

## The Conduct of Undergraduate Boards of Examiners' Meetings

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides guidance on the purpose and conduct of undergraduate Boards of Examiners' meetings<sup>1</sup> and should be read in conjunction with the following:

[Regulations for the Examination of BSc, MSci, BEng, MEng, MBBS Degrees](#)

[Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures](#)

[Academic Misconduct Procedures](#)

[UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), with specific reference to the advice and guidance on [Assessment](#) and [External Expertise](#)

- 1.2. A Board of Examiners is appointed annually for each programme in accordance with the College's Examination Regulations. Annually there will generally be at least one internal sub-board meeting and one progression and award meeting of each Board. Henceforth this is known as the Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB).
- 1.3. External examiners are appointed to all Boards (including Re-sit Boards where necessary) in accordance with the relevant Examination Regulations. External examiners will not normally attend sub-board meetings, but should always attend the Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB) meeting<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4. **Sub-board meetings of the Board of Examiners**
- 1.4.1. A sub-board(s) (see section 3.3) of the Board of Examiners should meet in advance of the EPAB meeting to 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance for Assessment states:

Degree-awarding bodies operate, or oversee the operation of, examination boards (or equivalent bodies) to make judgements and decisions on which the award of credit and qualifications is ultimately based. The powers, authority and accountability of the board are clearly specified and understood by members of the board.

<sup>2</sup> Except for undergraduate medicine; please see section 3.1.

## 1.5. Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB) Meetings

1.5.1. The Board of Examiners will agree the awards of final year candidates at the EPAB meeting (see section 3.2) and where appropriate will confirm whether or not students in earlier years can progress. The Board will also confirm re-sit opportunities for candidates at this meeting. The EPAB meeting is anonymous to ensure parity of treatment for all candidates.

## 2. Notification of Board Meetings

2.1. It is recommended that departments<sup>3</sup> 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 QA team (via [quality@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:quality@imperial.ac.uk)) when a Board is taking place.

## 3. Composition of Boards of Examiners' Meetings

### 3.1. Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB) Meetings

3.1.1. *[Full details of the roles and responsibilities of each of the groups described below can be accessed by clicking on the relevant hyperlink below or by visiting the College's [Roles and Responsibilities webpage](#).]*

3.2. The following people should attend EPAB meetings:

- [Chair of the Board of Examiners](#).
- [External Examiners](#)

3.2.1. All external examiners<sup>4</sup> are required to attend the Progression and Award meetings of the Board except in cases of illness or other unavoidable [emergency] causes. 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, because of the reasons stated above, no external examiner can attend the EPAB meeting, the Academic Registrar (via [quality@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:quality@imperial.ac.uk)) should be informed. 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 confirm the results of the students prior to final publication.

3.2.2. 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 they are responsible. Only one

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<sup>3</sup> or College Schools, Centres and Institutes and in the case of undergraduate medicine, the Faculty.

<sup>4</sup> Except for undergraduate medicine

external examiner is required to attend each of the BSc and MBBS EPAB meetings.

- [College examiners](#)

3.2.3. Normally, all academic staff are appointed College examiners<sup>5</sup>.

3.2.4. College examiners are expected to attend the EPAB meetings unless granted dispensation by the Head of Department. At least one member of the Department's Mitigating Circumstances Board<sup>6</sup> should attend the meeting.

3.2.5. [Assessors](#) and [Assistant Examiners](#) are not entitled to attend the EPAB meeting unless invited to by the Chair of the Board.

- Key members of departmental administrative staff associated with assessment (e.g. Head of Teaching Office, Examinations Officer).
- A representative from Registry

### 3.3. **Sub-Board Meetings of the Board of Examiners**

3.3.1. The Board Chair and normally all academic staff appointed as College examiners for the modules/elements under review should attend sub-meetings of the Board of Examiners as well as any other key members of departmental administrative staff involved with assessment. A member of the Department's Mitigating Circumstances Board should also be in attendance.

3.3.2. For undergraduate medicine only, external examiners should attend sub-board meetings (please also see section 3.2.2).

