Aston University

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

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1 GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

Throughout these Regulations, the term “Executive Dean” may be interpreted to mean the person so designated by the Senate for inter-School or collaborative programmes.

1.1 Membership of Boards of Examiners

1.1.1 Members of Boards of Examiners other than the External Examiner(s) shall be appointed from among members of the Academic Staff or Visiting Academic Staff of the University, other categories of the teaching staff of the University and the Staff of Partner Institutions approved by the Senate for the purpose. Other Staff of the University or Partner Institutions may be in attendance.

1.1.2 Academic support officers, research staff and academic-related staff who are involved in the teaching of modules are approved by the Senate as the other categories of teaching staff of the University that may be appointed as members of Boards of Examiners.

1.1.3 Membership of Boards of Examiners and the Chair and Deputy Chair thereof shall be appointed by the appropriate School Learning and Teaching Committee (or equivalent). Board membership should be finalised before the end of the first term of the academic year.

1.1.4 The Board of Examiners for the final stage of a programme shall include the External Examiner(s) for the programme.

1.1.5 Where a Module Board is appointed, it shall include the Internal Examiner responsible for every module within the remit of that Module Board.

1.1.6 A Programme Board shall include the Internal Examiner for any module of the relevant programme stage that does not fall within the remit of a Module Board.

1.1.7 In order to inform their decisions, Boards of Examiners may invite the attendance or comments of internal moderators, and appropriate tutors not already members in some other capacity, such attendance not conferring rights of membership. The right of attendance is limited to those who are formally approved as members of the Board unless otherwise specified in these regulations.

1.2 Chairs of Boards of Examiners

1.2.1 Appointment

The Chair is appointed from among the members of the Board of Examiners by the Senate on the recommendation of the appropriate School Learning and Teaching Committee on the recommendation of the appropriate Management Team *(see Ordinance VI)*. The Chair of each Board of Examiners should be appointed before the end of the first term of the session. The Executive Dean or her/his nominee must be a member of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners but does not necessarily need to be the Chair.

1.2.2 Responsibilities and Duties

a The Chair is responsible for:

i convening meetings of the Board. Dates for the meeting of each Final Board of Examiners should be arranged with the External Examiner(s) as early as possible after consultation with Registry;

ii keeping a record of those present at each meeting and notifying this to Registry;

iii keeping a record of the decisions and recommendations made by the Board of Examiners and notifying them to Registry;

iv taking any other necessary action arising from the deliberations of the Board.

b The Chair has a duty to ensure that all the relevant information on each student's performance is considered by the Board of Examiners, including any factors other than the marks which may have been brought to the Chair's notice.

c The Chair also has a duty to consult with appropriate Tutors in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners if necessary. (*Senate Minute 71/69*)

1.3 Conflict of Interest

1.3.1 In order to avoid any suggestion of bias or favouritism, any member of staff who is a member of a Board of Examiners (or who is otherwise involved in the assessment of students' work) having a present or past relationship with a candidate beyond the usual academic one is obliged to declare such an interest in confidence to his or her Executive Dean and/or Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners.

1.3.2 The Executive Dean or Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners should consider whether the relationship might be seen as casting doubt on the Examiner's ability to evaluate the candidate's work with the appropriate degree of impartiality and objectivity. He or she should then decide whether the member of staff may continue to serve as a member of the Board or whether any special arrangements should be made. The Examiner's Executive Dean will consult the Chair of the Board of Examiners if the membership or operation of the Board of Examiners is likely to be compromised in any way.

1.4 Quorum

1.4.1 The quorum for meetings of a Board of Examiners shall be two-thirds of the internal members of the approved Board (rounded up to the next whole number), except for subsidiary meetings, where the quorum shall be one-third of the original membership of the Board of Examiners or a minimum of four, whichever is the greater; agreed subsidiary meetings include September Boards to consider referred assessment results.

1.4.2 The minimum attendance requirement for subsidiary meetings to hear the individual submissions of students in jeopardy of being required to withdraw (Representations Board) shall be four members of the Board, including the Chair (or Deputy Chair). There should be no limit on attendance so that any members of the Board who wish to attend may do so.

1.4.3 The quorum for all meetings shall include the Chair or Deputy Chair or a substitute approved by the Senate.

1.5 Decisions and Voting Procedures

Decisions of a Board of Examiners may be taken by a simple majority of votes of those present who are members of the Board. Persons in attendance may not vote. The Chair does not vote in the first instance, but shall have a casting vote.

