so that the Board of Examiners can take account of the extenuating circumstances when the examination results are assessed.

#### **(b) Taking examinations abroad**

*(S.MM.147-151/98 – 17 June 1998 & S.MM.228-229/98 – 16 December 1998)*

- i. All candidates are required to sit examinations at the University of Essex or the relevant partner institution except when

There are exceptional circumstances (supported by appropriate documentary evidence) such as incapacity to travel for medical reasons, or the death of a close family member. (This applies to resit examinations only.)

OR

a student is required for academic reasons to be in residence outside the UK at the time of the examination, and arrangements can be made by the relevant department for the examinations to be simultaneous with those in the

UK and subject to appropriate invigilation. (This will normally occur when the University of Essex requires residence outside the UK during the resit period, or when a student visiting the University on an ERASMUS or other international exchange programme is required to return to their home institution before the normal Essex examination period.)

OR

where the student is given permission to sit a resit exam in one of the specified countries – see (c) below for details of current arrangements.

- ii. Requests to take resits outside the UK will be refused if received less than ten days before the first day of the resit period (and 28 days prior to the commencement of the Examinations in the summer exam period).
- iii. Students refused permission to take resits outside the UK are permitted to claim extenuating circumstances if unable to return to the UK.
- iv. Requests will only be approved if the University can secure a suitable alternative venue which is approved by the Examinations Office, and if the exam can be scheduled concurrently with the same examination being held at the specified venue. Requests based solely on financial grounds will not be granted. (Senate December 2002)
- v. A distant venue fee is payable where a request is approved, in addition to the standard resit fees payable by all students resitting exams at the specified venue. The distant venue fee may be waived by the relevant Dean in exceptional circumstances, and the student is liable for any costs incurred at the distant venue, such as invigilation and postage.

**(c) Taking Resit Exams Abroad (September period)**

All candidates are required to sit examinations at the University of Essex or institutions approved by the University of Essex. Students who have resit/voluntary resit examinations in September can be permitted to take these resit examinations away from the University at an approved overseas institution. This is a special dispensation and there is no right of the student to resit overseas. Candidates taking holidays abroad are NOT eligible to sit their examinations abroad. The University is unable to offer overseas resits during the summer exam period due to scheduling difficulties. Students are therefore expected to return to the University if they have exams during this period. There is a list of students' countries of residence as specified on the Exams Office webpage.

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/results/forms/resits\\_form.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/results/forms/resits_form.aspx)

**(d) Students arriving late for examinations**

- i. No candidate will be admitted to the examination room later than 55 minutes after the start of any examination of more than one hour's duration. No candidate will be permitted to leave the examination room permanently during the first 55 minutes or during the last 30 minutes of an examination of more than one hour's duration. For examinations with a duration of up to one hour candidates will be admitted to the examination room up to 10 minutes after the start of the examination and will be permitted to leave the examination room permanently only with the permission of the invigilator.
- ii. Students arriving late for examinations are not allowed to sit them under informal invigilation in their department. (*revised Senate April 08*)

**(e) Deferring Assessment**

- i. **Deferring main assessments - It may be possible in exceptional**



circumstances for students to defer their assessment. The Progress Team is the team responsible for dealing with requests from departments during the year.

ii. **Deferring reassessments for students on Year Abroad or Placement Year** - If a student needs to defer their re-assessment because they are on a Year Abroad or a Placement Year, they should contact Essex Abroad or their Faculty Placement Team in the first instance. The relevant team will then liaise with the Assessment Team.

iii. **Deferring main assessments for students with Sports Scholarships** - where a student athlete is in receipt of a University Sports Scholarship, it may be possible for them to apply to defer assessment if it clashes with selection for an international competition. In the first instance the student should contact the Sports Performance Team who will then liaise with the student's department and the Progress Team which is responsible for the Academic Flexibility Policy for Taught Students (Sport). *(approved by Senate in January 2015)*

#### 4. MARKING POLICIES

##### (a) Criteria for degree classification for Undergraduate Awards

*(S.MM.119-121/95 - 21 June 1995)*

- i. Deans are currently responsible for ensuring that, within their areas of responsibility, criteria for degree classification are broadly comparable.
- ii. Departments and partner institutions are required to publish the criteria for each degree class in Student Handbooks, and to ensure that teaching staff and External Examiners have copies of these criteria.

##### (b) Late Submission of Coursework

i. There is a single policy across the University for the late submission of coursework for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. All coursework submitted after the deadline will receive a mark of zero. The mark of zero shall stand unless the student submits satisfactory evidence of extenuating circumstances that indicate that the student was unable to submit the work prior to the deadline. Some partner institutions may have individual policies approved by the Deputy Dean (Partnerships).

ii. No extensions will be granted. A student submitting coursework late will have the Late Submission of Coursework Policy drawn to their attention.

iii. For work submitted after the point at which a mark of zero is awarded, marking is at the discretion of the department *unless* there are extenuating circumstances, which have been accepted by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee, and a model answer has *not* been circulated. Coursework may otherwise be marked for formative purposes.

