Briefing for Examination Board Chairs and Deans’ Representatives
March 2020

Dr Amos Haniff, Dean of the University (Pan Dean)
Jill Bowie, Deans’ Administrator
Aim of briefing

• To provide guidance and training for new Chairs of Boards and Deans representatives
  • Regulations 3 (13.2) & 48 (13.3)
    – “...Irrespective of designation, all Chairs shall attend one of the ‘Examination Board Chairs’ training sessions”

• To provide guidance on revised regulations and policy for experienced Chairs of Boards and Deans representatives

• To provide guidance for administrators and clerks
Structure of the Briefing

1. Role of the Examination Board
2. Examination Boards
3. Role of the Chair of the Exam Board
4. Role of the External Examiner
   • 4a. Role of The Chief External Examiner
5. Role of the Dean and Deans Representatives
6. Regulation Matters
7. Examination and Assessment Guidelines
   • HAPS
8. Examples of Good Practice
9. Contact details
1. The role of the Examination Board

- Examinations Boards serve the mechanism through which a School makes decisions regarding progression and award of individual students.
  - Receive and confirm course assessment marks
  - Consider and make recommendations (on behalf of Senate) for progression from one stage to the next
  - Consider and make recommendation (on behalf of Senate) for award
  - Consider extenuating circumstances
- Any award or progression decision is a matter for the academic judgement of the Board of Examiners and must be
  - Evidence based
  - Transparent
  - Consistent
  - Recorded
1. Authority of Board of Examiners

Ordinances

Regulations

Policy, Procedure and Guidelines

Board of Examiners decisions

2a Assessment Board
2b Progression Board
2c Award Boards
2a The Assessment Board

• Confirms the results of course assessment
• May incorporate the programme review
• There should be no joint Assessment/Exam Board
  • Assessment boards should meet after the appropriate exam diet and be held before and separately from Progression and Award boards
  • No requirement for Dean / Dean’s representative
• Composition
  • The Head of School, or nominee, as Chair
  • The members of academic staff involved in the teaching and assessment of each course under consideration

Regulations 3 (12.2) & 48 (13.2)
2b Progression Board

- Makes the following recommendations with respect to each student
  - Considers progression at each stage
  - Re-assessment in one or more courses
  - Award at an intermediate level
- Quorum
  - Three members of the board or one third of its membership, whichever is larger.
2b Progression Board

- Composition
  - Chair (HOS, DoLT or nominee approved by UCQS)
  - At least one representative of the academic staff involved in the teaching and the setting and marking of examinations and assessment of each course
  - The School Examinations Officer
  - Dean, Associate-Dean or Dean’s representative (as an observer and who does not count towards the quorum).

Regulations 3 (12.3) & 48 (13.3)
2c Award Board

- With respect to each student makes recommendations for award
  - Senate

- Quorum
  - **Three** members of the board or one third of its membership, whichever is larger.

*Regulations 3 (12.4) & 48 (13.4)*
2c Award Board cont’d

• **Composition**
  • Chair (HOS, DoLT or nominee approved by UCQS)
  • At least one representative of the academic staff involved in the teaching and the setting and marking of examinations and assessment of each course
  • The School Examinations Officer
  • Dean, Associate-Dean or Dean’s representative (as an observer and who does not count towards the quorum).
  • External Examiner(s).
    • In absence of External Examiner, a Dean shall be present

Regulations 3 (12.4) & 48 (13.4)
## Decision Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAS Code</th>
<th>Decision (short form)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Proceed to next year of study/part of programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Proceed to next year of study with attend or re-attend courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1D</td>
<td>Proceed to next year of study with reassessment/resubmission in next Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1F</td>
<td>Proceed to next year of study – transfer to different programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Continue in the same year/part of programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Cannot Proceed – Repeat/Re-attend programme or courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2C</td>
<td>Continue in same year – Reassessment may be required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D</td>
<td>Continue in same year with reassessment/resubmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2E</td>
<td>Continue in same year – continued affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2H</td>
<td>Continue to dissertation in the next Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2X</td>
<td>Continue in same year – no progression decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3C</td>
<td>Cannot continue – reassessment/resubmission required before next Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D</td>
<td>Cannot continue – reassessment/resubmission required in next Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3F</td>
<td>Cannot continue on current programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Confirmation of results – no progression decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4C</td>
<td>Reassessment required for award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4D</td>
<td>Deferred decision – reassessment/resubmission required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G</td>
<td>Deferred decision – awaiting outcome of Discipline Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4H</td>
<td>Continue to dissertation/project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4X</td>
<td>Decision pending further consideration of additional assessment information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Role of the Chair of the Exam Board