1.6 Responsibilities

1.6.1 Module Boards are responsible for the award of marks to students on individual modules; Programme Boards are responsible for recommendations for the conferment of University awards and decisions on progression on the basis of marks from Module Boards.

1.6.2 Boards of Examiners are the only bodies authorised to assess students and must act in accordance with University General and Programme Regulations. Within these regulations, Boards of Examiners have discretion in reaching decisions on the marks and awards to be recommended for individual candidates.

1.6.3 Boards of Examiners may not vary those of their decisions or recommendations which have been arrived at with the agreement of the External Examiner(s) without the approval of the External Examiner(s).

2 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

2.1 Purposes and Functions

2.1.1 The purposes of the external examiner system are to ensure, firstly and most importantly, that qualifications awarded in similar subjects are comparable in standard in all universities in the United Kingdom; and secondly that the assessment system is fair and is fairly operated in the classification of students.

2.1.2 In order to achieve these purposes, External Examiners need to be able to:

a participate in assessment processes for the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees;

b arbitrate or adjudicate on problem cases;

c comment and give advice on course content, balance and structure, on certificate, diploma and degree schemes, and on assessment processes.

2.1.3 The University will not make publicly available any information which could lead to the identification of individual External Examiners, compromising their independence.

2.2. Collaborative Provision

2.2.1 The University recognises the important role played by External Examiners in assuring the standards and quality of programmes of study leading to an award of the University.

2.2.2 Senate is responsible for the academic standard of all awards granted in the name of the University. The academic standard of all awards made under a collaborative arrangement must be equivalent to that of any comparable awards for programmes delivered at or by the University.

2.2.3 Unless Senate resolves otherwise, the partner institution shall comply with all Senate Regulations that may apply to programmes of study leading to an award of the University including these regulations.

2.3 Formal Requirements

2.3.1 External Examiners are responsible to the Senate which approves their appointment and which awards certificates, diplomas and degrees.

2.3.2 No certificate, diploma or degree should be awarded without participation in the examining process by at least one examiner external to the University who is a full member of the relevant Board of Examiners.

2.3.3 The signature(s) of the relevant External Examiner(s) must be appended to the final list of results, preferably before leaving the University, as evidence that the External Examiner accepts the Board's recommendations.

2.3.4 Each External Examiner, on appointment, will be sent a written statement by the appropriate School(s) about the place of the relevant examination in the University's system of education in that subject, and on the organisation and phasing of the relevant curriculum.

2.4 Selection, Appointment and Period of Service

2.4.1 After discussion in Schools, recommendations are made to the Senate for the appointment of particular persons as External Examiners. Scrutiny by the Schools and Senate should have regard to the criteria for appointment of External Examiners, Appendix 1.

2.4.2 External Examiners from outside the university system, for example from industry or the professions, may be appointed in appropriate circumstances.

2.4.3 The number of External Examiners for any particular module(s) must be sufficient to cover the range of studies in the degree programme. More than one External Examiner may be needed where there are a large number of students or where the degree programme covers a wide range of subjects.

2.4.4 In recommending External Examiners for appointment, Schools should specify whether the appointment is to advise on the assessment of a module or group of modules or to advise on the assessment of a programme or group of programmes, or to advise on both.

2.5 Participation in Meetings

2.5.1 An External Examiner, as a full member of the relevant Board of Examiners, has the right to be present at all examiners' meetings at which significant decisions are to be taken.

2.5.2 External Examiners are encouraged to attend all appropriate meetings of the Examination Board and are required to attend in person a minimum of one Examination Board in each year of their period of office.

2.5.3 Provided the minimum attendance requirement is met, if an External Examiner is unable to attend a meeting of the Examination Board he or she may be absent but is required to participate fully in the assessment process and to be available for consultation at the time the Examination Board is held (e.g. by telephone). Under exceptional circumstances, for example serious illness of an External Examiner, Schools may request that the Regulation Sub-Committee waive the minimum attendance requirement (R8.3.1 Waivers of Regulations).

2.6 Papers and Scripts

2.6.1 All draft final examination papers must be sent to the External Examiners for approval well in advance of the examination. In appropriate cases External Examiners may be invited to set some questions or complete papers. In some subjects it may be essential for model answers to be prepared and scrutinised.

2.6.2 An External Examiner has the right to see all final examination scripts. In those cases where it has been agreed that the inviting School makes a selection of scripts to be sent to an External Examiner, the principles for such selection must be agreed with him or her in advance.

