

## **Guide to the Code of Assessment – 6**

### **Responsibilities of Head of School, Assessment Officers and other examiners**

#### **6.1 Head of School**

#### **6.2 Assessment Officer**

#### **6.3 Examiners**

##### *6.3.1 Internal Examiners*

##### *6.3.2 External Examiners*

#### **6.4 Timing and duration of examinations**

## 6.1 Head of School

§16.54 Overall responsibility for management of the assessment scheme shall rest with the relevant Head of School.<sup>1</sup>

§16.57 The Head of School shall ensure that:

- a) all Internal Examiners, and especially those who are not members of academic staff of the University, receive appropriate training and other preparation relevant to their role in the assessment procedure;
- b) each External Examiner has access to the necessary information and assessment material required to assist them in reaching a reasonable conclusion on assessment performance, and has the opportunity to attend oral examinations and presentations where practicable.

§16.63 The method of marking (e.g. single marking, blind double marking, etc.) shall be made clear to candidates by the School.

§16.69 The Head of School shall ensure that the assessment scheme and its operation are monitored through the Annual Course Monitoring Report on the course.

§16.70 The Head of School shall encourage staff to take advantage of opportunities provided by the University to develop their knowledge of assessment procedures and practices with a view to ensuring that assessment schemes are effective and appropriate.

§16.58 The Head of School shall, for each course, appoint a member of academic, or academic related, staff as Assessment Officer with the following delegated responsibilities:

## 6.2 Assessment Officer

§16.58 ... a member of academic, or senior administrative, staff ... with the following delegated responsibilities:

- a) to ensure, in conjunction with the Course Co-ordinator or equivalent, that the relevant course documentation accurately describes the assessment scheme and corresponding procedures;
- b) to oversee the preparation of the relevant forms of assessment under secure conditions and ensure compliance with Senate's requirements in respect of printing of examination papers;<sup>2</sup>
- c) to supervise the arrangements for the assessment procedure including: the preparation of lists of candidates entitled to be assessed; procedures for recording the receipt of coursework at the time of its submission, and for safe keeping of such records, the anonymity of written work, where practicable, throughout its assessment; and any arrangements for candidates with special needs;
- d) to maintain throughout the assessment period the security of examination papers, other materials to be assessed and records, including examination attendance slips, relating to the procedure;
- e) to confirm arrangements for the secure collection and delivery of the completed scripts where appropriate;
- f) to ensure that all Examiners are conversant with the learning outcomes of the course, the intentions of the forms of assessment and the appropriate grading or classification scheme in use, and are supplied with marking schemes or other guides where these are employed;
- g) to convey provisional results and other information pertaining to the course, the assessment and the candidates to the External Examiner(s);
- h) to collate the provisional results of the assessment procedure and take all steps necessary to ensure their accurate reporting to the Board of Examiners;

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<sup>1</sup> Head of School means the Head or Heads of School or Schools responsible for the course, or other equivalent officers. [Footnote in the Code]

<sup>2</sup> The Senate's requirements are not published in the *University Regulations* but are set out in *Guidelines* sent out annually to teaching departments.

- i) to report to the Board of Examiners on the conduct of the assessment procedure, in particular drawing to its attention relevant information pertaining to the circumstances and conduct of individual candidates and any alleged deficiencies in respect of the operation of the procedure;
- j) to convey the results authenticated by the Board of Examiners to the Registry;
- k) to oversee the maintenance of appropriate records of assessment outcomes for the purposes of subsequent monitoring of courses.

An individual Assessment Officer may be responsible for more than one course. Similarly, some or all of the duties detailed above may be undertaken by one or more individuals at School level for some or all courses.

Particularly in larger Schools, a School Assessment Officer may be appointed to have oversight of assessment in all courses, providing advice and guidance to course Assessment Officers and acting as a single point of liaison between the School and the Registry.

### 6.3 Examiners

§16.55 The Examiners for the scheme shall comprise Internal Examiners and External Examiners.

a) The Internal Examiners shall be:

- i) all members of academic staff who teach on the programme;
- ii) other members of academic staff appointed by the Head of School;
- iii) other individuals whose services are to be employed in the assessment process (e.g. Honorary Lecturers, Research Fellows Category A, Graduate Teaching Assistants, staff from Associated Institutions, etc.); such individuals must be nominated by the Head of School and approved by the College (or by the Education Policy & Strategy Committee in the case of Associated Institutions).

b) At least one External Examiner shall be appointed by Court on the recommendation of the Head of School and in accordance with the criteria and procedures agreed by the Senate (see §16.64 (a) and (b)).

