



A Guide to the Conduct of
Undergraduate Modular Scheme Assessment
Boards
2009/10

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A Guide to the Conduct of Modular Scheme Assessment Boards

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following sections describe the assessment process from start to finish - i.e. from the setting of assignments to the formal approval of Assessment Board recommendations by the Academic Board.

1.1 SETTING ASSIGNMENTS

The assessment scheme for each module is defined in the owning Subject or Award's Definitive Documents, and may not be changed without the formal approval of a School Board. The assessment scheme is published in the Guides to Modules, which list every module offered in a particular academic year, and which are available to view on the Student Administration Services website. Additionally, Module Co-ordinators are responsible for notifying students of the nature and aims of each assessment item; this will normally form part of the module documentation and should be addressed in the introductory meeting with students at the beginning of the module.

1.2 SETTING EXAM PAPERS

Student Administration Services will circulate deadlines for the preparation of exam papers. It is expected that draft exam papers are:

- internally checked at a meeting of the Subject Team including, where appropriate, representatives from associated FE Colleges;
- sent to the External Examiner for his/her comments.

Where modules are delivered at more than one location, it is particularly important to ensure that questions are phrased in a way that will not disadvantage students at one location vis-à-vis another, tutors must not set different questions for students taking a different module occurrence.

1.3 ASSESSMENT OF EXCHANGE STUDENTS

BSU participates in a number of exchange programmes. Most are within the European Union - the Erasmus programme - though there are others, e.g. with US partners. The University utilises the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to enable it to transfer credit for European exchange students. The main features of this scheme are:

- Credit is awarded by the teaching institution and accepted by the home institution.
- Credit is graded, according to a norm-based marking scheme (top 10% of marks = A, etc).

BSU STUDENTS

BSU students who go on exchanges receive ungraded credit for the period of time in which they are at a partner institution. The dates of attendance at the partner institution do not have to be exactly the same as BSU's term dates, nor does the period of attendance have to be exactly the same as a BSU term. The Exchange Co-ordinator should however be satisfied that the workload is equivalent to the work which would have been undertaken at BSU. Credit for the exchange is awarded on receipt of a certificate from the partner institution confirming that the student has satisfactorily completed the exchange programme.

STUDENTS FROM PARTNER ERASMUS INSTITUTIONS WHO STUDY AT BSU

Exchange Co-ordinators should plan programmes of study for incoming exchange students. However, it must be made absolutely clear that BSU cannot guarantee places on specific modules. As stated in the disclaimer in the prospectus, BSU reserves the right to close or modify all or any of its courses and modules.

All visiting students who enrol on a module at BSU must take the full assessment load. Where there is an assessment outside the exchange period, e.g. an exam, an alternative assignment must be arranged in advance

by the Module Co-ordinator. Module Co-ordinators and Subject Boards must record 0 F for any missing assignment mark, whatever the reason, whether expected or not.

Exchange students should take up to 60 BSU credits' worth of modules (i.e. a normal full-time load) per half year. Like other students, they may not take extra modules on an attendance-only basis.

BSU credits are worth twice as much as ECTS credits. Thus a full-time academic year is 60 ECTS credits. No indication of credit level is given.

Partner institutions will increasingly require graded rather than ungraded credit. The ECTS grading scheme is norm-based rather than criterion-based, and does not sit easily on BSU practice. However, a conversion table is given below.

ECTS GRADES CONVERSION FROM MODULAR SCHEME MARKS			
BSU Mark	ECTS Grade	% of successful students normally achieving the grade	ECTS definition
69-100	A	10	EXCELLENT - outstanding performance with only minor errors
62-68	B	25	VERY GOOD - above the average standard but with some errors
57-61	C	30	GOOD - generally sound work with a number of notable errors
49-56	D	25	SATISFACTORY - fair but with significant shortcomings
40-48	E	10	SUFFICIENT - performance meets the minimum criteria
-	FX	-	FAIL - some more work required before credit can be awarded
-	F	-	FAIL - considerable further work required

Erasmus Co-ordinators should use the information given above to prepare certificates, which meet the needs of the partner institution. Minimally, they should give BSU credits, ECTS credits and ECTS grades. They must be forwarded to the Registrar for signature. Please do not generate unofficial letters which award BSU or ECTS credits, or certificate a study period abroad.