2.6.3 The guiding principle for any selection of scripts is that External Examiners will have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. External Examiners must see a sample of scripts from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range and they must see all scripts of borderline candidates (normally, candidates whose overall average mark for the programme falls within 2% of a recognised mark boundary). They must also see all scripts assessed internally as failures which have not been moderated by a second marker.

2.7 V*iva Voce*

2.7.1 Examination Boards will agree clear criteria for how candidates for general *viva voce* will be chosen. A general *viva voce* will normally be conducted by an External Examiner who may be assisted by one or more Internal Examiner(s).

2.7.2 Where an oral examination is an integral part of the assessment scheme (e.g. for Modern Languages programmes) the External Examiner may determine those candidates, if any, whose examination he or she wishes to attend.

2.7.3 For further information External Examiners should consult the Assessment Regulations and Policies.

2.7.4 Examinations, including general *Viva Voce*, will not be held outside of Aston University's term-dates and other examination periods approved by the Senate.

2.8 Examiners' Views and Comments

2.8.1 External Examiners must see the syllabus of modules on which the assessments are set.

2.8.2 An External Examiner has the right to see any work that contributes to the assessment and, where relevant, the degree classification. In some cases it may be agreed that the School makes a selection of such work to be sent to the External Examiner, the principles for such selection being agreed in advance with the Examiner.

2.8.3 In the case of discussion on the final classification to be derived from the array of marks of a particular candidate at the examiners' meeting the views of the External Examiner should be influential. External Examiners' views are also significant in determining the appropriateness of the mark profile for modules including any adjustment needed due to unforeseen circumstances. External Examiners are not expected to act as markers for individual candidates or scripts. Their role is that of moderation when a disparity exists between internal markers.

2.8.4 External Examiners will be encouraged to comment on the assessment process and the schemes for marking and classification and encouraged to give advice to Internal Examiners, especially the inexperienced, either directly or through the Executive Dean or their nominee.

2.9 Discussion of Module/Programme Structure and Degree Schemes

2.9.1 Schools and External Examiners should use the opportunity afforded by the visits of External Examiners to discuss the structure and content of the module/programme

and the curriculum, and the assessment procedures. Any comments or suggestions made by the External Examiners should be discussed by the Schools and an explicit decision made about whether or not to introduce changes.

2.10 Reports

2.10.1 External Examiners are required to submit written annual reports to the Chief Operating Officer, or their nominee, within one month of the meeting of the relevant Examination Board. They are free to make any comments they wish, including observations on teaching methods, programme structure and course content.

2.10.2 The Senate has agreed that the payment of each External Examiner's fee will be contingent upon the receipt of his or her annual report. Payment of the External Examiner's claims for expenses are not affected by this decision.

2.10.3 External Examiners' annual reports are regarded as public documents which will be provided to the University's student representatives (in line with the recommendations of the HEFCE). Reports will be made available to other External Examiners of the University. They may also be sent to certain external bodies such as the Research Councils or accreditation groups. In this regard, an External Examiner's consent to act will constitute the necessary implied licence to use their copyright. External Examiners may wish to send additional separate confidential reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

2.10.4 External Examiners' annual reports will be made available for wide discussion within the University. Each report will be submitted initially to the Chief Operating Officer, or their nominee, who co-ordinates appropriate action for the University or the Schools to take in response to any significant issues raised by the External Examiner. Each report will also be copied to the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and the relevant Executive and Associate Dean(s).

2.10.5 The report made by an External Examiner at the conclusion of his or her term of office may be copied to the incoming External Examiner at the start of the new examiner's first year.

2.10.6 It is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Deans to see that the reports are considered and appropriate action is taken by the School Learning and Teaching Committee or other bodies. Schools are responsible for identifying the locus of responsibility for producing written responses to External Examiners' reports and ensuring this is made clear to all staff. Executive Deans are responsible for ensuring that External Examiners receive a written response to any issues raised in their formal reports by the time the annual monitoring process for the programme(s) has taken place, and that any actions identified are completed. Written responses to External Examiners are copied to the Chief Operating Officer, or their nominee.

2.10.7 The University attaches considerable weight to the External Examiners' reports within quality assurance procedures and as an indicator of the health of programmes. Programme Committees are required within the University's annual monitoring procedures to report on issues raised by External Examiners, and actions taken/proposed in response to them. External Examiners' reports and written responses to them will also be required by the programme review panels set up by the Senate's University Learning and Teaching Committee.