- Designated by Head of School
  - Must attend training
  - Approved by UCQS
    - Regulations 3 (13.3.2a) & 48 (13.3.2a)
- Is a full member of the Exam Board
- Has both a deliberative and casting vote
- Has the authority to suspend the Board
- Moderates the meeting

Regulations 3 (13.3.2a) & 48 (13.3.2a)
3. Role of the Chair of the Exam Board cont’d

• Ensures
  • The Agenda is followed
  • University Regulations, Policies and Procedures are followed
  • All students are considered fairly
  • Decisions are transparent and consistent
  • Mitigating circumstances are considered
  • University values are maintained in the operations

Regulations 3 (13.3.2a) & 48 (13.3.2a)
4. Role of the External Examiner

- QAA Code of Practice
  - External Examiners should be trained
    - Handbook on External Examining For Taught Programmes (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)
    - Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment Guidance for External Examiners

- The main purposes and functions of the external examiner system are to:
  - Ensure that the academic standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this.
  - Ensure that the standards of awards in similar subjects are comparable across different universities in the United Kingdom, though their content does of course vary.
  - Ensure that the processes for assessment, examination and determination of awards are sound and fairly operated.
  - Report on the standards of student performance and on comparability with students across universities in the UK
4. Role of the External Examiner

cont’d

• Are full members of the Exam Board
  • But note they are NOT ‘super members’ (they do NOT have a casting vote)
  • Consequently External Examiners should not adjudicate on borderline cases (these are matters for the whole Board)

• External is entitled to comment on marks and recommend an alteration (as indeed is any other member of the Board)
  • This refers specifically to whole groups/sets of marks, not an individual student’s marks

• The Board should consider the External’s recommendation, but is not duty bound to accept any such alteration
  • The decision is for the Board. Schools would defend any such collective decision if the External commented negatively in the end of year External Examiner report
4a. Role of the Chief External Examiner

- Comment on different versions of a programme, including curriculum, structure, assessment processes, marking/classification, quality of provision
- Oversight of effectiveness of School's moderation procedure, with comments to the Board of Examiners
- Attendance at Boards
  - Attend Boards of Examiners meetings, as appropriate
  - Attendance at a Board of Examiners is mandatory in the first year of appointment; thereafter, Schools may permit the Chief External Examiner to conduct his/her role by correspondence
  - The Chief External Examiner should, however, attend a Board of Examiners where there has been a significant increase in the scale or scope of multi-location, multi-mode provision during the period of office (e.g. first time a programme is delivered at a new campus or an ALP)
5. Role of the Dean and Representatives

• Deans are required to attend all undergraduate and postgraduate taught Progression/Award Boards

• Role at Exam Boards
  • Observers not members of the Board
  • Monitor the operation of the Board
  • Have the authority to request that the Chair suspend the Board
5. Role of Deans’ and Representatives cont’d

• Submit Report
  • Deans and representatives should make a note of issues raised at Examination Boards in connection with assessment and examinations procedures
  • Submit to the Deans Administrator within 14 days of Exam Board

• HAPS 13a. Pro-forma
  • Deans may report on any Exam Board matter to UCQS or direct to the Deputy Principal of Learning and Teaching
  • Section on COVID-19 pandemic
6. Regulation Matters

- Regulation 31
  - Authority of Heads of Schools and Examiners in Exceptional Circumstances invoked by Senate

- Exceptional Circumstances
  - In which a full range of examination mark, result or coursework evaluation, normally taken into assessment is not available, excluding mitigating circumstances applying to individual students

- Exam Board are authorized to make judgement and decisions on the bases of information made available to the board

- Board of Examiners Quorum
  - Approved Chair, External Examiner Dean or Representative
7. Examination and Assessment Guidelines

- Comprehensive suite of documentation, including:
  - Recent Revisions to Policies and Procedures
- Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment:
  - Exceptions that apply to UG and PGT Assessment Procedures
  - Guidance for Year 1 and Year 2 Progression Boards

