

Imperial College London

Conduct of Boards of Examiners 2019-20

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the requirements for the constitution and operation of Boards of Examiners considering results, progression and award decisions for undergraduate programmes of study and for postgraduate taught programmes of study.
- 1.2 The principles and guidance included in this document help the College to provide assurance of the academic standards of its awards through decisions made by the Boards of Examiners and set out how the Boards should be established and operate effectively. This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

[Academic Regulations](#)

All students of the College are subject to the [Regulations for Students](#). In addition:

Undergraduate programmes of study commencing prior to September 2019 are governed by the relevant [Academic and Examination](#), with the [General Regulations](#).

Postgraduate programmes of study that have not been re-approved through curriculum review (see regulations website), are governed by the relevant [Academic and Examination](#) regulations, with the [General Regulations](#).

All new postgraduate programmes of study commencing from September 2019, those postgraduate programmes that completed, and all undergraduate programmes of study commencing September 2019 onwards are governed by the [Single Set of Taught Academic Regulations](#).

[Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#)

[Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

2. AUTHORITY OF THE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- 2.1 Boards of Examiners operate with delegated authority from the Senate to confer academic awards. Each Board of Examiners will be appointed annually for each programme or suite of programmes in accordance with the relevant College Academic Regulations.

3. STRUCTURE OF BOARDS

- 3.1 The College operates a two-tier Board of Examiners structure.
- 3.2 **Pre-Boards** (also referred to as Sub-Boards or Internal Boards) determine the overall module/component/element marks and agree, if required, any scaling or

adjustments. Approved procedures for dealing with borderline candidates (e.g. via vivas or algorithms) must be agreed and, where needed, take place before the EPAB meeting and may result in further sub-board meetings prior to the final EPAB meeting

- 3.3 **Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB)** agree the awards of final year candidates and where appropriate confirm whether or not students in earlier years can progress. The Board will also confirm re-sit opportunities for candidates. The EPAB meeting is anonymous to ensure parity of treatment for all candidates.
- 3.4 **Resit Boards** consider results of re-sits (including Supplementary Qualifying Tests for the Faculty of Engineering) and any deferred examinations. These Boards make decisions in line with those of the EPAB for awards of final year students and progression for those in earlier years.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS

- 4.1 The membership of the Boards and Joint Boards shall consist of a Chair, together with College Examiners and the External Examiners appointed to act for the relevant fields of study.
- 4.2 Faculty Education Committees (FECs) are responsible for confirming the membership of EPAB and Joint EPABs and to approve and monitor Schemes of Awards where this is required.
- 4.3 **Pre-Boards or Sub-Boards** should include: The EPAB Chair (or nominee) and the minimum of College Examiners¹ to enable the consideration of the modules/elements under review as well as any other key members of departmental administrative staff involved with assessment. A member of the Department's Mitigating Circumstances Board (MCB) should also be in attendance. For undergraduate medicine only, external examiners are expected to attend sub-board meetings.
- 4.4 **Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB)** must include: The Board Chair, College Examiners (unless granted dispensation by the current Head of Department), key members of departmental administrative staff, a representative from Assessment Records in Registry (where available) and all External Examiners.
- 4.5 For undergraduate medicine, EPAB meetings take place in years four (BSc) and six (MBBS) and only consider the award of degrees to candidates. It is recognised that for undergraduate medicine a slightly different system operates whereby the sub-board meetings for each year of the programme are responsible for the detailed discussion of student progression, including consideration of borderline cases. For this reason, it is a requirement for all relevant external examiners and College examiners to attend the appropriate undergraduate medicine sub-board for which

¹ College Examiner is defined in the College Regulations and the role is available on the website under: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/quality-assurance-enhancement/roles-and-responsibilities/>

they are responsible. Only one external examiner is required to attend each of the BSc and MBBS EPAB meeting.

- 4.6 **Joint Boards of Examiner's Meetings** will normally be set up only for candidates whose range of examinations has, in the opinion of the relevant Faculty Education Committee, been too wide for a single Board to deal with adequately. Any meeting of a Joint Board (and sub-board meetings where relevant) at which the classification of candidates is considered must be attended by (a) at least one External Examiner and (b) at least one College Examiner from each of the Boards concerned. It must, furthermore, normally be attended by at least one External Examiner in each of the principal fields of study concerned. The relevant Faculty Education Committee shall decide which fields of study and which Boards are concerned.