Where these arrangements do not meet the requirements of partner universities, they should be advised that they may use their own APEL arrangements to award credit for attendance at BSU.

2.0 ASSESSMENT SCHEDULING

As soon as the student lists for a module have settled down (i.e. when students are no longer allowed to change their programme of studies for the academic year), two processes begin - planning the examination timetable for the end of the year, and creating Student Assessment Records. These are described in the following sections.

2.1 EXAMINATION SCHEDULING

The objective of examination scheduling is to produce a clash-free exam timetable for the end of the academic year. It should therefore be recognised that this cannot be done until the list of students on each module is finalised. A full list of exam dates, times and rooms is published at least 6 weeks before the examinations take place. Any clashes or errors should be reported to Student Administration Services immediately.

At present, there are three exam 'slots' per day. Scheduling takes place on the basis that no student should have more than 2 exams in one day, or more than 3 in 2 days. This does not preclude the possibility of two consecutive exams, however. Nor, of course, can these maxima be guaranteed on a long-term basis - it is obviously a function of the number of exams to be scheduled and the number of rooms available.

Exams for Level 4 modules are of two hours; exams for Level 5 and Level 6 modules are of two or three hours.

Exams at Newton Park generally take place in the University Theatre building, though other large rooms such as NE.101 are also used.

BSU conducts formal examinations at its Newton Park and Sion Hill campuses, and at associate FE Colleges. It cannot normally make arrangements for students to sit examinations at other locations. Arrangements cannot normally be made for students to take examinations at times other than those specified.

Students who need special arrangements must communicate them to Student Administration Services as early in the academic year as possible.

2.2 CREATION OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT RECORDS

Once the list of students on each module is finalised, blank Student Assessment Records are created for each student in each module they are taking.

3.0 CONDUCT OF EXAMINATIONS

At each examination, the invigilators concerned will be provided with one or more envelopes, each containing:

- Two copies of Attendance List of candidates;
- Two copies of the invigilation certificate;
- Examination Registration Forms;
- Examination papers;
- Any additional material supplied by the Module Co-ordinator.

Invigilators will place the appropriate examination paper Examination Registration Form each desk at least ten minutes before the start of the examination.

Candidates will be admitted to the room five minutes before the examination is due to commence. On entering the examination room they must deposit all bags and unauthorised sources of information in a place indicated by the invigilator. Mobile phones must be switched off and may not be taken into the examination room.

During the five minutes before the commencement of the examination, candidates may read the question paper, but may not write until the Chief Invigilator announces the commencement of the examination. Normally, the Chief Invigilator shall be the sole person to make announcements in the examination room.

Only candidates for whom English is not their first language are permitted to use a dictionary to help with language problems (e.g. French/English). They are not permitted to use a dictionary solely in their first language.

The Chief Invigilator shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- no candidate is admitted to the room more than thirty minutes after the commencement of the examination;
- no candidate leaves the examination room until thirty minutes after the start of the examination;
- no candidate leaves the examination room during the last fifteen minutes of an examination.

The Chief Invigilator will announce the length and end time of the examination at the start and warn students when there are fifteen minutes of examination time left and will announce the termination of the examination at the proper time. Candidates should be asked to check that cover papers are correctly completed and the scripts numbered according to instructions.

Candidates are permitted to leave the room for a short period for urgent reasons only, and must be accompanied by one of the Invigilators. Invigilators may require a candidate to leave the examination room if his or her conduct is disturbing other candidates.

Invigilators shall not discuss the content of the examination paper with any candidate.