3 MODULE BOARDS

A Module Board may be established for a module contributing to a University award. Typically a Module Board will cover one or more modules within a cognate subject area. Where a separate Module Board has been established, the Board will meet and confirm marks before the meetings of relevant Programme Boards.

3.1 Membership

a A Module Board of Examiners shall be composed as follows:
   i a Chair appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the School Learning and Teaching Committee;
   ii at least one representative of the staff having a major responsibility for teaching and/or assessment of each module;
   iii the Module External Examiner(s), where appointed.

b The Chair (or their nominees) of Programme Boards serviced by the Module Board will have the right to attend Module Boards but will not be members, unless qualified by one of the conditions above.

3.2 Responsibilities of Module Boards

The responsibilities of Module Boards are:

a to determine and report to Programme Boards the award of marks for all candidates in the context of overall averages, student performance and particular circumstances affecting the assessment and conduct of the module, and, where appointed, the comments of External Examiners;

b in any case of reported exceptional circumstances or cases of cheating and plagiarism affecting individual candidates, to report the mark actually achieved by the candidate (that is, without making allowance for exceptional or other circumstances) and to provide the Chair of the Programme Board with full information concerning the details of the case together with any mark recommendation for consideration by the Programme Board;

c to monitor the performance of the various cohorts of students from different programmes attending a particular module, and to report substantial differences in such performances to the appropriate Programme Boards and to the appropriate Programme Committees for annual monitoring purposes;

d to indicate clearly and make recommendations concerning instances of module failure which may be condoned by a Programme Board in the light of the candidate's overall performance;

e to act within their remit noting that it is the Programme Board which takes the final decisions on condonement for failure, progression, referral and deferral, confirmation of award and honours classification of individual students in the context of their overall performance, on any allowances made for exceptional circumstances, and on penalties for cheating and plagiarism (taking account of recommendations from Module Boards) in accordance with Disciplinary Board decisions as appropriate.

A Module Board may make recommendations on condonement, referral, substitution of modules, or any other module level issue including exceptional circumstances when applied to the whole module (e.g. problems with an examination which affect all students).

A Programme Board (in light of the wider range of evidence available to it) may decide not to follow the Module Board's recommendation(s).

3.3 Publication of Results

3.3.1 Where all the relevant Programme Boards meet shortly after Module Boards, the marks awarded will be published by the Programme Board to individual students with their recommendations relating to progression or award.

3.3.2 It is accepted however that decisions on marks may be needed urgently in order for students to select study options (or to retrieve failure) for the following stage and where there is some delay between meetings of Module and Programme Boards, percentage marks may be released to students prior to a meeting of the Programme Board with the proviso that the marks are provisional and may be subject to amendment by the Programme Board.

4 PROGRAMME BOARDS

The main responsibility of a Programme Board is to make decisions about interim and final awards and about the progression of students on their programmes.

A Programme Board is the only body authorised to recommend the conferment of an award of the University upon a student who, in the judgement of the Board, has fulfilled the outcomes of the approved programme and achieved the standard required for the award.

4.1 Membership of Programme Boards

A Programme Board shall be composed as follows:

a a Chairperson appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the School Learning and Teaching Committee responsible for the programme;
b representatives of the staff associated with programme management;
c representatives of the appropriate Module Boards, normally one per Board;
d the Internal Examiner for any module of the relevant programme stage that does not fall within the remit of a Module Board;
e appropriate Executive Dean(s) or his/her nominee, if not already members (ex officio);
f the External Examiner(s).

4.2 Responsibilities of Programme Boards

Programme Boards will operate within the University's assessment regulations and within any approved programme-specific assessment regulations, and have the following specific responsibilities:

a to receive confirmed marks as recommended by Module Boards;
b to consider any communications from staff and/or students relevant to its work, and in particular submissions from individual students with any relevant information on personal circumstances, including exceptional circumstances, which may have affected their performance and which they wish the examiners to take into account. Programme Boards should not systematically adjust marks for all students taking a module where these marks have already been determined by a Module Board. An

Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Panel may be convened to advise the Board (see Section 5 below);

c to decide on any changes to be made to reported marks in the light of proven cases of exceptional circumstances or academic offences. Programme Boards must have available full details of all such cases, together with any comments or recommendations from Module Boards or Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Panels;

d to decide on the award of credit by condonement;

e to consider the achievement of students completing programmes and to recommend to the Senate the conferment of awards and the class or grade of such awards;

f to recommend to the Senate the award of University prizes and other prizes as appropriate;

g to make decisions about the progression of students on programmes of study and to ensure that students are informed of their results;

h in the event of a student failing to meet the requirements for immediate progression, to make appropriate decisions in accordance with the General Regulations, Options in Case of Failure, taking account of the recommendations from Module Boards;

i to review a decision or recommendation when required to do so under the terms of the University's Academic Appeal procedures;

j to make recommendations to the Programme Committees on the assessment arrangements for the programme as a whole, and to report to the Programme Committees any significant issues;

k the development of precedents.