4.7 **Board of Examiners' Meetings for Collaborative Programmes**

Where programmes of study are run in collaboration with a partner institution there must be appropriate representation at the EPAB meetings (and sub-board meetings where relevant) from the partner(s) and the College. The composition of these Boards should be approved by the relevant FEC and detailed in the governing Memorandum of Agreement.

4.8 **Programmes of Study with a "Management Year"**

Management year results are considered by the Business School's EPAB, rather than the students' home department. The management year results are passed to the students' home department prior to the departments' EPAB. A representative from the Business School should also be in attendance at the departmental EPAB to present the results. Decisions by the Business School EPAB for programmes with management years are final and cannot be amended by the departmental EPAB. This is to ensure that the learning outcomes for the management year have been achieved and to ensure students with similar results for a module or for the whole management year are treated equitably across the College.

- 4.9 **Re-sit Boards:** the membership of resit boards must include: The EPAB Chair (or Nominee) and the minimum of College Examiners to enable the consideration of the modules/elements under review as well as any other key members of departmental administrative staff. The Board decisions must be confirmed by at least one of the duly appointed External Examiners. This may be either through attendance at the Board (physically or virtually), or by correspondence post Board. A representative from Assessment Records in Registry will be invited to attend but are not required for the meeting to be quorate.

5. **CONDUCT OF BOARDS**

- 5.1 The Chair of the Board is responsible for ensuring that the meeting is properly conducted and that appropriate decisions are reached, in line with the College regulations, policies and procedures.

- 5.2 All Board meetings should be serviced by Departmental Administrative staff. They are responsible for advising on the procedures, recording accurately the proceedings of the meeting and for communicating the decisions reached by the Board.
- 5.3 It is recommended that Departments confirm the dates of their Board meetings a year in advance, in particular the date of EPAB meetings which external examiners are required to attend. Departments should also inform Registry's Assessment Records team when a Board is taking place.
- 5.4 Where an external examiner is unable to physically attend the meeting arrangements should be made for them to take part via video- or telephone-conferencing. If no external examiner can attend the EPAB meeting, the Academic Registrar (via quality@imperial.ac.uk) must be informed at the earliest opportunity. The EPAB meeting cannot proceed without an external examiner unless this is authorised by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). If authorised, the Board is required to follow up with the external examiner(s) after the meeting to ratify the results of the students prior to final publication.
- 5.5 Clear provision must be made to enable potential conflicts of interest to be identified and addressed, such as personal interests or involvements with students. These should be reported to the Chair in advance of the meeting and noted. Where a member of staff has a conflict of interest, they will not be involved in any discussion or decision-making related to that candidate.
- 5.6 Any Chair's Actions taken since the last meeting of the Examination Board should be presented to the Board and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 5.7 The EPAB receives the final marks from the sub-board(s), including any recommendations such as from the MCB made as a result of the consideration of claims for mitigation or regarding borderline cases, for ratification and to confirm progression and award.
- 5.8 College regulations require EPABs to be conducted with anonymity for all candidates and so their marks profile will be presented by **candidate number only**. In limited circumstances exemptions are permitted under the College regulations with advance agreement.
- 5.9 All Boards should ensure that any decisions they make are transparent and recorded accurately in the minutes of the meeting. There should be transparent processes for dealing with anomalies in marking and arrangements for fair and appropriate adjustments. EPAB minutes must be sent to the Registry's Assessment Records Team for logging.
- 5.10 Re-sit requirements must be agreed. This will clearly be recorded for each candidate with regards to session, and capped or uncapped
- 5.11 General preliminary comments made by the external examiners on the outcome of assessments for the current academic session and their reflections on the assessment process and standards achieved should be recorded.

- 5.12 Potential changes to the examination arrangements and procedures, marking scheme and/or assessment formats for future cohorts should be discussed. A recommendation for any modifications should then be made to the appropriate committee.