Details are published at

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/late-submission.aspx>

*(S.MM.265-266/10 July 2010; Senate April 2018)*

Dissertations are not counted as coursework and are therefore not covered by the Policy on the Late Submission of Coursework. Students can request an extension to submit their dissertation if they find that, due to extenuating circumstances, they will be unable to submit the dissertation by the published deadline. *(Senate July 2012)*

### **(c) Moderation, Second and Blind Marking of Coursework and Examinations**

See below link for full details of the Marking Policy.

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies/examination\\_and\\_assessment/marketing\\_policy/default.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/examination_and_assessment/marketing_policy/default.asp)

### **(d) Examination marking by GTAs**

For guidance on employing GTAs to mark see the section on Graduate Teaching Assistants on page [http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies/default.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/default.asp)

The application form for seeking the approval for GTAs to mark can be found at

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/Documents/university\\_policies/gta\\_exam\\_marking\\_permission\\_form.doc](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/Documents/university_policies/gta_exam_marking_permission_form.doc)

For guidance on moderating marking undertaken by GTAs see

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies/examination\\_and\\_assessment/marketing\\_policy/default.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/examination_and_assessment/marketing_policy/default.asp)

### **(e) Marking of Illegible Scripts**

All scripts should be marked to the best of the marker's ability to decipher poor handwriting but special arrangements to transcribe illegible scripts should be discontinued. The need to write legibly and the consequences of failing to do so should be highlighted to students in relevant examination information. (ASC.MM.148-149/03)

### **(f) Marks Scaling**

*(S.MM.141-43/00 - 21 June 2000, ASC.MM.121/06 31 May 2006)*

Throughout this marks scaling policy, the Deputy Dean means the Deputy Dean (Education) of the relevant Faculty or the Deputy Dean (Partnerships) for partner institutions.

- i. Scaling is understood as the adjustment of the marks of all candidates for a unit of assessment using a single algorithm, based on a retrospective judgement concerning the difficulty or presence of errors or other inaccuracies in the task set by the Examiners. Scaling should be an exceptional event.
- ii. When scaling is recommended the Module External Examiner must be given the opportunity to have access to all the student work involved (whether coursework or examination scripts); a run of apparently aberrant marks should never form the basis for a decision to scale without the reconsideration of candidates' work. Departments should provide concise supporting evidence, e.g. scatterplots of raw marks in the relevant module against students' raw marks in their other modules or clear evidence of an error with the paper. The approval of the Module External Examiner (for level 5 or above or where required by a PSRB) is required. If the Module External Examiner is supportive of a scaling, the proposed scaling should be put, with the supporting evidence, to the Deputy Dean for approval or otherwise. (If the Deputy Dean is unavailable in cases of urgency, the Assessment Team shall refer the matter to an alternate Chair). The decision of the Deputy Dean/alternate shall be final and reported to the Pre-Board. The Deputy Dean/alternate shall liaise with the Chair of the relevant Exam Board if they are not the Chair of that exam board.
- iii. It is particularly important to make clear to students the provisional nature of any marks released to them during the year. *(ASC.MM.51-54/98)*
- iv. Decisions on scaled marks must be taken in advance of all relevant meetings of Pre-Boards *(NB – including joint boards and boards where students may have taken the course as an option)*. *(Senate 12 Dec 01)*

- v. Where a mark has been subject to a penalty of reduction to the pass mark or zero (whether imposed for late submission or for unfair academic practice), application of the penalty should be applied by the Exam Board after any scaling has been done.
- vi. Scaling must be applied to the unit of assessment, not just to the overall module aggregate mark.

**(g) Other policies related to Marking**

- i. Heads of Department should ensure that teachers are regularly reminded to use the full range of marks available for the course. *(ASC.M.13/94 - 21 November 1994; subsequently clarified for consistency with (ii) below.)*
- ii. Departments routinely using a maximum number of marks below 100 for coursework assignments of a kind marked correct or incorrect - in order to make marks comparable to those generated from discursive assignments - are required to indicate this practice in the module documentation for the course(s) involved. Departments using scaling according to algorithms decided year-by-year or paper-by-paper required to indicate in module documentation the possibility that examination papers might be subject to scaling. *(ASC 13 March 2002 (modification of ASC.MM.73/01 - 5 March 01).)*
- iii. Heads of Department should offer systematic and formal encouragement to UG students achieving first-class or near first-class marks at the end of the first and second year (and third year of a four-year scheme). *(ASC.M.14/94 - 21 November 1994)*
- iv. Students must be informed that all marks are provisional until the meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners. (This is particularly important in departments which may adjust marks by means of scaling.)