A Module Board may make recommendations on condonement, referral, substitution of modules, or any other module level issue including exceptional circumstances when applied to the whole module (e.g. problems with an examination which affect all students). A Programme Board (in light of the wider range of evidence available to it) may decide not to follow the Module Board's recommendation(s).

5 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ABSENCE PANEL (ECAP)

5.1 An Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Panel, chaired by a senior member of School staff, will meet each semester in advance of final module assessments. The role of the Panel is to facilitate timely consideration of and promote consistency of approach to student exceptional circumstances and absence from assessment. The Panel supports the work of Programme Boards of Examiners. Students will be notified of the date of the Panel in good time.

5.2 Decisions of the Panel

a The Panel is empowered to make the following decisions in the light of available evidence including student submissions.

C Approve Exceptional Circumstances for Absence (ECA) from an assessment/examination (specify assessment/examination)
D Reject ECA from an assessment/examination (specify assessment/examination)
E Approve Exceptional Circumstances for Performance (ECP) in attended assessment/examination
Optional

E1 – strong ECP: Accept
E2 – medium ECP: Accept
E3 – weak ECP: Accept

F Reject Exceptional Circumstances for Performance in attended assessment/examination (ECP very weak or no evidence)

b Leave of Absence (LOA), other than absence from assessment due to exceptional circumstances, are approved by the School. ECAP Panels receive a list of approved LOA and may make recommendations to the Programme Board of Examiners about the general pattern of approved absences.

c The decisions of the Panel (E-F) will be notified to students and to the Programme Board of Examiners.

5.3 Recommendations of the Panel

The Panel may make recommendations to the Programme Board of Examiners regarding:

a the re-assessment, condonement or degree classification of individual students who require special consideration because of accepted exceptional circumstances or assessment-related regulatory issues such as cheating or plagiarism;

b students whose enrolment is to be terminated, either by the University (on academic or non-academic grounds) or by the student; such students may also be eligible for consideration for an intermediate award.

5.4 The meetings of the Panel must be minuted. If necessary an 'in confidence' record, accessible only to the Chair of the Panel, the Chair and Secretary to the relevant Programme Board, and the Programme External Examiner(s) will be kept which provides justification for the decisions of the Panel and recommendations to Programme Boards.

5.5 The Programme Board retains the responsibility for the final decision on matters listed under R5.3 but it is expected that recommendations of the Panel will normally be accepted.

5.6 A student's written statement of exceptional circumstances should give full details and should include supplementary evidence and testimony from independent or third parties, for example a medical certificate or letter from an employer, indicating the time, nature and probable effect of the circumstances.

5.7 All statements of exceptional circumstances will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed outside the Panel and Programme Boards of Examiners. Where circumstances are particularly sensitive students may request that they are disclosed only to the Chair of the Panel, the Chair and Secretary of the Programme Board and the Programme External Examiner(s). See Appendix 2 on Requests made to the Student Counselling Service for letters/documentation as part of a student's Exceptional Circumstances claim.

5.8 The submission of a claim of exceptional circumstances will not necessarily cause the Programme Board of Examiners to come to a different decision.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS

6.1 Assessments and Marking Schemes

6.1.1 Schools should ensure that programme and module specifications (including marking schemes and assessment weightings) are available to students at the beginning of the academic year.

6.1.2 Examination and coursework questions should appropriately reflect the Level of the credit to be assessed, and are expected to differ according to Level, either in the assessment question set, or in the mark scheme to be used.

6.1.3 Changes to assessment which have a retrospective effect on current students must not be introduced without full consultation with all students affected.

6.2 Moderation and Anonymous Marking

6.2.1 A minimum of 20% of final year written examination scripts will be moderated.

6.2.2 A minimum of 20% of final year coursework which contributes a significant percentage of marks to the overall module mark (i.e. 30% or more), or which assess a crucial aspect of the module, will be moderated.

6.2.3 All substantial final year projects (i.e. projects carrying 20 credits or more) will be moderated.

6.2.4 Dissertations and major undergraduate projects will be independently double marked. Definitions of marking practices are available in the Assessment Regulations and Policies, *REG/12/368, and subsequent versions*.

