Academic Quality

Operation of Progression/Award Boards (Spring and Autumn 2020) – Guidelines for Deans, Associate Deans and Representatives

Deans or their representatives (Associate Dean or other nominated representative, who should normally be a senior member of academic staff) are required to attend all undergraduate and postgraduate taught Progression/Award Boards in order to monitor the operation of the Board and to report to the Learning and Teaching Board and to the Quality and Standards Committee where appropriate. This paper outlines a series of brief guidelines on assessment and examinations procedures, in order to assist the Deans and their representatives in their monitoring role.

1. Reports from Deans

Deans and representatives should complete and submit the ‘Operation of Exam Boards’ report proforma following each Examination Board. make a note of issues raised at Progression Boards in connection with assessment and examinations procedures. Reports should be forwarded within two weeks of the Board taking place to Jill Bowie, Deans’ Administrator (email: deansadministration@hw.ac.uk).

For managing and reporting on suspended Boards of Examiners, please refer to Document 11, "Process for Managing Suspended Boards of Examiners".

2. Supporting Information

Prior to attendance at Boards, Deans and their representatives should be familiar with the Examination and Assessment Guidelines and particularly:

- Document A: Recent Revisions to Policies and Procedures
- 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
- Document 1: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Procedures
- Document 2: Decisions and Decision Codes 2019
- Document 3: Guidelines on Discretionary Award of Credits
- Document 4: The Heriot-Watt University Assessment and Progression System (HAPS)
- Document 6a: Policy for Undergraduate Degree-Classification Borderline Cases (new for 2018/19)
- Document 6b: Policy for Postgraduate Degree-Classification Borderline Cases (new from 1 Mar 20)
- Document 7: The Guide to Medical Certificates under HAPS
- Document 13: Guidelines for Deans, Associate-Deans and Representatives (this document)

1 Progression/Awards Boards include boards for graduating students and continuing students in the spring and the re-assessment boards in August, and the Boards for taught PG programmes. The term “Progression Board” is used here in reference to all exam boards.
3. **Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment**

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. Information that follows applies to the standard examination and assessment procedures and reference to Documents B and C (as detailed at Point 2 above) is necessary in order to ensure exceptions are applied as appropriate.

4. **Marks and Grades**

The Deans and representatives should note the following:

- Confirmation that any decisions taken on courses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were made under the authority of Regulation 31: Authority of Heads of Schools and Examiners in Exceptional Circumstances.
- Confirmation that the HAPS is being operated, particularly by PGT Boards; any instances of inconsistent application of HAPS or other aspects of the assessment process should be noted on the Dean’s Report Proforma.
- Confirmation should be received that marks have not been altered whilst mapping onto grades.
- Justification for abnormal mapping of marks onto grades should be recorded.
- Justification for any alteration of grades, including discretionary award of credits, by the Progression Board should be recorded.
- Document 3 should be referred to for guidance on using the Discretionary Award of Credits - for award at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels, and progression at the undergraduate level only *(to be used with caution)*.

5. **Re-assessment and Repeat**

The Deans and representatives should emphasise the following, if required:

**Re-assessment**

- Re-assessment should be required for Grade E only for *continuing* courses.
- Only one re-assessment opportunity is permitted for courses: all re-assessments are to be taken in the Autumn diet; the decision code should reflect this *(section 5)*.
- One re-assessment opportunity is permitted for non-final year qualifying courses – *for credit points only*, the original mark remains in the calculation of the degree.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Progression Board has the discretion to grant a further re-assessment opportunity, the justification for which must be recorded in the Board’s Minutes.
- For UG, opportunities up to a maximum of four may be permitted by the Progression Board; fifth opportunities must be considered and approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee.
- For PG taught programmes, re-assessment is permitted in a maximum of three taught courses – this may include re-sit for progression to Masters (if Grade D, E or F has been gained). Clarification on PGT regulations regarding re-assessment (including discretion of the Progression Board in permitting more than 3 resits or allowing re-assessment in the dissertation/project) should be sought in advance of the Progression Board meeting.

**Repeat**

- Repeat is not an automatic entitlement, but is at the discretion of the Progression Board. The justification for repeat must be recorded in the Board’s minutes.
- Repeat means re-attend and retake all assessments – full course fees to be paid.
- The Board can recommend alternative courses, rather than a repeat.

6. **Decision Codes**

The Dean and representatives should take note of any comments made with regard to the list of decisions and codes. The Dean and representatives should remind School Examinations Officers that the codes entered on Banner should correspond to the decisions taken by the Progression Board (this should be emphasised especially for PGT programmes).

The Dean and representatives should remind the Progression Board that UG re-assessment, for both continuing and non-continuing courses, should be taken in the autumn diet; only in exceptional circumstances should students be permitted to defer until the next academic session and a justification for such decisions should be provided.
7. **Assessment Results Reports**

The Dean and representatives should remind the Progression Board that Assessment Results Reports (ARR) should contain all course grades (*including service courses*) and a progression or award decision for each student. No blanks should remain on the ARR.

8. **Deadlines**

The Dean and representatives should be assured by the Chair of the Progression Board that the deadlines for inputting confirmed grades and decision codes and the return of signed ARRs to the Academic Registry can be met (*See sections 5 and 6 of Document 1: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Procedures*).