

TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND QUORACY OF BOARDS OF STUDY AND EXAM BOARDS AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Boards of Study and examination boards

1. Each School will have one or more Boards of Study which will be convened at discipline level. The Board of Study is responsible for the management and administration of the modules and courses within its remit. Boards of Study may make recommendations to the School Education Committee (SEC) but it is for SEC to make the final decision to progress the actions recommended.
2. Examination Boards deal with examination and assessment matters via two types of examination board: Module Assessment Boards (MABs) where marks assurance is undertaken and School Progression and Award Boards (PABs) where outcomes for students are determined.

Board of Study (BoS)

3. BoS Terms of Reference:
 - (i) To consider and convey views and recommendations to the School Education Committee (SEC) concerning any academic matter relating to Courses and/or Modules within its remit and any other matter requiring consideration as may be referred from time-to-time.
 - (ii) To keep under review delivery of courses within the remit of the Board in order to ensure course objectives are achieved and to assure the effective operation of the course, including receipt of the annual course report.
 - (iii) To keep under review course admission criteria, placement and study abroad arrangements and ensure the accuracy of information, advice and guidance to applicants and students in published information for courses within the remit of the Board, including the approval of course handbooks.
 - (iv) To ensure the administration of the examination and assessment arrangements is conducted in accordance with the agreed course requirements, following University procedures, and to recommend improvements to the School Education Committee (SEC) and/or the Course Co-Convenor as necessary.
 - (v) To advise SEC on External Examiner nominations for approval by the PVC (Education and Students), and to ensure External Examiners are appropriately briefed on course examination and assessment requirements and related matters.
 - (vi) To consider issues arising from students and staff in relation to course delivery and management and to recommend action as appropriate or to refer matters for consideration and approval to the appropriate authority as required.
 - (vii) To keep under review the resources required for the effective delivery of the course(s) under its remit and to ensure SEC and the School management team are apprised of requirements as appropriate, including library and resources on Canvas.

- (viii) To make recommendations to SEC on in-year assessment changes arising from unforeseen issues to ensure the effective delivery and assessment of the course(s) under its remit and to provide regular reports as required to relevant School committees. The Chair of the Board of Study will be responsible for ensuring that the majority of students sign to agree to any in-year assessment change.
- (ix) The Chair of the Board of Study will be the main point of contact with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the PAB. The Chair of the Board of Study will be responsible for ensuring the proper and timely setting of all assessments including collation and submission of exam questions for scrutiny to the Deputy Chair of the PAB. The Deputy Chair of the PAB will seek the approval of the External Examiner and confirm that the standards required by the Student Administration Office (SAO) have been met. The Deputy Chair of the PAB is responsible for sending examination papers to the SAO.

BoS Composition:

Chair (Senior Academic Subject Lead, appointed by the Head of School); Academic Staff; Course Convenor(s) (if not subject lead); Module Convenors; Students agreed by the School; elected Student Representatives; Administrative Staff/Secretary and Course Co-ordinator.

Conduct of Business:

Boards of Study should meet at least once per term and as required and provide a regular report to the School Education Committee. Reports on resource matters should be referred to SMT. Detailed discussion of examination papers should be conducted under reserved business in the absence of the elected student representatives.

Module Assessment Boards (MAB)

4. *MAB Terms of Reference: Marks assurance:*

- (i) To confirm and maintain standards of assessments for all modules for which the MAB is responsible in conjunction with the Board of Study and the External Examiner(s).
- (ii) To confirm marks for each module for which the MAB is responsible. Assuring the marks allows credit to be accrued where the pass threshold has been met for students who are not registered for an award with the University and allows a resit to be offered to these students, where appropriate. The mark achieved at resit may be uncapped for such students, in proportion with the accepted exceptional circumstances.
- (iii) To recommend action to be taken in the case of question papers where there are errors or assessments about which there are evidenced major concerns. The Chair of the MAB will consult the relevant External Examiner before making recommendations to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) for approval to remedy the situation. The Chair will also report the matter to the Board of Study responsible for the module management to ensure the issue is not repeated for future cohorts.
- (iv) To recommend action to be taken in cases where academic judgement concludes that an assessment has been unexpectedly easy or difficult, or where students within a cohort may be markedly advantaged or disadvantaged by their

particular choice of modules. The scaling of marks, in line with University guidance, may be considered in such situations. The Chair of the MAB will consult the relevant External Examiner before making recommendations to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) for approval to remedy the situation. The Chair will also report the matter to the Board of Study responsible for the module.