§16.56 The Examiners, and the appropriate Assessment Officer(s) under the convenership of the Head of School (or their nominee), shall constitute a Board of Examiners for the purpose of determining the results of the assessment procedure.

§16.61 Examiners shall be responsible for the assurance of standards through the exercise of their academic judgement both directly in the assessment of candidates' work and indirectly in the design of specific forms of assessment involving mechanical grading operations.

§16.65 All examiners shall maintain the security of examination scripts and other materials to be assessed. Throughout the assessment process examiners must ensure that the identity of any candidate is not disclosed through any form of communication, including e-mail. Examination scripts and other assessed materials must be retained by Schools for the periods [prescribed by Senate](#).

§16.66 a) Meetings of the Board of Examiners in respect of a particular course or programme shall be formally called and constituted, separately from other meetings such as School meetings. Subject to (b), all Examiners shall be members of the Board of Examiners and shall be invited to all meetings of the Board: the quorum shall comprise the Head of School (or their nominee), the Assessment Officer, an Internal Examiner and an External Examiner. If no External Examiner is present then written confirmation of the discharge of the functions of the External Examiner may be considered as equivalent to attendance. No person other than Examiners and others with direct responsibilities for examining and related administrative and clerical matters shall attend or observe meetings of the Board of Examiners. The business of the Board of Examiners shall be minuted and particular records kept of the External Examiner's adjudications, comments and recommendations, as well as particular decisions made by the Board in respect of incomplete assessment, good

cause and disciplinary matters. Returns of results shall be completed, checked by two persons and confirmed at the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

- b) In the case of joint or combined honours degrees the decision on classification of the honours degree for the programme shall be taken at a meeting of the subject Board of Examiners which takes place later. At such meetings the Board may be composed as set out in (a) for that subject or may involve a smaller number of members selected by the Board for that subject and representing that Board with power to agree a final classification on its behalf. The other subject will be represented by a number of members of the Board of Examiners for that subject. These representatives will have authority to agree the final classification to be awarded for the joint/combined honours degree and will convey the views of the earlier Board of Examiners, including those of External Examiner(s) present, to the later meeting. At the later meeting each of the subjects will have an equality of votes in determining the final degree classification. Where practicable the unapproved grades for the subject which has the later Board of Examiners meeting will be made available to the earlier Board of Examiners to enable it to discuss the final classification appropriate in light of these.

Note that Exam Board meetings may take place in person or remotely or on a hybrid basis. The arrangements should be noted on the [minute](#) from the meeting.

While the Code limits the number of people who should be present at a meeting of the Board of Examiners, it is acceptable to invite observers (such as School Learning & Teaching Convener) with a view to promoting best practice in the conduct of Exam Board meetings.

Regulation 16.66(b) deals with the conduct of honours boards in the case of students taking joint/combined honours programmes. For example a student taking joint honours in Politics and Philosophy. In such cases the boards for the two subjects are unlikely to meet on the same day or to be able to meet together as a single joint board. In such cases the regulation sets out the following procedure, assuming that the Politics board meets first:

- a) Philosophy will, if practicable, pass on the unconfirmed student grades so that these can be considered by the Politics board.
- b) The Politics board will consider all of the student's grades and form a view on the outcome.
- c) Representatives of the Politics board will be identified and will have authority to attend the Philosophy board and agree a classification.
- d) Attendance at the Philosophy board may involve attendance at a meeting of the whole Philosophy board or it may involve meeting with representatives of the Philosophy board, who will have power to agree a classification on behalf of that Board.
- e) Regardless of the format of the meeting the two subjects have an equality of votes if a vote is required.

§16.67 If a Board of Examiners suspects, on the basis of evidence before it, that a disciplinary offence has been committed by a candidate in respect of the assessment, the Board shall invoke the provisions of the Statement on Plagiarism ([Regulation 32](#)) or Code of Student Conduct ([Regulation 33](#)), as appropriate.

### 6.3.1 Internal Examiners

§16.62 Internal Examiners shall:

- a) have access to the relevant course documentation, possess an appropriate level of knowledge of the subject matter of the course, the course aims and the learning outcomes and the corresponding course materials;
- b) be provided with guidance as to how the grading or classification scheme is to be applied in the context of the particular assessment.