6.3 Reconvening the Board

6.3.1 The Board should be reconvened if it is found that incorrect or incomplete information about a candidate's academic performance has been considered.

6.3.2 If, after a meeting of the Board of Examiners, it is found that a procedural error has affected any decision taken by the Board, the Board must be reconvened.

6.3.3 Within the provisions of the General Regulations and the Regulations for the particular programme, the decisions of the Board of Examiners shall be final (*Ordinance IX*) but a student wishing to request a formal review of the decision of a Board of Examiners may appeal on the grounds set out in the University's *Academic Appeals Procedure.*

6.4 Notification of Decisions

6.4.1 The Schools are responsible for arranging for final assessment results to be signed off by the appropriate Chair of the Examination Board and External Examiner(s) and, following this, for notifying Registry of the decisions of Boards of Examiners.

6.4.2 Registry arrange for final assessment results to be approved by the Vice-Chancellor or Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the Senate.

6.5 Release of Results to Students

6.5.1 Results of all assessment whether of individual assignments, modules or overall averages should be released to students as percentage marks rather than grades.

6.5.2 Marks may be released to students prior to a meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners on condition that it is clearly indicated that the marks are provisional (not yet confirmed by a Board of Examiners) and may be subject to amendment by the Board of Examiners.

7 EXAMINATION RECORDS

7.1 Records of the Board's Meetings

7.1.1 The Board should keep notes of the factors taken into account when decisions were made, particularly to assist in the development of precedents.
7.1.2 Any notes on Boards of Examiners' meetings should remain confidential and should be kept securely.
7.1.3 As any notes on Boards of Examiners' meetings are confidential any relevant issues should be referred to Programme Committees (or other bodies as appropriate) by memo.

7.2 Storage of Examination Scripts

These guidelines are based on the retention schedule for records published by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), taking into account relevant legislation such as the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

7.2.1 All assessments (examinations and coursework) which contribute to the final mark for a stage should be kept at least for one year following the year in which they were submitted (this includes L4 and L5 assessments). These data should be kept to allow the University to deal with any appeals/complaints from students that withdraw or leave with lesser awards, as well as meeting the JISC guidance.
7.2.2 For students that complete the full programme L5, LP and L6 assessments should be retained for one year following graduation. This appears to be a significant length of time to retain L5 assessments. This work should be retained in case of complaints etc which could occur during and after L6.
7.2.3 Professional body requirements should be taken into account. They may have additional record-keeping requirements.
7.2.4 Records of marks, exam board decisions, any evidence of exceptional circumstances or other factors influencing awards should be kept for at least six years after the year in which the assessment occurs.
7.2.5 If an appeal or complaint is notified (up to one year after graduation) it is advisable to retain the marked work for the individual student. The JISC guideline is that marked assessments should be retained for six years following notification of an appeal or complaint.

8 REGULATIONS

8.1 General and Programme Regulations

8.1.1 Where a programme has been revised and the Programme Regulations have been amended to reflect those revisions, the Board of Examiners may find that several different sets of Programme Regulations are needed to cover all the students in all years of the programme.

8.1.2 The Board of Examiners will therefore need to take care that they are referring to the correct set of Programme Regulations when considering a particular individual or group of students. This is particularly important when considering students who have repeated a year.

8.2 Interpretation of Regulations

8.2.1 If the Board of Examiners is in doubt about the interpretation of any University Regulation, the Chair should consult the Secretary or the Secretary to the Regulation Sub-Committee either before or during the meeting.

8.3 Waivers of Regulations

8.3.1 Where, in the opinion of the School Learning and Teaching Committee, there are exceptional circumstances affecting the Examination and/or Assessment processes which could not reasonably have been foreseen, for example illness of an External Examiner, the School may request that the Regulation Sub-Committee waive any relevant part of these Regulations on such conditions as it may deem appropriate.

9 REPRESENTATIONS BY STUDENTS

9.1 Students Required to Withdraw from a Programme

9.1.1 Before reaching the decision that a student should withdraw from a programme, the Board of Examiners[+] shall give the student concerned, aided by a member of the University, a Welfare Adviser in the Students' Union or by a member of staff acceptable to the Senate, if so desired, an opportunity to make representations, in writing or in person or both, of any circumstances that were unknown to the Board when the first decision was made which might have affected his/her performance. (*General Regulations: Undergraduate R6.5, Foundation Degree R6.6, Graduate Diploma R6.5 and Postgraduate Taught R7.4)*

9.2 Inviting Representation: the Jeopardy letter

9.2.1 The jeopardy letter is used to invite representation from a student when a student's membership of the University is in jeopardy. An example is given in Appendix 2.