- (v) To exceptionally recommend proposed outcomes for approval by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) in all cases where external moderation has not been conducted on a module, to ensure that progression and award decisions are not unduly delayed. All such cases must be reported to University Education Committee and Senate.
- (vi) To transmit marks for modules to the Student Administration Office (SAO) who will ensure they are available to the appropriate PABs.

MAB Composition:

Chair (nominated by Head of School); Deputy Chair (nominated by the Head of School usually for a minimum of three years); a representative group of the internal Markers of the assessments to be conducted by the examination board; the External Examiner(s). School Education Committee recommends the appointment of officers and members to University Education Committee for formal approval. Markers who are not members of the Board have the right to be in attendance.

MAB Quoracy and attendance:

For the MAB, the minimum quoracy is the Chair, Deputy Chair and 2 other examiners. External Examiners are not required to attend meetings but should be available for consultation if necessary.

School Progression and Award Boards (PAB)

5. School PAB Terms of Reference: Progression and Award:

Schools will have an Undergraduate and a Postgraduate PAB

- (i) To determine, in accordance with the rules and procedures determined by University Education Committee, whether students for certificates, diplomas or degrees have satisfied the rules for progression from one stage of the course to the next.
- (ii) To recommend to the University Education Committee the award of certificates, diplomas or degrees to those students who have satisfied the assessment requirements for these awards. Where an External Examiner has exceptionally not been consulted regarding award decisions, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) will review and approve the awards recommended, to ensure that classification is not unduly delayed. All such cases must be reported to University Education Committee and Senate.
- (iii) To make academic judgements in relation to accepted Exceptional Circumstances Claims and to grant further resits as sits or a repeat stage, in accordance with the regulations, to allow students a fair chance to demonstrate academic ability.
- (iv) To consider academic performance and award academic credit, in accordance with the regulations set out in the University's Examinations and

Assessment Regulations handbook, and to apply the discretionary assessment regulations.

- (v) To confirm the award of academic credit via condoned credit in the final stages of an award.
- (vi) To determine the resit or repeat requirements, in accordance with the regulations and procedures set out in the University's Academic Framework and Examinations and Assessment Regulations, in the event of failure of a stage or the award.
- (vii) To report to the School and University Education Committee annually at the beginning of Semester 1, on the conduct and outcomes of previous year's assessments.
- (viii) To award prizes in accordance with School prize criteria.

School PAB Composition:

Chair (Head of School or nominee); Deputy Chair (nominated by the Head of School in consultation usually for a minimum of three years); Director of Teaching and Learning; Director of Student Experience, a representative group of the internal markers of the assessments to be conducted by the board; the External Examiner(s). School Education Committee recommends the appointment of officers and members to University Education Committee for formal approval. Markers who are not members of the Board have the right to be in attendance.

School PAB Quoracy and attendance:

Where a final award is to be made, the PAB must meet in full. The quorum is the Chair, Deputy Chair and at least one third of the appointed members of the Board. At least one External Examiner should be present at each PAB where an award is made. Attendance at a PAB where a final award is not to be made may be reduced to a minimum of the Chair and Deputy Chair and at least one member representative of the internal markers. Where a PAB is held in two consecutive sittings, both meetings must be attended by the Chair, the Deputy Chair, at least one External Examiner and at least one representative member.

External Examiner involvement and attendance at the PAB

6. It is recommended that External Examiners are communicated with in good time to:
 - (i) let them know that they are a full member of the MAB and the PAB, and are all expected to attend the main meetings of the PAB, to participate in the work of the board and the final award of students (including exercising discretionary powers);
 - (ii) let them know when the meetings will take place and remind them of the main purpose;
 - (iii) clarify that at least one External Examiner, who has also attended the main PAB, is required to attend the PAB following a resit opportunity, where an award is made;
 - (iv) clarify that External Examiners are invited but not required to attend the PAB meetings which solely consider progression, or the MAB where marks assurance takes place;

- (v) request, if possible, contact details (telephone or email) of all External Examiners for the day of the meeting where they are not able to attend, as a precaution in the unlikely event that the recommendation of the subject specialist External Examiner is required to advise on an area of academic judgement. In such cases, it remains highly desirable that the subject specialist External Examiner is involved (remotely) in this discussion and that they are in agreement with the proposed outcome.