### 6.3.2 External Examiners

§16.64 External Examiners shall:

- a) hold an academic or professional post of an appropriate level of seniority;
- b) possess substantial prior experience of assessment at equivalent levels on behalf of institutions judged to be delivering and making awards of comparable standards. Exceptionally a professional nominee who lacks the required prior experience may be appointed provided at least one experienced External Examiner is also appointed for the same course;
- c) be appointed in accordance with the University's agreed procedures (see Appointment of External Examiners for Taught Courses at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Level [Regulation 23](#));
- d) have no potential conflict of interest or other impediment to the impartial discharge of the functions of external examining;
- e) discharge the following functions:
  - i) in respect of the design of the assessment scheme:
    - comment on the syllabus, learning outcomes and assessment scheme of the course and its delivery mechanism in the light of experiences of candidates' learning outcomes, comparable courses and awards elsewhere and developments within the discipline or field;
    - be consulted regarding proposals for the introduction or modification of a course;
  - ii) in respect of a given assessment diet:
    - comment on, in advance, all summative assessment instruments (or, in cases involving a high volume of continuous assessment, a sample may be provided for advance comment);
    - report on the overall standards achieved by candidates and in particular on the comparability of these standards with those of candidates on similar courses or programmes in other UK Higher Education institutions;
    - report on the relationship between these overall standards, programme specifications and published national subject benchmark statements;
    - assess the soundness and fairness of the implementation of the assessment process;
    - adjudicate where necessary, subject to the authority of Senate, over the grade to be awarded to any particular candidate;
    - certify contentment with the assessment outcomes prior to their publication;
    - provide an annual written report to the Principal as required by the University.
  - iii) in respect of meetings of the Board of Examiners:

attend at least one meeting of the Board per academic session.

§16.68 Academic Policy & Governance<sup>3</sup> shall forward External Examiners' reports to Schools within eight weeks of receipt identifying points to which a response is required. The Head of School shall arrange for External Examiners' reports to be considered by a School meeting and for appropriate responses to be made to specific recommendations made by the External Examiner: such responses to be conveyed within three months of receipt to the Senate Office.

§16.72 Academic Policy & Governance shall determine and administer procedures to be followed in respect of the appointment, reporting, remuneration and payment of expenses of

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<sup>3</sup> Academic Policy & Governance is a new unit which combines the former Senate and Academic Collaborations Offices.

External Examiners. Procedures shall include provision for the instruction of individual External Examiners to ensure that they understand and can fulfil their responsibilities.

School procedures to identify and select appropriate individuals to perform the role of External Examiners frequently rely on personal contacts and direct, informal communication. External Examiners must, however, be formally appointed prior to their assuming responsibilities, including submission of advice in respect of syllabus and curriculum. Schools should be familiar not only with the appointment procedures to be followed but also with the conditions determined by Senate which must be satisfied prior to appointment. Schools should also be aware of the University's terms and conditions of employment of External Examiners. Academic Policy & Governance web pages include extensive [guidance for External Examiners](#) and [nomination and report forms](#).

In order to ensure continuity of cover, attention should be paid to the duration of appointments of External Examiners, and steps taken in good time to recruit successors. Specific responsibilities, and how they should be fulfilled, should be clearly set out and discussed prior to appointment. In addition, Schools should provide External Examiners with all relevant information relating to the courses in which they will have an interest.

#### 6.4 Timing and duration of examinations<sup>4</sup>

§16.14 Where all or part of a course's scheme of assessment consists of an 'end of course' examination, that examination shall normally be held within the academic session in which the course has been taught.

§16.15 The duration of an examination which occurs within the main examination diets, and which forms all or part of a course's summative assessment, is subject to a limit determined by the level at which the course is taught, its credit rating, and the extent to which the examination contributes to the summative assessment of the course as a whole.

§16.16 Where more than one such examination for the same course occurs within the main examination diets, the maximum duration prescribed in §16.17 - §16.18, and the references in the same clauses to 'examination', shall apply to these examinations in combination.

§16.17 The duration of an examination as defined in §16.15 where it contributes 100% of the course's summative assessment, may not, subject to §16.19, exceed the number of minutes prescribed in Schedule D.