**(h) Marking Turnaround Time**

The expectation for the return of assessed work should be 20 working days, less wherever possible. The 20 working days does not include Bank Holidays and any of the University's Christmas closure periods (which is usually considered to be six days). Other vacation periods are included in the 20 working days as well as term-time (i.e. coursework handed in at the end of term should be returned at the start of the following term, not 20 working days into it). Working days are Monday to Friday. *(Senate July 2017, m. 217/17)*

**(i) X9 Module Aggregate Marks**

This policy was rescinded by Senate in April 2019. It is no longer in effect and checks will not be carried out for 2018-19.

**5. ISSUES RELATING TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

*Detailed procedures relating to the role of the External Examiner in reviewing assessed work (both coursework and examination scripts), (updated and approved by ASC 121/06 31 May 2006) can be found on the web at*

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external\\_examiners/default.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external_examiners/default.asp)

**a) Availability of Student work for External Examiners**

*It is very important that these procedures are closely followed. The additional procedures set out below relate to arrangements for ensuring that all appropriate material is available to External Examiners and in the event of an appeal. (ASC.MM.24-25/97 - 26 February 1997; ASC.M.234/96 - 27 November 1996; S.M.144/94 - 7 December 1994)*

*It is recognised that, where coursework is not in written form, these arrangements may not be appropriate. In such a case the relevant Dean should be consulted on the appropriate policy.*

- i. All assessed coursework (which is to be interpreted as part of an examination for purposes of Ordinance 44 ASC.M.191/06 31 May 2006) must be available for consultation by External Examiners as necessary when they attend at the University for meetings of Boards of Examiners. (An exception to this rule may be made in departments which operate with very high volumes of small assessed coursework assignments, but only with the explicit written agreement of the current External Examiner(s) and the relevant Dean.)
- ii. To ensure that coursework (which will have been returned to students during the academic year) is available to External Examiners, departments and partner institutions are required to follow one of the following two models (and to publish in their Student Handbooks the arrangements made):  
EITHER students submit two copies of work for assessment initially, one to be retained for the External Examiner  
OR responsibility for the resubmission of coursework for this purpose by a clearly specified date rests entirely with the student.
- iii. Students should be required to keep all assessed coursework until six months after conferment of their degree.
- iv. As Boards of Examiners for final-year UG students cannot revise marks from previous years, final-year students should not be required to resubmit second year coursework to departments. However they should be reminded that they are required to retain copies of all their coursework until six months after they have graduated in case this may be required because of an appeal.

#### **b) External Examiners' Involvement in Level 4 work**

External Examiners need not be routinely engaged in level 4, unless required to be professional body expectations. Instead, Externals should be offered the opportunity to request to view level 4 assessment instruments and sample work if they have concerns. Routinely, however, departments are not required to send examination papers to Externals. (*UGSB June 08*)

Senate also confirmed that first year Boards of Examiners have the power to confirm exit awards without an External Examiner being present.

#### **c) Attendance by External Examiners at Exam Boards**

##### **i. General Policy**

Details can be found on the Academic Standards and Quality Office website – see the section entitled 'Examination Board Attendance'  
[http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external\\_examiners/roles\\_and\\_responsibilities.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external_examiners/roles_and_responsibilities.asp)

##### **ii. Absences from meetings**

Where an External is going to be absent from an Exam Board, the department must seek approval in advance using the following pro-forma.  
[https://www1.essex.ac.uk/quality/Reports\\_and\\_proformas/default.asp](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/quality/Reports_and_proformas/default.asp)

Where a Board of Examiners at which a particular External Examiner is not present proposes to make a decision which rejects the advice of that External Examiner, this should be communicated to the External Examiner and their consent obtained in writing before a final decision is taken by the Board and communicated to students. In cases where the External Examiner does not agree to the Board's proposal, and where the Board wishes its decision to stand, the Dean of the Faculty should be informed. The Dean shall then chair a reconvened

meeting of the Board at which the External Examiner shall be present.

iii. Attendance at Postgraduate Taught Boards

Externals are not required to attend both the Interim and the Final Board of Examiners' meetings. However, departments will still need to seek Dean's approval where the External is going to be absent from one of these meetings.

In cases where the External has been given approval to be absent from an Interim Board meeting, Senate has confirmed that Interim Examination Boards for taught postgraduate/graduate programmes should have the authority to confirm a student's eligibility for the award of a certificate or diploma as an exit award, where there is no External Examiner present, provided the External Examiner has reviewed the usual sample of work in advance. (*Sen April 08*).

