

The Board of Examiners has delegated power from the Academic Board to determine progression and award of students.

Membership and Terms of Reference for the Board of Examiners must be agreed by Academic Board on an annual basis at the start of the academic year.

Membership

- Chair – usually the Head of Higher Skills
- Secretary
- Minute-taker
- All Programme leaders for the programmes being considered
- All External Examiners for the programmes being considered
- Quality Systems Manager
- Open University Representative

No students may be nominated to be a member of, attend, or take part in, any Board of Examiner proceedings.

If the Head of Higher Skills is unavailable to Chair the meeting then another member of the University Centre Management Team or a suitable nominee may deputise, provided they are not directly involved in curriculum delivery or assessment for the programmes being considered.

A member of the Board of Examiners must declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with an assessed student to the Chair who will decide (in agreement with the Open University representative) the appropriate course of action.

The Chair must recuse him or herself from consideration of a programme cohort where a conflict is present relating to an interest, involvement or relationship with an assessed student. A suitable nominated member must cover the Chair's duties for the relevant programme. Where this occurs it will be minuted.

Quorum

All members (or agreed, nominated deputies) must be present for the meeting to be Quorate.

Terms of Reference

- To assess students in accordance with the Open University (and if applicable any professional, statutory or regulatory body) regulations for the validated programme of study, and recommend conferment of Open University awards upon students who the Board judges to have fulfilled the objectives of the approved programme of study and achieved the standard required for the award.
- To receive final assessment marks from the Pre-Board meetings.

- To receive arrangements for reassessment from the Pre-Board meetings which the Board of Examiners can choose to uphold once it has made failure decisions and determined retrieval rights.
- To confirm that the appropriate quality assurance mechanisms underpin assessment practices and the qualification processes.
- To confirm there is confidence that the student cohorts have met threshold academic standards for eligibility of the award.
- To uphold the confidentiality of the proceedings and ensure all confidential papers are received by the Secretary at the close of the Board.
- To have overall responsibility for assessment which contributes to the recommendation of award, including confirming the arrangements for the approval and moderation of initial and resit assessment tasks in line with recommendations (where applicable) from the Subsidiary Board of Examiners.
- To devolve oversight of mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct to the appropriate individual(s) and/or sub-group.

The Chair

The Chair must:

- Ensure that the Board of Examiners is quorate (including External Examiner representation) to enable the Board of Examiners to fulfil its Terms of Reference.
- Ensure that all External Examiners have been notified that they have a right to attend the meeting and make their recommendations to the Board of Examiners.
- Ensure that awards are conferred in line with the Open University's conditions of conferment, in line with the FHEQ, and that requirements for appropriate classification are met in full.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available to the Board of Examiners to ensure that it can exercise impartial judgement i.e. student results, decisions from the Mitigating Circumstances Panel and any exceptional circumstances arising.
- Check minutes to ensure that recorded student decisions are a true and accurate record of the Board of Examiners meeting.

Use of Chair's action

- If circumstances mean a Board of Examiners has been unable to make a final decision it is possible to use Chair's action to confirm decisions following a board. However, this should only be used in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the OU representative.

External Examiners

No recommendation for the conferment of a validated award of the University may be made without the written consent of the approved external examiner(s). On any matter which the external examiner has declared a matter of principle, the decision of the external examiners

shall either be accepted as final by the Board of Examiners or shall be referred to the Academic Board. Disagreements between external examiners shall be referred to the Academic Board or the University, as appropriate.

The external examiner will present a verbal report during the meeting, and will complete and submit a written report within one month of the Board of Examiners meeting.

The external examiner must be able to confirm, during a verbal report at the meeting:

- That they have been able to review a sample of student work from the programmes being considered. External examiners are also asked to comment on the range of assessed material and information provided by the programme leader on which their report is based.
- That the quality of students' work, their knowledge and skills (both general and subject-specific) is equivalent to their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere.
- Whether the standards set are appropriate for the award, or award element, by reference to any agreed subject benchmarks, qualifications framework, programme specification or other relevant information.

In addition, in their verbal report, the external examiner may wish to include a comment about other aspects in their written report, including:

- The strengths and weaknesses of the students
- The quality of teaching and learning, as indicated by student performance
- The quality of the curriculum, course materials and learning resources
- The quality and fairness of the assessments, in particular their:
 - Design and structure
 - Relation to stated objectives and learning outcomes of the programme
 - Marking
- Where the programme has specific work-related learning outcomes (e.g. Foundation Degrees) comment on the assessment and achievement of these outcomes, including employers' involvement where relevant.
- The administration of the assessments, operation of examination boards, the briefing they received, their access to essential materials, etc.
- Whether or not all the issues identified in the previous report been addressed by the institution
- Any other comments

The Secretary

The Secretary must:

- Ensure that the final agenda, and a reminder of confidentiality, is circulated at least one working day before the Board of Examiners meeting.
- At the Board of Examiners meeting provide that an accessible copy is available of:
 - Minutes of the previous Board of Examiners
 - Reports from the Extenuating Circumstances Panel
 - Report from any Unfair Practice hearings
 - Mark sheets from the Pre-Board meetings
 - Relevant trend data
 - The programme handbook for the programme(s) being considered

- The Assessment Policy for Open University Programmes
- The Unfair Practice Policy and Procedure
- The Extenuating Circumstances and Interruption of Studies Policy and Procedure
- After the completion of the a Board of Examiners meeting that includes conferment of final awards and classifications provide the following to OUVF, for each programme:
 - F7 sheet, signed by the Chair, the OU representative, the external examiner and the secretary
 - Award recommendation list, signed by the external examiner
 - Completed examination board spreadsheet signed by the Chair, the OU representative and the external examiner

The Open University (OU) representative

The primary role of the Open University representative is to provide support for boards of examiners or their committees in the continued assurance of academic standards. Attendance at boards of examiners will also provide for the OU an important window on the assessment process for its validated awards. The OU representative will not participate in making academic judgements but will be able to bring their own knowledge and experience of the assessment process to the discussion of outcomes. OU representatives will respect the autonomy of the institution as it derives from the institutional agreement but will also have concern for the University's obligations and national requirements.

The Open University representative will:

- Observe the conduct of the Board.
- Provide a source of advice on the interpretation and application of University policies and of guidance offered by QAA in the UK Quality Code and elsewhere.
- Alert the institution and/or the University to policies, procedures or circumstances which seem likely to impede the effective functioning of the Board or the discharge of their responsibilities by internal or External Examiners.
- Provide feedback to the University which will be included in briefing for institutional review panels.

Assure themselves and the Open University that:

- The regulations of the University and the University Centre have been properly observed.
- The assessment and qualification processes have been implemented with appropriate quality assurance and control procedures.
- There is confidence that the precisely detailed cohort of students have met the threshold (academic) standards required for eligibility for the identified award of credit and/or qualifications.
- Assessments are moderated internally and externally in accordance with approved regulations, and that reasonable adjustments (where applicable) have been approved and applied.