## 4. **Joint Board of Examiners' Meetings (for undergraduate programmes which cross Faculties and/or Departments)**

4.1. A Joint Board 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.

4.2. Any EPAB meeting of a Joint Board must be attended by:

- Chair of the Board of Examiners.
- At least one external examiner appointed to the joint programme and normally at least one external examiner in each of the principal fields of study concerned.
- College examiners from each of the Examination Boards of the principal fields of study concerned (including as appropriate at least one

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<sup>5</sup> For undergraduate medicine this will be "theme leaders" or "course directors" as appropriate.

<sup>6</sup> Please see [Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures](#) for further information on the composition of Mitigating Circumstances Board.

representative from each of the relevant departmental Mitigating Circumstances Boards).

- Key members of departmental administrative staff involved with assessment (e.g. Head of Teaching Office, Examinations Officer).
- A representative from Registry.

## **5. Board of Examiners' Meetings for Collaborative Programmes**

- 5.1. 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) by the partner and the College. The composition of these Boards should be approved by the relevant Faculty Education Committee and detailed in the governing Memorandum of Agreement.

## **6. Programmes with a "Management Year"**

- 6.1. Management year results are considered by the Business School Examination Board which is attended by the Business School External Examiners. The management year results are passed to the students' home department prior to the departments' EPAB for the award. A representative from the Business School should also be in attendance at the departmental EPAB to present the results. Decisions by the Business School Examination Board for 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.

## **7. Mitigation Circumstances Boards**

- 7.1. The Mitigation Circumstances Board (MCB) considers claims for mitigating circumstances affecting students' module/component/element results in line with the College Mitigating Circumstances Procedure. By its nature the MCB cannot be anonymous however candidate numbers only must be used when recording and passing on decisions for individual candidates.
- 7.2. The Board will accept or reject a claim in line with the policy document and may provide recommendations to the Board of Examiners for action, based on the claim itself. The Board of Examiners will make any final decisions of mitigation to be taken in the light of the mitigating circumstances policy, examination regulations, the student's academic profile and any specific programme requirements.
- 7.3. The decisions of the Board of Examiners in relation to mitigating circumstances must be clearly recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 7.4. For further details of the MCB see [Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures](#) and the [Implementation guide for mitigating circumstances procedure](#).

## 8. Conduct and Process

- 8.1. All Boards should ensure that any decisions they make are transparent and recorded accurately in the minutes of the meeting<sup>7</sup>. 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 QA Team (via [external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk)) for logging.
- 8.2. Normally candidates should be represented by their **candidate number only**<sup>8</sup> at all sub-Board meetings. **The EPAB meeting is anonymous.**
- 8.3. The EPAB meeting receive the final marks from the sub-board(s), including any recommendations from the MAP made as a result of the consideration of mitigation or borderline cases, for ratification and confirm progression and award. The EPAB must report marks to Registry to a maximum of two decimal places.
- 8.4. Re-sit requirements are agreed.
- 8.5. Reasons for either accepting or not accepting the recommendations of the Mitigating Circumstances Board or the outcome of borderline processes must be recorded in the minutes. If there have been no instances of mitigating circumstances or any borderline cases this should also be recorded in the minutes.
- 8.6. A summary of action taken by the Board during the academic year under the College's [Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#) [located under *Academic Integrity*]. If there have been no minor misconduct offences this should also be recorded in the minutes.
- 8.7. A report on the total number of cases of late submission of assessed work should be presented and the number of occasions in which the default penalty was applied or amended.
- 8.8. Decisions regarding special awards and prizes should be recorded.
- 8.9. An overview of results and management information set data should be presented together with comments from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- 8.10. A brief summary of what action (if any) was taken as a result of the external examiners' reports from the previous year.

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<sup>7</sup> The UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance on Assessment states:

A record is kept of decisions and of the factors taken into account in the exercise of discretion by the board. Regulations make explicit how applications from students with extenuating circumstances are dealt with, including whether or not new assessment attempts are allowed and assessment elements disregarded.

<sup>8</sup> The QAEC agreed at its meeting on the 17 January 2013 that in order to ensure parity of treatment for all candidates, Boards of Examiners' meetings should be anonymous.