**d) External Examiners Involvement in Reassessment Boards**

External Examiners do not need to attend Reassessment Boards for 2<sup>nd</sup> or Final year students. However, practice may need to vary due to professional body requirements. (*re: final years - Sen July 10*)

**6. TIMING, COMPOSITION AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

**(a) Timing of Boards of Examiners' meetings**

Wherever possible Boards of Examiners for joint degree courses should be scheduled after the meetings of the relevant single-subject Boards. Where this is not possible, it is the responsibility of the scheme Management Committee to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are in place for the reporting of approved marks to the relevant Board of Examiners. (*S.MM.141-143/00 - 21 June 2000*)

**(b) The Chairing of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Boards of Examiners**

- i. **Undergraduate Boards of Examiners** are chaired by the relevant Dean. If the Chair of a Board of Examiners is not available they may nominate another suitably experienced senior academic to serve as Chair if another Dean is not available. Secretaries of undergraduate Boards of Examiners for University of Essex awards shall be members of the administrative staff of the University of Essex, or for partners, a member of the staff of the partner institution.
- ii. **Postgraduate Taught Boards of Examiners** chaired by a Dean. . If the Chair of a Board of Examiners is not available, they may nominate another suitably experienced senior academic to serve as Chair if another Dean is not available. For partner institutions, Boards will be chaired by the Dean or Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships or another nominated Dean of the University.

(*S.MM.122-24/95 - 21 June 1995 & S.M.147-48/00 - 21 June 2000. Updated Senate April 2013*)

Chairs of Boards of Examiners and pre-boards must be briefed before taking on this role. (*USG agreed this policy for 10/11 onwards*)

**(c) Composition of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Boards of Examiners**

Faculty Deans are responsible for approving the composition of UG and PGT Boards of Examiners. (*S.MM.118-121/02*).

- i. The quorum for a Board of Examiners is four members. External Examiners are included in the quorum in the case of undergraduate courses, but

excluded in the case of taught postgraduate ones. The Chair is always included.

- ii. Taught Postgraduate Boards would normally be expected to include the Director of the scheme and other key teachers.
- iii. Boards of Examiners for joint degree schemes shared equally by two departments should have equal representation from the departments sharing the scheme. In approving the composition of Boards for interdisciplinary courses, or courses with an unequal split between two subjects, Deans should ensure that there is appropriate representation of all the disciplines involved, but without the need for an exact proportional relationship between the academic balance of the course and the membership of the Board. (*Senate.MM.51-52/00 - 29 March 2000*). Only the External Examiner of the administering department is required to be present at the joint degree examination board. (*ASC 26 May 04 -ASC M. 13/04*).
- iv. Where University departments or partner institutions choose to propose to the relevant Dean fewer than four members of teaching staff other than the Chair for membership of a Board of Examiners, they are at the same time required to nominate a reserve who is committed to being available on the day in question in case the meeting should become inquorate through the unavoidable absence of a Board member. For joint courses, a reserve from each department is required, and for multidisciplinary courses the number of reserves required shall be at the discretion of the Dean.

### **Absences from Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate Boards of Examiners**

**[See section 5c(ii) above in relation to External Examiners who are absent from Boards of Examiners' meetings]**

- v. If a member of a Board of Examiners is unable to attend a meeting of the Board, the Dean should be asked either to approve the absence or to approve a change to the membership. If the absence would render the meeting inquorate, an alternate member must be approved. (*Senate April 08*)
- vi. It should be noted that the unapproved absence of a member of a Board of Examiners is a serious matter which may constitute grounds for a student appeal on the basis of procedural irregularity.

## **7 OPERATION OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS' MEETINGS**

### **(a) Guidelines for UG and PGT Pre-Board Meetings**

#### **The Purpose of the Pre-Board**

All departments are required to hold Pre- Board meetings in advance of the Board of Examiners' meeting. The pre-board is responsible for considering the following:

- i. The accuracy and completeness of the marks and results shown on the exam board grids, ensuring itself that all the pre-board checks have been completed;
- ii. Overseeing interaction with other departments where there is joint provision;
- iii. Extenuating circumstances claims and making recommendations to the exam board;
- iv. Identification and investigation of modules where there has been a problem with the delivery or assessment requiring a possible scaling of marks, in accordance with the policy on scaling [see 4f above];

- v. Preparing recommendations on reassessment in accordance with the department's approved reassessment strategy
- vi. Student performance on modules and courses, identifying any issues that require further consideration;
- vii. Recommendations for the award of prizes

The Pre- Board is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Examiners, to enable the Board to make effective decisions as efficiently as possible, but the recommendation from a Pre-Board meeting does not bind members of the Board.

### **Membership of the Pre-Board**

- i. The membership of the Pre-Board meeting is not prescribed, however, as a minimum it should comprise at least three of the departmental members of the exam board. The chair of the Pre-Board is appointed by the Head of Department and has the responsibility for reporting recommendations to the Board of Examiners. Suitable appointees could include the Head of Department, Centre Director, Education Director, Graduate or Undergraduate Director or Examinations Co-ordinator. Chairs of Pre-Boards must attend briefing on their role in accordance with University requirements.
- ii. External Examiners are not required to attend Pre-Board meetings.
- iii. Members of the professional services staff of the department shall attend the Pre-Board to advise and to record recommendations.

### **Operation of the Pre-Board**

Departments may hold separate sub-board meetings to consider extenuating circumstances claims if they wish. At least one member of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee must also be a member of the Pre-Board.