Timing of undergraduate and postgraduate MABs and PABs

- 7. The dates of undergraduate and postgraduate Module Assurance Boards (MABs) and Progression and Award Boards (PABs) will be published by the Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Office.
- 8. MABs will meet as required following every designated assessment period to assure marks. PABs will normally meet as follows:
 - (i) **Undergraduate PAB:**
 - Finalist PAB: June
 - Progression PAB: June/July
 - Resit PAB: August/September
 - (ii) **Postgraduate PAB:**
 - In-year PAB: Summer
 - Main Award PAB: Autumn
 - Resit PAB: Spring

Note: Some Undergraduate PABs include the consideration of postgraduate courses where the scheduling allows students to be included in summer graduation. In addition, some courses have a different PAB timing or remit. **Appendix 1** provides a list of courses that have a different PAB timing or remit, approved by the PVC for Education & Students.

(iii) PABs reconvening to consider a candidate

Where a PAB has previously considered a candidate at the level of the award and offered a further assessment opportunity, the PAB may reconvene virtually to reconsider the candidate and make an award. The PABs terms of reference will apply. However, the minimum quoracy for a PAB to reconvene virtually will be the Chair, Deputy Chair, at least one External Examiner (for decisions at the level of the award) and at least one member. In making any award the PAB should ensure equity for any borderline candidates with those considered at the main PAB. The outcome of all PAB decisions made by a PAB that has been reconvened virtually must be reported to the Student Administration Office and be reported to the next meeting of the PAB and recorded in the minutes. For Online Distance Learning Courses, award decisions may be made for any candidate at a virtual PAB, providing the quoracy requirements for a reconvened PAB are followed.

Duties of Examination Board Officers (Chair and Deputy Chair), Chair of the Board of Study, Course Convenor, Module Convenor and External Examiners

Chair of the examination board

- 9. The Chair of the examination board (MAB or PAB respectively) is responsible for the following:

- convening the meetings of the MABs and PABs
- agreement between the Chair (or deputy) of the examination board and the Chairs of Boards of Study the allocation of modules to MABs, ensuring that all elective modules owned by the School are assigned to a MAB
- convening the School PAB at School level and including all courses owned by the School.
- ensuring that the examination board functions in accordance with its *Terms of reference*
- ensuring the effective conduct of business
- ensuring that a PAB annual report is drafted for consideration by the SEC in Semester 1

Deputy Chair of the examination board

10. A Deputy Chair should normally be appointed for all examination boards (MABs and PABs). In the exceptional absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair will take over the responsibilities of the Chair. The Deputy Chair will assist the Chair in convening the meetings and ensuring smooth functioning.

The Deputy Chair of the PAB is responsible for:

11. Being the main point of contact with the External Examiner/s including:

- (i) ensuring that each course has at least one External Examiner appointed to it in advance of the academic session. Where a course has more than one External Examiner a lead External Examiner should be appointed as part of the appointment process;
- (ii) providing briefing and induction materials in accordance with the Policy on External Examining of Taught Courses – to include a list of courses/modules to be examined and their aims, objectives and learning outcomes; a copy of the previous External Examiner’s report; a copy of the latest annual course review; the names of course and module convenors and tutors; all relevant marking criteria;
- (iii) ensuring that the External Examiner externally moderates an appropriate sample of the assessments in accordance with the core duties set out in the Handbook on the policy and procedures for the external examining of taught courses and the **‘Marking, Moderation and Feedback Regulations’**;
- (iv) for hard copy submissions, providing External Examiners with the sample of internally moderated assessments including the comments of internal markers on marks assigned and feedback to students;
- (v) dispatching sample of assessments with completed batch mark sheet, and including relevant materials such as question-papers for unseen exams; generally keeping accurate records of what has been sent to the External Examiner.