- 8.11. 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.
- 8.12. Clear provision must be made to enable potential conflicts of interest - such as personal interests or involvements with students - to be identified and addressed.
- 8.13. 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.

## **9. Borderline Candidates**

- 9.1. Departments should develop objective and transparent processes for dealing with borderline cases. These may, for example, include vivas and/or formulaic algorithms for determining whether a candidate's mark may be raised; for example 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. The methods to be used (including details of any algorithm) should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Education Committee for prior approval.
- 9.2. 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](#).
- 9.3. The examiners who conducted a student's viva voce examination will provide the Board at its EPAB meeting with a recommendation regarding the additional marks to be awarded. The EPAB will consider the recommendation and make a final decision but should not discuss the detail of the viva.
- 9.4. All Boards should keep full and accurate minutes of their reasons for moving a candidate up a grade or their reasons for not. If appropriate, it is recommended that departments hold a pre-meeting to discuss any difficult cases prior to the final meeting of the Board.
- 9.5. The outcome of decisions made by Boards of Examiners must be communicated to students as quickly as possible making it clear whether a result is provisional or final.

## **10. Academic Misconduct**

- 10.1. Details of minor misconduct, such as plagiarism, that have been dealt with by the department should also be reported to the Board at the EPAB meeting (and sub-boards as appropriate) and minuted. If there have been no instances of minor misconduct this should also be recorded.

## **11. External Examiners' Reports**

- 11.1. 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.

## **12. Progression and Award Data – Discussion at Boards**

- 12.1. 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.

## **13. Re-sit Boards**

- 13.1. These Boards consider results of re-sits (including Supplementary Qualifying Tests for the Faculty of Engineering) and any deferred examinations. Re-sit Boards may take place electronically, however if this is the case, at least one external examiner will be consulted.

**Board of Examiners' Meeting [Sub-Board or EPAB] – Undergraduate Programmes**

**Faculty(ies) of [insert name]:**

**Department(s) of [insert name]:**

**Name of Programmes(s):**

**Minutes for the meeting held on [insert date] at [insert time] in [insert room], [insert campus].**

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- 1. College Staff Present**
- 2. External Examiner(s) present**
- 3. Apologies for absence**
- 4. Declaration of conflicts of interest (if any)**
- 5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on [insert date] and Matters Arising from these**
- 6. Report on Chair's Actions**
- 7. Consideration of examination results and confirmation of progression and award made to individual candidates, including:**
  - Consideration of recommendations for additional marks awarded to borderline cases. Reasons why candidates at class borderlines were promoted or not promoted must be recorded.**
  - Consideration of recommendations by the Mitigating Circumstances Board for students who have submitted mitigating circumstances. Reasons for the outcome of the recommendations must be recorded. If there have been no instances of mitigating circumstances this should be recorded.**
- 8. Re-sit arrangements are agreed.**
- 9. Summary of action taken by the Board during the academic year under the College's [Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#) [located under *Academic Integrity*]. (If there have been no minor misconduct offences this should also be recorded)**

10. A report of the total number of cases of late submission of assessed work should be presented and the number of occasions in which the penalty was applied or amended.
11. Decisions made regarding special awards and prizes.
12. Consideration of the overview of results and management information set data with comments from the Director of Undergraduate Studies on these.
13. A brief summary report of what action (if any) was taken as a result of the external examiners' reports from the previous year.
14. General preliminary comments made by the external examiners on the outcome of assessments for the current academic session and their reflections on the examination process and standards achieved.
15. Confirmation that the marks for the current session are endorsed by external examiners.
16. Consideration of examination arrangements and procedures, amendments to marking schemes/assessment formats for future cohorts.

#### **Any Other Business**

#### **Date, time and place of next meeting**

[After the EPAB meeting please send a copy of the minutes to the Registry's QA Team ([external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk)) for logging.]

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<b>Cross References:</b>	<a href="#">Conduct of Oral Assessment for Undergraduate and Master’s Level Programmes</a> <a href="#">Penalties for the Late Submission of Assessed Work</a> <a href="#">Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures</a> <a href="#">Conduct of Master’s Level Boards of Examiners’ Meetings</a>		
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