Ideally there should be two working days between the timing of the Pre-Board and the Board of Examiners' meeting to allow for investigation and correction of any errors, or the scaling of marks.

Where errors are spotted on the grids, the Department must investigate the matter and identify the correct mark or result. A report on the errors must normally be notified to the Chair of the Exam Board in advance of the meeting.

(guidelines revised by QAEC May 2010 – approved Senate 2010)

Host departments of joint courses must ensure that there is interaction with each department involved to discuss recommendations concerning extenuating circumstances for joint candidates.

#### **(b) Voting**

Ordinance 45 states that:

Decisions as to the classification of a degree and the conferment or not of a Bachelor's degree shall normally require the consent of the appropriate Award External Examiner. If the External Examiner cannot consent, the decision requires the consent of a two-thirds majority of the examination board, including the Chair. The exception to this is when the board is suspended under [Regulation 6.28](#).

### **(c) Revision of Marks by a Final Board of Examiners**

*(See also the procedures for dealing with extenuating circumstances at Examination Boards below).*

- i. A Board of Examiners may not leave examination or coursework marks for review or alteration by another Board.
- ii. Except in appeal cases, a Board of Examiners may not review or alter examination or coursework marks already confirmed by another Board.  
*(S.M.196/93 - 8 December 1993; wording subsequently clarified)*

### **(d) Viva Voce (Oral) Examinations**

Please note that in January 2009 Senate agreed that Regulation 6.11 be removed with immediate effect. Regulation 6.11 formerly stated that, "Candidates for any part of final examinations for the degree of Bachelor may, at the discretion of the examiners, be required to present themselves for oral examination."

### **(e) Examination Board grids and recording amendments to marks**

- i. Examination Board grids are required to be anonymised *(S.MM.159-63/00 - 21 June 2000)*.
- ii. Chairs of Boards of Examiners should normally not be given marks grids identifying candidates by name *(ASC.M.27/02 - 23 January 2002)*
- iii. Examination Board grids can identify where a penalty for an academic offence has been given. (from 10-11 onwards)
- iv. All errors must be notified to the secretary and chair of the Board of Examiners *in advance* of the main meeting.

The signature(s) of the External Examiner(s) present at a Board of Examiners' meeting are required on an Exam Board coversheet alongside that of the Chair, to indicate that procedures have been correctly followed..

## **8 HANDLING EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES CLAIMS**

### **(a) Extenuating Circumstances Policy**

See below link for full details of the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ext-circ.aspx>

### **(b) Aegrotat Degrees**

Aegrotat degrees are only available to undergraduate students. Below is a summary of Regulation 6.27 – please see the full text in the University Calendar.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/affairs.aspx>

- i. Where illness or other sufficient cause affects an **undergraduate candidate** after the sixth week of the spring term and before the end of the final examination period [or the January exam period in the case of compulsory final year exams], the Board of Examiners may confer on them an aegrotat degree. Such a candidate may re-sit the examinations in the following year.
- ii. The Aegrotat regulation should be interpreted by Boards of Examiners in such a way that a candidate affected by extenuating circumstances over their entire period of study is not awarded an aegrotat, degree but considered for a



classified degree. (ASC.M.350/01 - 5 December 2001)

### **(c) Assessment Deferrals**

Where students have exceptional circumstances affecting examinations or other assessed work amounting to a significant percentage of a student's assessment, the department may make a case to the Deputy Dean Education for the assessment to be deferred. See the Guidelines on Assessment Deferrals in Appendix B.

## **9 REASSESSMENT AND RETRIEVING FAILURE OF THE OVERALL AWARD**

### **(a) Reassessment Strategy**

The requirements for reassessment are as follows:

- i Reassessment should by default take the same form as the original mode of assessment.
- ii Where this is not possible, the school/department must seek approval from the Deputy Dean (Education) to offer a different form of reassessment setting out the reason why like-for-like reassessment is not possible. This should be done as part of the Annual Update process.
- iii Where approval has been given to offer a different form of reassessment, the school/department should normally operate a consistent approach across the modules for which approval has been given.
- iv Notwithstanding iii, there should be consistency across the University in how certain modes of assessment are reassessed. Schools/departments should consult the Assessment Team for a list of approved modes of reassessment before requesting approval to offer a different form of reassessment.
- v In respect of each of their modules, departments are required to publish information on reassessment. Normally, this will be done through the module directory and through the introductory module information.

*Approved by Senate, April 2018*

### **(b) Voluntary Reassessment**

Students may not undertake voluntary reassessment to improve their marks.

The Board of Examiners may offer a voluntary reassessment in view of a candidate's extenuating circumstances, or where the Board decides it is necessary in order to permit a student to transfer course.

The Board will also offer one voluntary reassessment opportunity in failed credits to final stage students who have met the criteria to graduate with an honours degree but who have failed modules in the final stage.