9.3 Academic Appeals Procedure

9.3.1 A student wishing to request a formal review of the decision of a Board of Examiners may appeal on the grounds set out in the University's Academic Appeals Procedure. The decisions of the Board of Examiners in all matters relating to academic judgement shall be final.

[+] see Section 4.1 above, concerning membership of the Board.

10 EXAMINATIONS

10.1 Abandonment of an Examination

10.1.1 Where an examination is abandoned for any reason, Registry will transmit a report on the circumstances to the Chair of the Board of Examiners. On receipt of the report, the Chair should call an emergency meeting of the Board.

10.1.2 In the light of the evidence, the Board of Examiners will be asked to decide:

- whether to accept the partially completed scripts (or equivalent evidence) as being a sufficient basis on which to assess the candidates' performance in the examination;
- whether to accept the partially completed scripts (or equivalent evidence), but to require each candidate to submit, in addition, to a supplementary examination. (*Senate Minute 77/524I*)

10.2 Examination Malpractice

10.2.1 As far as possible the roles of the Board of Examiners and the Disciplinary Board are intended to be separate. In any case where alleged malpractice has been reported, the Board of Examiners should follow the *Regulations on Student Discipline: Section B6, REG/12/379 and subsequent versions.*

10.2.2 Cases of alleged examination malpractice should be reported by the invigilator to the Chief Operating Officer, or their nominee. Any member of staff who suspects examination malpractice where there is no formal invigilator (e.g. in continuous assessment) should report the matter to the Executive Dean.

10.3 Misconduct in Coursework

10.3.1 Misconduct in any assessment which does not contribute to a mark for a module falls within the jurisdiction of the Executive Dean concerned. *(Regulations on Student Discipline, A1.3, REG/12/379 and subsequent versions.*

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Appendix 1

Criteria for the appointment of external examiners

1 Every external examiner will be expected to have:

- competence and experience in the field covered by the course
- academic qualifications/professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined
- experience of setting examinations and running assessment procedures (either externally or internally)
- sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of colleagues
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students in the course to be examined
- fluency in English
- met the criteria set out by professional and accrediting bodies
- awareness of modern developments in the design and delivery of the flexible curriculum
- expertise in the enhancement of the student experience

2 Former staff and students can only be appointed as external examiners for the University after a period of not less than five years has passed since leaving Aston.

3 Retirees can be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.

4 External examiners should hold no more than two external examiner appointments at any point in time.

5 To avoid potential conflicts of interest, external examiners should not be appointed if they are covered by any of the following categories:

- member of Council
- near relative of a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
- anyone already appointed as an examiner on a cognate course
- anyone closely associated with the sponsorship of students on the course
- anyone closely associated with placements or training
- anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
- anyone in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
- anyone involved in collaborative research activities with a member of staff
- anyone who has been directly involved as an external advisor/member of the programme approval panel for the programme

6 Reciprocal arrangements between Aston and other institutions are not allowed.

7 The replacement of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same department in the same institution is not allowed.

8 No more than one external examiner should be appointed to a course from any one department.

9 The duration of an external examiner's appointment will be four years.

10 An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since their last appointment.

11 The appointment of an external examiner can be terminated by the University, approved at a senior level, if they fail to fulfil their obligations at the end of any single year of appointment.

12 Colleagues who are new to external examining or have professional experience relevant to a professional or vocational programme can be appointed provided they are given appropriate support (e.g. part of a team and mentored by an external examiner that meets the criteria outlined in 1–9 above).

13 Once appointed, the University and School will make it clear to external examiners what their duties and obligations are, including those relating to attendance and feedback, and any legal obligations.

Appendix 2

Students in Jeopardy
Guidance Notes

When a Board of Examiners has identified that a student is in jeopardy, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Priority should be given to processing the results of those students who are in jeopardy.