12. Seeking the approval of the External Examiners and signing off examination papers to ensure that they meet the standard required by the Student Administration Office and ensuring appropriate contacts are available during an examination:

- (i) Seeking approval from the School Education Committee where an examination paper or other heavily weighted assessment task has not been signed off by the External Examiner.
- (ii) proof-reading (see also **‘Question papers and titles’**) prior to finalising and final checking of any printed papers;

- (iii) Ensuring that the rubric refers to any handout that should apply to the examination paper;
 - (iv) ensuring that copies of rubrics are sent to the School Administrator or nominee and the Student Administration Office (for on campus exams) and that any significant changes in format or rubric of question-papers are flagged to the Student Administration Office (for on campus exams);
 - (v) ensuring that the final proof-read versions of question papers are sent to the Student Administration Office (for on campus exams) in the prescribed format by the appropriate deadline and that any model answers are removed;
 - (vi) ensuring that the person responsible for the exam is available for consultation, at the time of the exam(s), including evenings and weekends, and for providing the appropriate Officer in the Student Administration Office with a contact telephone number (for on campus exams);
 - (vii) investigating complaints on question papers and/or via the conduct of examinations report, supported by the Chair of the Board of Study.
13. ensuring that the following information is published to students and examiners in a timely manner:
- (i) rubrics for all examination papers including resit papers where these differ
 - (ii) changes to the format of examination question papers including resit papers;
 - (iii) updated and approved versions of relevant marking criteria against which marking should be undertaken.
14. ensuring the preparation of marks arrays, including relevant calculated mean marks, for students on courses falling within the remit of the PAB are presented appropriately, in respect of:
- (i) stage-to-stage progression;
 - (ii) consideration for final award, and where relevant, classification.

Chair of the Board of Study

The Chair of the Board of Study is responsible for the following:

15. managing (in consultation with the Course and Module Convenors, School Administrator or nominee) the production of question papers for examinations by the deadlines specified by the Deputy Chair of the examination board to ensure the Student Administration Office deadlines published at the beginning of the year can be met;
16. The Chair of the Board of Study will be the main point of contact with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the PAB. The Chair of the Board of Study will be responsible for ensuring the proper and timely setting of all assessments including collation and submission of exam questions for scrutiny to the Deputy Chair of the PAB:
- (i) ensuring that the Module Convenor drafts relevant question paper(s) for unseen examinations and that all papers are produced obtaining the necessary approval from relevant internal marker/s. The Chair of the Board of Study should receive the final version of an examination paper from the Module Convenor for academic sign off prior to the Deputy Chair of the PAB seeking the approval of the External Examiner;

- (ii) ensuring, where appropriate, model answers to quantitative questions and indicative answers to other questions are provided to the Deputy Chair of the PAB for forwarding to the External Examiners;
 - (iii) ensuring consistent style and correct question numbering;
 - (iv) arranging for members of the Board of Study to vet draft question-papers.
 - (v) Convene a School Assessment Approval Panel to sign off assessments before referral to the Deputy Chair of the PAB.
17. ensuring the appointment of internal markers for each module falling within the remit of the Board of Study including:
- (i) securing the appointment of an experienced marker to mentor an inexperienced marker;
 - (ii) briefing all markers;
 - (iii) providing all markers with the relevant marking scales and marking criteria.
18. the Chair of the Board of Study (or nominee) oversees the allocation of markers in agreement with the Module Convenor (or nominee responsible for marking the assessments) and appoints an independent Moderator (responsible for the quality assurance). For assessments exempt from moderation the Chair of the Board of Study should agree with the External Examiner an appropriate process for the moderation of such assessments that is proportionate to the value of credit;
19. ensuring that the Module Convenor, is responsible for ensuring that the marking of assessments is undertaken as agreed and in accordance with the University marking policy and procedures (see '**Marking, Moderation and Feedback Regulations**') within published timetables, ensuring oversight of relevant aspects of data-entry to the central marks database, including:
- (i) providing a list of markers for all modules with unseen examinations by the deadline published by the Student Administration Office (for on campus exams);
 - (ii) managing the timely collection and distribution of students' assessments for marking by markers (for assessments not submitted electronically);
 - (iii) ensuring that internal marking is completed and moderated, and ensure that marks are returned to the School Office (for marks that need to be entered), by the specified deadlines;
 - (iv) oversight of the process of local inputting of marks that contribute to progression or award to the central marks database by the deadline specified, and responsibility for ensuring that mechanisms are in place to check and confirm the accurate input of marks.