### **(c) Maximum Period for UG Students**

In 08/09 Senate introduced a new maximum period within which students must complete their studies. For foundation and honours degrees this is normally the length of the original award plus two additional years.

However, the principle that students can have no more than three opportunities to undertake the assessment for a module is being retained.

#### **(d) Undergraduate students who fail their degrees**

The Undergraduate Rules of Assessment set out the criteria for the eligibility for an honours degree, and the range of reassessment opportunities which the Board can offer. Resit exams will take place in September.

##### **1 Criteria for Reassessment**

- a) Boards of Examiners will offer reassessment to final year students who have not met the minimum criteria for the award on which they are studying.
- b) Boards of Examiners will also offer one further voluntary reassessment attempt to students who meet the criteria to graduate but who have failed credits in the final stage. The student must not already have exhausted their three attempts at the assessment for the module(s). The student will still be permitted to attend Graduation. The attempt must be taken across the summer and cannot be delayed or retaken the following year.
- c) Boards of Examiners will offer compulsory reassessment in a sufficient number of modules to enable students to meet the minimum criteria for the award and a voluntary reassessment attempt at the remainder. For example, if a student has failed 60 credits' worth of non-core modules in the final year s/he will be offered reassessment in 30 credits and voluntary reassessment in the other 30.
- d) Where students must take reassessment in 30 out of 60 failed credits, the Board of Examiners should offer students the choice of module in which they are to be reassessed.
- e) Boards of Examiners will continue to check whether students have met the criteria for an exit award, and offer this as an alternative to reassessment.
- f) Students on the final stage of a Foundation Degree should be offered reassessment in more than the minimum credits required to obtain an award (nb - students can only fail 15 credits), since a number of students continue with their studies to achieve an honours degree, and it is therefore preferable to give them the chance to retrieve fails in all their level 5 modules, as is the case with students in Stage Two of an honours programme.

##### **2 The Method of Reassessment**

- a) The main Board of Examiners (at which the External Examiners are present) will decide on the form of reassessment based on what elements the student has failed, and the reassessment strategy for the modules concerned.
- b) Students must confirm, by the published deadline, whether they are taking up the offer of reassessment and in which module(s).
- c) Departments will not be required to set resit exam papers for final year modules at the time they set the main exam paper. (Please note, where resit exams are being sat at the start of September, the Department will need to provide the Exams Office with an exam paper by the normal resit paper deadline set by the Office. Departmental Managers should confirm the arrangements for submitting papers for their department with the Exams Office in advance).
- d) Where students are being asked to submit coursework, they should be set the work within two weeks of the results being published.

#### **(e) Second Attempts at PGT Assessment and Re-submission of Masters Dissertations**

Details of the reassessment attempts and the rules relating to the resubmission of dissertations can be found in the published Taught Masters' Rules of Assessment

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/pgt/assess-rules.aspx>

## 10. PREPARATION OF FORMAL PASS LISTS FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Pass lists must be generated automatically from the Results Processing System (RPS) or from equivalent systems at partner institutions. Departments must not produce their own pass lists manually, or make manual amendments to the pass lists.

- a. Pass lists are produced by the relevant department from RPS. An original must be sent to The Assessment Team; no results should be revealed until this has been done. Pass lists must be signed by someone within authority in the department to show that it is a correct record of the decisions taken by the Board. It is **not** necessary for the External Examiner or the Chair to sign the official Pass list, but they **must** sign the Exam Board coversheet. This is the official evidence that the process has been conducted properly.
- b. The pass lists must be sent as soon as possible to the Assessment Team for processing (normally within 48 hours of the board). The Assessment Team will ensure that the database is correctly updated and produce award letters for students. Departments will send letters to students who must undertake reassessment using the template letters designed by the Assessment Team.

## 11. REPORT TO THE DEAN BY THE CHAIR OF A TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE EXAM BOARD

The Chair of the Taught Postgraduate Board of Examiners shall communicate formally to the Dean of the Faculty:

- a. that the Board of Examiners has met, including the date and time of the meeting;
- b. the names of those present, noting any special arrangement concerning External Examiners;
- c. details of any extenuating circumstances reported to the Board and the decisions made in each case;
- d. confirmation that the correct procedures have been followed;
- e. in exceptional circumstances where the Board of Examiners agrees to exercise its discretion, the reasons for doing so must be documented as part of the Examination Board report. The report should set out the reasons for exercising discretion and the reasons for the decision taken, and a copy of the report should be sent to the Graduate School (*GSB.MM.121-123/06 – June 2006*).
- f. any matters arising from the Board of Examiners which the Chair, the Board of Examiners, or any individual member of the Board of Examiners, wishes to be drawn to the attention of the Dean. The Chair shall indicate if there are no such matters. In the event that matters of concern are communicated in this way, the Dean shall discuss them as appropriate and, where necessary, bring the matter to the attention of the Board of the Faculty. This provision does not replace the role of the External Examiner's Report, which will be considered in the normal way.

## 12. RESULTS

It is University policy **not** to give results over the telephone.