§16.18 Where such an examination accounts for less than 100% of the course's summative assessment, the maximum duration of such an examination shall be determined by the product of that percentage (expressed as a decimal fraction) and the number of minutes appropriate to credits and level indicated in Schedule D. Where the result of this calculation is less than 60 minutes, the minimum duration shall be rounded up to 60 minutes and, otherwise, subject to §16.19, the result shall be rounded to the nearest multiple of 30 minutes.

§16.19 Where the calculated maximum duration is 60 minutes or 90 minutes, the College in which responsibility for the examination lies may approve an extension of 30 minutes where such an extension is justified by the nature and content of the examination.

§16.20 The examination duration determined by these regulations may be allocated to two or more individual examinations which may be 60, 90, 120, or (only in the spring examination period) 180 minutes in length, all of these durations being inclusive of reading time.

§16.21 The maximum durations prescribed in §16.17 - §16.19 shall not limit the provision in §24.7 - §24.9 to allow extra time to examination candidates with disabilities.

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<sup>4</sup> §16.14-§16.21 relate to timed examinations taking place in exam halls on-campus or at other approved venues. While the provisions do not directly apply to online examinations, in determining the duration of the latter note should be taken of the principles set out in these provisions. [Footnote in the Code.]

## SCHEDULE D

Credits	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 3, H and M
10	90 minutes	120 minutes
15	120 minutes	150 minutes
20	150 minutes	180 minutes
30	240 minutes	240 minutes
40	330 minutes	330 minutes
60	480 minutes	480 minutes

### Example 6.A

The end of course examination for a 20 credit level 1 course accounts for 60% of the course assessment. The maximum duration allowed for that examination is found by multiplying the number of minutes read from Schedule D by 0.6. Thus:

$$\begin{aligned} &0.6 \times 150 \text{ minutes} \\ &= 90 \text{ minutes.} \end{aligned}$$

In accordance with §16.19, the College may increase this by 30 minutes if appropriate.

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The end of course examination for a 40 credit masters course accounts for 80% of the course assessment. The maximum duration for that examination is determined by multiplying the number of minutes obtained from Schedule D by 0.8. Thus:

$$\begin{aligned} &0.8 \times 330 \text{ minutes} \\ &= 264 \text{ minutes} \\ &\approx 270 \text{ minutes (rounded to the nearest multiple of 30)} \end{aligned}$$

In accordance with §16.20, this may be divided into two examinations of, say, 90 and 180 minutes (main spring diet) or three of, say, 60, 90 and 120 minutes.

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The assessment for a 30 credit Honours course consists of a written test conducted in class time (20%), an essay (30%) and an end of course examination (50%).

The class test does not reduce the time available for the examination whose duration is determined by multiplying the number of minutes obtained from Schedule D by 0.5. Thus:

$$\begin{aligned} &0.5 \times 240 \text{ minutes} \\ &= 120 \text{ minutes} \end{aligned}$$

§16.71 Where an examination is a component of a summative assessment scheme the Head of the Registry shall, in conjunction with the Assessment Officer responsible for the course, determine a suitable date and time for the examination;<sup>5</sup> and for examinations held on campus:

- a) allocate adequate accommodation, scripts and other materials as appropriate for the number of candidates to be examined;
- b) provide for secure delivery of the examination paper(s) to the accommodation.

The Head of Registry may delegate all or part of this to the Assessment Officer responsible for the course.

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<sup>5</sup> In scheduling examinations, the Registry shall take reasonable steps to ensure that no candidate is normally required to sit more than three examinations in two days and shall avoid, as far as possible, a candidate sitting a morning examination the day after an evening examination. [Footnote in the Code.]

On-campus examinations generally place Schools in competition with each other for suitable accommodation. Students should have adequate time for preparation between the end of teaching and the end-of-course assessment but this can be jeopardised by other timetabling constraints. In order to minimise waste and inefficiency in the timetabling process the information exchanged between the Registry and Schools should be as accurate as possible. Incorrect candidate lists lead to waste of space and time, and generate uncertainty for invigilators. Effective communication should be established and maintained between Assessment Officers, Advisers, Disability Co-ordinators and the Examinations Section of the Registry.

The constraints on examination accommodation should be taken into account during the design of schemes of assessment if there is no compelling reason for preferring an on-campus written examination to an alternative form of assessment such as an online exam.

The centralised system for delivery of examination papers and appropriate script books requires that Schools respect printing and information return deadlines and, to that end, maintain efficient control of preparatory proof reading and correspondence with External Examiners.