Borderline Candidates

- 5.13 Boards must have objective and transparent processes for dealing with borderline cases. For candidates being considered under the [Academic and Examination regulations](#) (candidates registered on programmes that have not completed curriculum review, see the [regulations webpages](#) for further details) the process of considering borderline decisions may include viva voce and/or an algorithmic criteria such as; the number of questions answered at a specific level (i.e. grade profiling). Exit velocity may be included within the algorithm (and should therefore not be applied again at Board meetings). However, in most cases, exit velocity is reflected in year weightings and departments should be mindful of this when developing suitable algorithms. For candidates being considered under the [Single Set of Taught Academic Regulations](#) (for 2019/2020 this will only include a limited number of postgraduate taught programmes, see the [regulations webpages](#) for further details). this must be based on algorithmic criteria. The methods to be used (including details of any algorithm) should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Education Committee for prior approval.
- 5.14 Departments using viva voce examinations to deal with borderline cases should refer to the College's [Conduct of \(Oral\) Examinations \(including Viva Voce Examinations\) for Undergraduate and Master's Level Programmes](#).
- 5.15 The examiners who conducted a student's viva voce examination will provide the Board at its EPAB meeting with their recommendation. The EPAB will consider the recommendation and make a final decision but should not discuss the detail of the viva.
- 5.16 All Boards must keep full and accurate minutes of their reasons for uplifting a candidate's final classification or not.
- 5.17 The outcome of decisions made by EPAB must be communicated to students as quickly as possible making it clear whether a result is provisional or final.

Academic Misconduct

- 5.18 Details of minor misconduct that have been dealt with by the department as per the College procedure will be reported and formally minuted at the EPAB meeting. If there have been no instances this should also be recorded.

External Examiners' Reports

- 5.19 External examiners would normally be asked to provide general comments on the outcome of assessments for the academic session and their reflections on the examination process and standards achieved at the EPAB meeting. This feedback is

in addition to, and does not replace, the formal report that each external examiner is asked to submit to the College.

Progression and Award Data – Discussion at Boards

- 5.20 At the end of the Board meeting, members should consider management information set data for individual modules and for the awards overall. Boards should review and consider trends in the distribution of the award of honours, progression and failure rates. Boards may also wish to review year trends, including 3 year averages for the marks awarded on the different final year taught components of the degree programme and for examinations to ensure that parts of the programme are not consistently significantly different in marks awarded. This would exclude coursework only components such as projects, as these differ for explainable reasons.
- 5.21 This discussion is used to inform, and evidence, updates and changes to the programmes, for example minor or major modifications, and to support the annual monitoring process.

Consideration of Prizes, Awards and the Dean's list

- 5.22 Where it is appropriate to do so, the EPAB (or other Board) should confirm the outcome of relevant prizes or awards under their remit. They would also agree, where relevant, the Dean's list.
- 5.23 The EPAB may delegate detailed consideration of the above to the pre-board or other relevant groups/individuals. Those delegated to consider would provide recommendations to the EPAB for a final decision/ratification.

6 FOLLOW UP ACTION AFTER THE BOARD

- 6.1 After any Board, the minutes should be approved in a timely fashion. For an EPAB or Re-sit Board, this must be provided to Assessment Records in Registry. The minutes are needed to support the actions following a Board, such as result production or to explain the decision-making of the Board if challenged, such as through an academic appeal.
- 6.2 The marks and decisions from EPAB reported to Registry must be on the agreed template. Marks will be reported to two decimal places.

Chair's Action

- 6.3 Chair's action should normally only be used if the next EPAB is more than six weeks away, to:
- a) approve an explicit and minuted Board decision, following completion of an action in respect of an individual student (e.g. outcome of an Academic Misconduct Panel)

- b) reflect a decision following the acceptance of a late mitigating circumstances claim or the resolution of an academic appeal, or formal complaint under the College procedures.
- c) approve an exit award following the withdrawal from an Undergraduate programme of study, where there are sufficient credits to make the award.
- d) correct an administrative error or delay

6.4 Of the above, an external examiner's approval would usually only be required if there is a change to the overall programme outcome (pass to fail or fail to pass), in final classification or other significant change such as change to a cohort's marks in one module.