2. The progression procedure will include displaying the following message on MAP:
   The Board of Examiners for (programme title) has met to consider your examination results.
   You have failed a substantial proportion of the modules for your programme and the Board of Examiners may therefore require you to leave the programme. A transcript of your results is available to view on MAP and a full copy of the transcript will also be sent by post to your home address.
   Before making a final decision on whether you must leave the programme, the Board of Examiners will give you an opportunity to explain any circumstances that were previously unknown to the Board and might have affected your performance. You may put your case to the Board of Examiners in writing and/or in person. Full details about this and how you may obtain further help and advice will be sent to your Aston University email account and to your home address.
   In the meantime if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact (*name*) on *(telephone no. and email address).*
3. The email and letter **must** be generated from SITS using SRL. A sample of the email and letter to be sent is shown below.
4. All students have a Personal Contact (usually Personal Tutor or in the case of ABS the generic student advisor details) recorded on MAP, this contact will be included in the email/letter below for students to contact for help with the jeopardy process.
5. Normally, all students must be given a minimum of two weeks from the date of email to indicate his/her intention to appeal.
6. After receiving the email/letter below, if a student indicates his/her intention to attend the reconvened Board, a further email should be sent to give the student full details of the date, time and venue of the Board, a copy of the email should be sent to ARC. Students should be given an indication of the time that his/her case will be heard.

Example Jeopardy Email

Destination
(Aston email address, cc ARC + Personal contact)

Reference: (Student No.)

Date

Dear (*name)*
The Board of Examiners for (programme title) has met to consider your examination results.
You have failed a substantial proportion of the modules for your programme and the Board of Examiners may therefore require you to leave the programme. A transcript of your results is available to view on MAP and a full copy of the transcript will be sent by post to your home address.
Before making a final decision on whether you must leave the programme, the Board of Examiners will give you an opportunity to explain any circumstances that were previously unknown to the Board and might have affected your performance. You may put your case to the Board of Examiners in writing and/or in person. You may be aided by another member of the University if you wish.
Your personal contact is (*Personal contact details from SITS)* who is available on (*email address)*.
The Board of Examiners will meet to decide whether you must leave the programme at (*reconvened time*) on *(reconvened date*). Any written case you may wish to make to the Board and/or an indication of an intention to appear in person should reach me no later than (*reply time)* on (*reply date)*.
If you require any further information or advice, please contact me as soon as possible (*email* and *telephone number)*. Alternatively you may wish to contact the Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) on the first floor of the Students' Union (email: arc@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 204 4848). I have sent a copy of this email to ARC so they will be prepared for you to contact them.
Yours sincerely
(*name)*

Example Jeopardy Letter

Destination
(Home address)

Reference: (Student No.)

Date

Dear (*name)*
The Board of Examiners for (programme title) has met to consider your examination results.
You have failed a substantial proportion of the modules for your programme and the Board of Examiners may therefore require you to leave the programme. A full copy of your transcript is enclosed.
Before making a final decision on whether you must leave the programme, the Board of Examiners will give you an opportunity to explain any circumstances that were previously unknown to the Board and might have affected your performance. You may put your case to the Board of Examiners in writing and/or in person. You may be aided by another member of the University if you wish. Your personal contact is (*Personal contact details from SITS)* who is available on (*email address)*.
The Board of Examiners will meet to decide whether you must leave the programme at (*reconvened time*) on *(reconvened date*). Any written case you may wish to make to the Board and/or an indication of an intention to appear in person should reach me no later than (*reply time)* on (*reply date)*.
If you require any further information or advice, please contact me as soon as possible (*email* and *telephone number)*. Alternatively you may wish to contact the Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) on the first floor of the Students' Union (email: arc@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 204 4848). I have sent a copy of this email to ARC so they will be prepared for you to contact them.
Yours sincerely
(*name)*

Appendix 3

ASTON UNIVERSITY REG/04/235

LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

Requests made to the Student Counselling Service for letters/documentation as part of a student's Exceptional Circumstances claim

It is appropriate to seek documentation from the Counselling Service to support a claim of Exceptional Circumstances only when the student has an existing relationship with the Counselling Service. An existing relationship is indicated in cases where, *prior* to a request for documentation to support an exceptional circumstances claim, the student will have had at least one consultation with a counsellor *during* the academic year in which the request is made. If the student does not have an existing relationship with the Counselling Service, the Service is not in a position to provide documentation, and should not be requested to do so.

The Counselling Service is able and willing to supply, with the student's consent, supportive documentation to the School/Exam Board if there is an existing relationship with the student, and where personal factors exist which are adversely affecting their academic performance.

Requests from students who have had no prior contact with the Service for documentation confirming a current set of personal circumstances are generally inappropriate. In such instances, the student is rarely seeking counselling, and the Counselling Service is not able to supply any documentation in support of an exceptional circumstances claim in these circumstances.

Paul Lawrence (Counselling Service) and Gillian Simpson (Registry)
June 2004