Module Convenors

20. Module Convenors are responsible for:

- (i) marking, or for overseeing the marking process, for all assessments that contribute to progression or award, as agreed by the Chair of the Board of Study within the policy and procedures set out in the '**Marking, Moderation and Feedback Regulations**';
- (ii) drafting unseen examination papers on the module/s that they convene within the procedure set out in the '**Question Papers and Titles Regulations**'. Approval of

the examination paper with input from the External Examiner is the responsibility of the Deputy Chair of the PAB.

External Examiners

21. The detailed duties of External Examiners are set out in the *Handbook on the policy and procedures for the external examining of taught courses* which can be accessed from the following URL: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/externalexaminers>
22. External Examiners are required to confirm the appropriateness of the application of the marking and internal moderation processes, based on the assessment outcomes, and where appropriate confirm that any Professional and/or Statutory Body (PSB) requirements related to assessment have been met. They should not act as additional Markers on a par with internal examiners in any circumstances. See **'Marking, Moderation and Feedback Regulations'** for more information regarding moderation.

23. Powers of External Examiners

In their independent capacity External Examiners have the power to:

- (i) review proposed assessment tasks and make recommendations for improving the structure or content of the proposed module assessment including examination paper or other heavily weighted assessment;
- (ii) request and obtain reasonable access to assessed parts of any course, including evidence about a student's performance on a placement;
- (iii) for hard copy assessments, agree with the Deputy Chair of the PAB and the Chair of the Board of Study requirements for a suitable sample of assessments for external moderation drawn from the internal moderation process in line with the **'Marking, Moderation and Feedback Regulations'**;
- (iv) review and critique the outcome of the internal moderation process, based on the assessment outcomes in the sample;
- (v) not endorse the outcome of the internal moderation process;
- (vi) request that the decisions of the PAB are consistent with the requirements of any PSB.

24. Limits of External Examiners' powers

- (i) Where an External Examiner is unwilling to endorse the outcome of an individual student at the PAB, the final decision rests with the Chair of the PAB and not the External Examiner. Where such action is taken, the Chair must report the fact to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) immediately. External Examiners retain the right to make a separate confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor on such occasions.
- (ii) It is not University policy normally to involve External Examiners in participating in decisions relating to misconduct, except indirectly as a member of an examination board.

Appendix 1: undergraduate and postgraduate PABs with a different timing or remit

Candidates on the following courses may be considered at the following School PAB:

Business School

UG Finalist PAB: MBA Masters in Business Administration

PG Resit PAB: MBA Masters in Business Administration (January start)

ESW

UG Finalist PAB: PG Dip Social Work (Step Up to Social Work)

UG Progression PAB: BA Social Work (final stage); MA Social Work (Year 2); PG Dip Social Work (Year 2)

EngInfo

PG Resit PAB: to consider resits/sits for Semester 1 modules on MSc Intelligent and Adaptive Systems; MSc Robotics and Autonomous System

LPS

UG Finalist PAB: Dip GRAD in Law

Psychology

PG Resit PAB: PG Cert Low-Intensity Psychological Interventions for Children and Young People; PG Dip Psychological Therapy; PG Cert Mental Health Wellbeing Practice (January version); PG Dip Children's Wellbeing Practice (January version); Grad Cert Mental Health Wellbeing Practice (January Version); Grad Dip Children's Wellbeing Practice (January version) (final cohort awarded at PAB July 2024)

PGT Finalist PAB: Grad Dip Education Mental Health Practice; Grad Cert Mental Health Wellbeing Practice January version;

In-Year PAB (Summer): Grad Dip Children's Wellbeing Practice (final cohort awarded at PAB July 2024)

PGT courses with a January 2021 start date (see Appendix D(i)(a) for resit timing details):

University of Sussex Business School courses (except for MBA); MA Digital Media Practice: Activism and Social Change:
October PAB (interim); March PAB (Main).

Media, Arts and Humanities courses, with the exception of MA Digital Media Practice: Activism and Social Change:
July PAB (interim); March PAB (Main).