### (a) Publication of Results for Undergraduates

Students registered for the University's own courses must look up their results on the Web on a site that is password protected. We must not publish pass lists on noticeboards.

### (b) Publication of Results for Taught Postgraduates

1. We must not publish pass lists on noticeboards.
2. The Assessment Team will send award letters to students as soon possible after the Board of Examiners has met and staff have processed the formal pass lists which have been sent by the department.

3. The results will be available on the web and students will access their results on a password protected site. The Assessment Team will inform the department when the results have gone live and the department will notify the students.
4. In the case of students who are in debt to the University, departments should not provide any formal documentation/information to the student.
5. Departments will send letters relating to the reassessment to students once the results have gone live.

**(c) Prediction and disclosure of marks and access by candidates to their examination scripts**

- i) Supervisors of student projects and others who read them in a role that is not that of examiner, should ensure that in their comments to the student they make no prediction of mark or class.
- ii) Publication of marks and access to examination scripts:
  1. Students will automatically receive the following information about their final marks for each module after the marks have been confirmed by the Board of Examiners:
    - the final aggregate mark for the module;
    - the aggregate coursework mark and the examination mark (where applicable) from which the final aggregate mark for the module has been calculated.

The statement of final results will not give details of the marks received for individual examination questions or individual pieces of coursework (where applicable).

2. A student who requests access to their examination script, or who wishes to know the marks received for individual questions, may apply to the department which is responsible for that module. The department should **either**
  - permit the student to see their examination script in the presence of a relevant member of the academic staff (normally one of the staff responsible for teaching the module);
  - or**
  - supply the student with a copy (or a summary) of the examiners' comments on the student's performance in the examination, including marks for individual questions.

*[Note: The second of these options will normally be appropriate when markers have not written their comments on the examination script itself.]*

Requests of this type should normally be received within four weeks of the publication of the examination marks.

3. When the assessment for a module comprises, or includes, a piece of work other than an examination which is not returned to the student until after the mark has been confirmed by the Board of Examiners (for example a project or dissertation), the department should ensure that feedback on the work is available to students who require it after their marks have been made available.
4. Where an undergraduate student has not passed a module(s) and is undertaking reassessment over the summer they should have access to feedback on the elements being reassessed. Where they are resitting an exam, they should be provided with written feedback on the exam, or other piece of work for which feedback has not already been provided, within two weeks of the publication of the results by the Board of Examiners. Feedback may take the form of feedback on candidates' overall performance in the exam/piece of assessed work and/or individual feedback on the candidate's exam

script/assessed work. The feedback should be sent to the student by the department. It should follow the principles set out in the University's policy on Assessment Feedback. . Any variation to this approach must be agreed in advance by the PVC Education.

### 13. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING ERRORS AFTER THE EXAM BOARD HAS MET

If errors or cases of potential inconsistency are discovered after the Exam Board meeting, the Assessment Team should be notified in the first instance. Departments must **not** make changes to the database. The relevant Academic Officer will follow the set procedure, which has been agreed by Senate, to rectify the situation. (*S.M.103/07 – 6 June 2007*)

### 14. APPEALS

There are different appeals procedures depending on whether the student is appealing against the final results or the decision of a Board of Examiners in respect of an Undergraduate student's progress. (Copies of the procedures are available on the Web, in the University Regulations) Students wishing to appeal must do so in accordance with the relevant publicised appeals procedure within the time period specified. Students cannot appeal against academic judgement. Examinations will not be remarked, except in cases of procedural irregularities. If errors are discovered in the recording of marks, then the official records will be amended and the student issued with an amended statement of results/transcript.

### 15. ARCHIVING OF DOCUMENTATION

#### For Undergraduate Courses

1. The Academic Section keeps a permanent archive of Undergraduate grids, pass lists and records of the decisions taken at Board of Examiners' meetings.
2. Coursework and examination mark sheets (whether centrally produced sheets or the records used in departments) must be kept in departments for a period of two years and can then be destroyed.
3. Examination scripts must be retained for 18 months.
4. Departments can put into place their own procedures for dealing with coursework which students have submitted for consideration by the External Examiner but then have not collected afterwards. However all coursework must be kept for a minimum of six months after conferment of the student's degree.

#### For Taught Postgraduate Courses

1. The Academic Section keeps a permanent archive of PGT pass lists.
2. The department must keep a permanent archive of the decisions of Boards of Examiners (which should include the final marks grids signed by the External Examiner, extenuating circumstances forms submitted by students and any notes). Coursework and examination mark sheets must be kept in departments for a period of 2 years and can then be destroyed.
3. Examination scripts must be retained for 18 months.
4. Dissertations must be retained for five years.
5. Departments can put into place their own procedures for dealing with coursework which students have submitted for consideration by the External Examiner but then have not collected afterwards. However all coursework must be kept for a minimum of six months after conferment of the student's degree

Updated by: Emma Anderson, The Assessment Team  
May 2019

Z:\Assessment Team\SharePoint site RPS and Exam Board documentation\5. Assessment policies and procedures\Updated ready for Summer 2019\Assessment Policies Summary v3.1.docx

## Equality Act – Guidance for Exam Boards

### Discrimination: Definitions and examples

The Equality Act 2010 protects students from discrimination based on ‘protected characteristics’.