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/exam-guidelines.htm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Number</th>
<th>HAPS – Heriot-Watt Assessment and Progression System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>• Recent Revisions to Policies and Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>• Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: Exceptions that apply to UG and PGT Assessment Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>• Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: Guidance for Year 1 and Year 2 Progression Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Decisions and Decision Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Guidelines on the Discretionary Award of Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Heriot-Watt University Assessment and Progression System (HAPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Guidelines on Complying with SCQF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>• Policy for Undergraduate Degree – Classification of Borderline Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>• Policy for Postgraduate Taught Degree – Classification of Borderline Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>• Guide to Medical Certificates under the HAP System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>• Policy on Mitigating Circumstances in Relation to Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>• Policy on Withholding Awards due to Outstanding Debts: Implementation Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10a</td>
<td>• Appeals Against Examiners' Recommendations of Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10b</td>
<td>• Appeals Against Examiners' Recommendations of Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>• Managing Suspended Examination Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>• Briefing Session: Chairs of Examination Boards; Deans' Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13a</td>
<td>• Guidelines for Deans, Associate Deans and Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13b</td>
<td>• Deans’ Report Proforma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>• Examination Paper Format Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>• Temporary Suspension of Studies Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a</td>
<td>• Exam Board Minutes Template Yrs 1+2 (Internal only document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b</td>
<td>• Exam Board Minutes Template Yrs 3, 4, 5, PGT (Internal only document)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HAPS 13: Guidelines for Deans, Associate Deans and Representatives

• Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment
  • Any decisions taken on courses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were made under the authority of Regulation 31
  • The Deans and representatives should be aware that in relation to Semester 2, 2019/20 exceptions to examination and assessment procedures apply, for mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

• Supporting Documents
  • **Document B:** Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: *Exceptions that apply to UG and PGT Assessment Procedures*
  • **Document C:** Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: *Guidance for Year 1 and Year 2 Progression Boards*
Summary of Major Changes
Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19

• Years 1 and 2
  – 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.
• Semester 2 Level 7/8 courses,
  – ‘P’ grades should be awarded, irrespective of the student’s registered year of study
• Semester 2 Levels 9/10/11
  – If there is incomplete assessment information in relation to Semester 2, including courses which have had some element of coursework already submitted, then University Regulation 31 is invoked.
  – Boards of Examiners can take decisions to allocate a Grade A-F or a Grade P, as appropriate, and as guided by Document B.
HAPS 3: Discretionary Credits

• Discretionary Award of Credits
  • Regulations 3.22 & 48.21
  • A student who has not achieved the minimum number of credit points necessary to qualify for consideration of award or progression may be awarded the requisite credit points at the discretion of the Progression Board (Undergraduate only) or Award Board, as appropriate.

• Discretion within an entire programme of study:
  • UG: 30 credits (45 for Combined Studies)
    • Award and progression (but not for prerequisites)
  • PG: 15 credits (not dissertation or other research project)
    • Award only. Cannot be used for progression
HAPS 3: Discretionary Credits

- For Progression (Undergraduate only)
  - the candidate shall have taken a re-assessment in the course(s) in question and shall have gained a Grade F in the re-assessment
  - the candidate shall have satisfied the specified criteria for progression
  - the discretionary credits **shall not** be applied to courses which are designated as requiring a minimum of Grade D for progression on the programme (and which might be defined as ‘pre-requisite’, ‘core’ or some other terminology)
  - All alternative options have been considered. For example, where appropriate, and where programme regulations allow, the candidate might be given the opportunity to take alternative courses in order to minimise the possibility of having insufficient credits for the award of a degree.

- For Award
  - If the standards and learning outcomes of the programme have been achieved
  - The justification for allocating additional credits shall be recorded in the minutes of the Award Board.
HAPS 6a: Guidance for Undergraduate Borderline Cases

- Policy for Undergraduate Degree-Classification Borderline Cases
- Marks range between *8.5 - *9.9%
  - *9.5 - *9.9 rounded up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70% Average, or above</td>
<td>1st Class, or Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69.4%</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59.4%</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 39.4%</td>
<td>No honors recommended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Award Board has discretion to consider students falling below boundaries for receipt of higher award
  - Discretion zone – average of *8.5% (but no lower)
HAPS 6b: Guidance for Postgraduate Borderline Cases

