Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment

Guidance for Year 1 and Year 2 Progression Boards

This Guidance Note is designed to assist Schools in the operation of Progression Boards of Examiners for Year 1 and Year 2 students in the UK and Dubai and Year 1 students in Malaysia.

Exams and Assessment-Related Decisions taken by Heriot-Watt University

In March 2020, the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) approved the following on behalf of the Senate, in relation to Year 1 and Year 2 examinations for Semester 2 (note this includes Year 1 in Malaysia, which is hereafter subsumed within the term “Year 1 and Year 2”):

All examinations for Year 1 and Year 2 students have been cancelled and all students will be given a “P” pass grade for Semester 2 courses. If professional bodies require students to undertake an exam for accreditation or exemption purposes, this will be arranged a later date.

Full information on the various discussions can be found in the relevant Student Guides at https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/examinations.htm

Operation of Progression Boards of Examiners for Years 1 and 2

1. “P” grades should be awarded for all Semester 2 level 7 and 8 courses: this applies to Y1 and 2 students, as well as students in Y3/4/5 taking level 7 and 8 courses. “P” grades should be awarded to students who were resitting or repeating level 7 and 8 courses in Semester 2, as well as to students taking level 7 and 8 courses for the first time.

2. All “P” grades for Semester 2 courses should be entered onto Banner with immediate effect [see Exam Board Guidelines for process].

3. Year 1 and Year 2 students should be assigned one of the standard progression/resit decisions based on student performance in Semester 1 [see Exam Board Guidelines for Decisions and Decision Codes].

4. Progression Boards should meet virtually to consider, recommend and approve Semester 1 results and progression/resit decisions [see Exam Board Guidelines for process]. Year 1 and 2 students who have pass alpha grades from Semester 1 can be automatically progressed (due to having “P” grades for Semester 2). It is recommended, for the purposes of efficiency, that Year 1 and Year 2 focus only on students with resits, MC or ABS results from Semester 1, with the Board endorsing rather considering the straightforward progressing students. As Boards will, therefore, be considering a much smaller number of Y1 and Y2 set of results, it is recommended that Y1 and Y2 Progression Boards be combined into a single whole, School Board or a small number of multi-disciplinary Boards.

5. Regulation 31, as enclosed, specifies the membership of Boards operating in exceptional circumstances; in addition, Boards should have a Clerk to ensure that a Minute of the meeting is produced.

6. Minutes should be completed for the Progression Board as per standard practice, and using the University’s standard Exam Board Minute template. All sets of Minutes must include the University statement on the operation of Boards of Examiners under Regulation 31 and on actions taken to
mitigate the impact of COVID19 [NOTE: this statement has already been incorporated into the template; Schools may wish to add further detail]. Minutes should be produced and submitted within five days of the meeting, as these will be key evidence that the University has followed due process in the exceptional circumstances created by COVID19, both for external scrutiny and in the event of student appeals.

7. Results should be returned in the form of the Assessment Results Report (ARR - GS060) to Registry Operations no later than the originally published date of **26 June 2020** [see Exam Board Guidelines for process]. It is recommended, however, that Schools should aim to return their ARR earlier and by 29 May 2020, wherever possible, given that all Semester 2 results are standard P grades; in this way, Schools can free up staff time for Y3, 4 and 5 exams and Exam Boards.

8. In response to feedback from Schools, Year 1 and Year 2 results will be released on the date originally published, ie **3 July 2020** and not at an earlier date, even if ARRs are submitted well in advance of 26 June 2020. In this way, Schools will not be trying to deal with Y1/2 student queries about the next academic year while marking, moderating, holding Boards and processing results for Years 3/4/5.
REGULATION 31 Authority of Heads of Schools and Examiners in Exceptional Circumstances

Notes

1. This Regulation is made in pursuance of clause (b) of Statute XXII and of paragraph 2 of Ordinance 5.

2. The purpose of this Regulation is to clarify the authority of the Head of School and other Examiners in exceptional circumstances. ‘Exceptional circumstances’ shall be defined as those in which the full range of examination marks, results or coursework evaluation, normally taken into account in assessment, is not available, excluding mitigating circumstances applying to individual Students.

3. The Regulation shall not apply where the full range of information normally taken into account is available.

4. When the circumstances of paragraph 2 apply, it is the responsibility of the Senate Business Committee, acting with the delegated authority of the Senate, to bring into effect the arrangements and conditions set out in this Regulation, to determine the duration for which they should be applied, and to impose any additional conditions.

5. This Regulation shall apply equally to the assessment of a candidate for a higher degree that is based in whole or in part on the submission of a thesis.

Definition

6. For the purpose of this Regulation “the Examiners” shall mean, “the Head of School or his or her nominee/alternative supported by the relevant External Examiner(s) carrying out their normal duties and at the discretion of the Head of School or his or her nominee, suitably qualified members of Staff or Approved Teachers”.

A nominee appointed to act in place of a Head of School shall be subject to approval by the Senate Business Committee.

For a Student who is not enrolled with a particular School, the Senate Business Committee will assign a Head of School.

Authority of Examiners

7. A Board of Examiners shall include the Examiners as defined in paragraph 6 and the Dean or his or her nominee/alternative.

8. The Examiners are authorised to make judgements and decisions on the basis of such information as is available to them at the time a judgement or decision is required to be made.

9. The Examiners shall have the authority:

   a) to make recommendations to the Senate for the award of degrees and other awards
   b) to make decisions about the progression of Students
   c) to award credit for individual courses
   d) to defer making a decision if it is agreed that there is insufficient information available to recommend an award or allow a Student to progress.

Appeals

10. A candidate who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Examiners shall be entitled to appeal to the Senior Dean under the terms of Regulation 36: Student Appeals.