These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Discrimination occurs when a student is treated less favourably than another student because of a protected characteristic.

Type of Discrimination	Definition and examples relating to extenuating circumstances and exams
<p>Direct Discrimination</p> <p>NB: To claim pregnancy or maternity discrimination a female student must show she has been treated unfairly because of her pregnancy or maternity and does not have to compare her treatment with someone who is not pregnant or a new mother</p>	<p>Definition: Occurs when a student is treated less favourably than another student because of a protected characteristic (other than pregnancy and maternity – see note opposite)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pregnant student is absent from a compulsory mid-term test due to attending a hospital appointment and is not given another opportunity to take the test or an alternative assessment</li> <li>• A student who is known to have chronic fatigue syndrome misses coursework deadlines due to a period of ill health (confirmed by her doctor) and this is not considered by the Extenuating Circumstances committee</li> </ul>
<p>Discrimination by association</p>	<p>Definition: Occurs when a student is treated less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student, who misses an exam because their elderly</li> </ul>

	<p>mother, who they care for, is taken seriously ill is treated less favourably to a student who misses an exam because they themselves are taken ill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student is harassed by other students because their best friend is gay</li> </ul>
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<p>Discrimination by perception</p>	<p>Definition: Occurs when a student is treated less favourably because it is mistakenly thought that they have a protected characteristic</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member of staff refuses to supervise a student because they think they are transsexual (it is irrelevant whether they are or are not)</li> <li>• A student is 'sent to Coventry' in classes by fellow students because they think s/he is of a certain religion</li> </ul>
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<p>Indirect discrimination</p> <p>NB: Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that it was 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'</p>	<p>Definition: Occurs when a decision is made that applies to all students or a particular group of students e.g. all students taking a particular exam, and has the effect of putting students sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exam timetable is set such that students taking a particular combination of modules have to take four exams in two days. This could particularly disadvantage students with certain disabilities</li> <li>• The date and time of a particular exam is changed at the last minute. This could particularly disadvantage students with caring responsibilities or those of a certain religion or with certain disabilities</li> </ul>
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## Assessment Deferrals

### Guidelines

Deferred assessments are a concession intended to allow students, who are unable to attend examinations and/or produce coursework at the date first set, to take them at a later date. Deferrals can be agreed in **exceptional** cases only, where it is considered that a student is physically unable to attend their examination(s) or submit coursework and is in need of reassurance in advance of the Board of Examiners.

Scope: This process encompasses exceptional circumstances affecting examinations, coursework amounting to a significant percentage of a student's assessment (to be decided by the department and approved by the DDEs), and undergraduate projects/dissertations. For post-graduate extensions students should contact their department (up to four weeks) or use ESF (over a month).

**Acceptable** reasons should fall into one or more of these categories:

- **Severe:** The event or circumstance will have a serious impact on the student's performance.
- **Unexpected:** The student did not know that a particular event or circumstance would occur during the assessment period.
- **Unpreventable:** The student cannot take reasonable steps to prevent the event or circumstances from occurring during the assessment period.
- **Relevant:** The event or circumstance is due to occur during the period leading up to the deadline(s), examination(s) and/or during the examinations.

Some examples of possible grounds include (but are not limited to):

- Acute illness or injury before the assessment period which is very serious and debilitating;
- Long-term conditions such as a disability of a chronic/ongoing medical problem, where there is a serious, unpredictable and unpreventable increase in the severity of the condition in the period leading up to the assessment;
- Vital medical treatment/surgical appointment;
- Court attendance/Jury service;
- Participating in authorised national or international sporting competition or authorised sports training camps;
- Family events where the student has no control over the date and must attend;
- Death, serious/acute illness or injury of a close person before the examination period;
- International crises such as natural disasters, political conflict, civil unrest that affects the student, etc.

**Unacceptable** reasons should fall into one or more of these categories:

- a) Failure to notify the Student Support Office of religious commitments by the agreed deadline;
- b) House moves, family celebrations or other events where the student has control over the date or could choose not to participate;
- c) Going on holiday;
- d) Returning to their home country early (with the exception of international crises);
- e) Appointments (legal, medical etc.) which could be re-arranged;
- f) Consequences of paid employment;
- g) Requests to pace revision and examinations/deadlines over a longer period;
- h) Minor accidents, injuries or ailments or conditions which a student should normally be able to control e.g. a cold, hay fever or headaches;
- i) Extenuating circumstances that do not prevent a student from attending an examination or carrying out assessment;
- j) Visa /immigration issues (further advice should be sought from the Tier 4 Team).