- **Policy for Postgraduate Degree-Classification Borderline Cases**
- **Marks range between** *8.5 - *9.9%
  - *9.5 - *9.9 rounded up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Degree Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70% Average, or above</td>
<td>Postgraduate Masters with Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69.4%</td>
<td>Postgraduate Masters with Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59.4%</td>
<td>Postgraduate Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49.5%</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma (refer to Programme guidelines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 39.4%</td>
<td>Refer to Programme guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Award Board has discretion to consider students falling below boundaries for receipt of higher award
- Discretion zone – average of *8.5% (but no lower)
HAPS 8: Mitigating Circumstances in Relation to Assessment

- The Role of Mitigating Circumstances Committee
  - To determine the impact of mitigating circumstances affecting one or more students, with the authority to agree on the extent of the impact and to advise the exam board on the action to be taken.
  - Makes recommendation and rationale to Examination Board and Courses mitigation applies to

- The role of the Examination Board
  - Consider the recommendation of MC Committee and make decision regarding credit, progression and award.

- Confidentiality of Evidence
  - Ensure compliance with Data Protection law
    - Supporting documents should not be sent to Exam Board
    - Representative from MC Committee
    - Verbal report
8. Examples of Good Practice - Managing Boards via Teams

- State your name when you wish to speak (only a few faces will be visible on the screen at any time);
- Use the ‘Conversation’ window within the Teams call to alert the Chair (via the Clerk if needs be) that you wish to make a contribution;
- When making a contribution speak clearly and more slowly than in normal conversation, keeping your comments concise and to the point;
- Keep rustling of papers / other background noise to a minimum when your mic is unmuted;
- Always mute your microphone when not speaking;
- Do not speak over other contributors – especially the Chair – except briefly to indicate that you wish to speak;
- During discussions, please clearly state any proposed actions, indicating that it is an action. At the end of each item the Chair should summarise the actions to ensure these are captured correctly;
- Remember that this may be a novel experience for other participants (including the clerk) and so please be patient.
8. Examples of Good Practice – Organisation of the Board

• Clear Agenda
• Appropriate papers provided
• Information to be presented in a clear and consistent way
• Complete and correct marks provided
  – Chair must have confidence in the marks presented
• Board proceeds at an appropriate pace (due care and attention, not too long / too short)
• After board, papers are collected and destroyed
8. Examples of Good Practice - Roles and Responsibilities

- Quorum of Board members are present
  - Interests declared
- Members are well prepared and understand the role of the External Examiner and Deans
  - HAPS Documents B & C
- External Examiner has been thoroughly briefed about course / programme
  - University policies
- External Examiner has good understanding of his / her own role (and acts accordingly)
  - Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment Guidance for External Examiners
8. Examples of Good Practice - Procedures

- Use of pre-meetings to discuss:
  - Difficulties to ensure efficient and effective operation of Board
  - Recommendations on mitigating circumstances made to Board
  - Issues that Deans / Deans’ Representatives should be made aware of before meeting

- Board members to have clear understanding of procedures for:
  - Considering marks
  - Dealing with borderline cases – HAPS 6a and 6b
  - Dealing with extenuating circumstances
  - Recording decisions – COVID mitigation policies
  - Notification / publication of results
  - Confidentiality issues

- Check that decisions reached have been recorded correctly
  - Chair responsibility
8. Examples of Good Practice - Conduct of Business

- Observe social conventions at beginning of Board (welcome and introductions)
- Agenda item for External Examiner and Dean / Deans’ Rep to give views
- Conduct of Board – Professional at all times. Interaction between Board members to be respectful and courteous, consistent with university values
- Chair to intervene where opposition between board members threatens to undermine quality of decision making (sometimes robust)
9. Key Contacts

- Jill Bowie, Deans’ Administrator
- Helen Crosby-Knox, Quality Assurance Manager
- Lynn Boag, Exams Officer
- Dr Amos Haniff, Dean of the University (Pan Dean)
- Professor Scott Arthur, Dean of the University (Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Dr Fadi Ghaith, Dean of the University (Science and Engineering)
9. Contact Details

Dr. Amos Haniff
_Dean of the University (Pan-Dean)_
_School of Social Sciences_,
Heriot Watt University
Tel: 0131 451 3847
E-mail: a.haniff@hw.ac.uk

Jill Bowie
_Deans Administrator_
_Academic Registry_
Heriot Watt University
Tel: 0131 451 3369
E-mail: j.bowie@hw.ac.uk