It shall be the prime duty of the Invigilators to ensure that no improper practices occur within the examination room. Invigilators shall:

- stay in the examination room throughout the examination unless another member of the University staff deputises and maintains constant supervision over candidates; Invigilators shall not do any other work during the examination which is likely to distract their attention from the supervision of candidates;
- ensure that candidates are seated in their correct places, preferably with ID card clearly visible on desk. Invigilators may ask for other means of identification if a candidate has not produced an ID card; candidates may be excluded if they are unable to provide appropriate identification;
- ensure that each candidate completes an Examination Registration Form and that the forms are collected during the first half-hour of the commencement of the examination;
- ensure that each candidate has the correct paper;
- ensure that candidates use no unfair means;
- complete an invigilation certificate;
- tick both copies of Attendance List of candidates indicating those who are absent;
- submit a written report to the Registrar on any particular difficulties experienced during the examination. The attendance list may be used for this purpose;
- collect the scripts of any candidate taken ill during the examination and note on it the times at which the candidate left the examination room. Details of the circumstances shall be included in the written report required above.

Candidates must remain seated until an invigilator collects their scripts.

Scripts should be placed in alphabetical order by module, and returned to Student Administration Services together with one copy of the Attendance List. If they are collected by the Module Co-ordinator, they must sign the invigilation certificate. Examination Registration Forms and the second copy of the Attendance List should be returned to Student Administration Services.

4.0 SUBMITTING COURSEWORK

Module Co-ordinators are responsible for informing students of the due dates for each assignment. Although it is probably inevitable that the majority of formal assessment will take place towards the end of the academic year, colleagues are encouraged to avoid 'end-loading' modules unnecessarily. There may well be benefits in moving some deadlines to an earlier week to reduce pressure on students, library resources and marking staff. Additionally, a Subject Team may wish to consider staggering the assessment deadlines for its various modules.

The last date for the submission of course work in the 2009/10 academic year is Friday 14th May 2010.

The person empowered to give extensions is the Module Co-ordinator or, in his/her absence, the Subject Leader. The extension should always be recorded on paper, and attached to the assignment when it is eventually submitted. The normal extension period is a week. (This, incidentally, is another argument for spreading assessment deadlines through the academic year - giving extensions is obviously problematic if everything is due at the last possible moment.) Students should always be reminded that extending the deadline for one assignment may well have knock-on effects upon other commitments. Colleagues should be cautious about agreeing 'blanket' extensions for all the assignments due from a student.

Submission of work by fax is not permitted. Exceptions to this rule may only be made in highly exceptional circumstances, and must be agreed in writing by the appropriate Module Co-ordinator or Subject Leader. Where an exception has been agreed, the work must also be submitted in hard copy, by an agreed date, to the tutor concerned.

It is the University's policy that both electronic and hard copy versions of course work must be submitted by the deadline specified by the module co-coordinator. The only exception to this is where the means of assessment make this impractical. In such cases the module handbook or module co-coordinator must make this clear to students.

Electronic submission is via Minerva, and text is automatically checked for plagiarism by TurnitinUK. If a student fails to submit an electronic version of their work, they will fail the assessment item and be referred for a re-sit.

If, on the due date for the assignment, Minerva/Turnitin is unavailable for any reason (e.g. technical problems), then students must submit the electronic version of their work as soon as possible thereafter. Tutors should be aware of these situations and inform their students of such problems. Students should submit the hard copy of their work as normal by the deadline.

Coursework submitted to Minerva via TurnitinUK must comprise a single file of no more than 10MB. TurnitinUK will only accept files in the following formats: Word, Text, Postscript, PDF, HTML, and RTF. If students' work is in another format e.g. PowerPoint, they must consult tutors about how to proceed.

Tutors may make and may authorize third parties to make copies of any work submitted by students for assessment for the following purposes:

- assessment of student work;
- comparison with databases of earlier answers or works or other previously available works to confirm there is no plagiarism; and
- addition to databases of works used to ensure that future works submitted at this institution and others are not plagiarised from students' work.

Where copies are made and retained for the purposes identified above, tutors must ensure that no personal data is made available to any third party.

Subjects may require that coursework assignments should be word processed, and are empowered to refuse to accept handwritten work provided that due notice has been given at the commencement of the module.

5.0 STUDENTS GIVING CAUSE FOR CONCERN: THE ATTENDANCE REPORT

Students giving cause for concern should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Subject Leader or Course Director. It is helpful if this is done at the earliest opportunity.

Subject leaders/Course Directors are required to complete the Confirmation of Attendance reports for their modules online via the Staff Portal. Subject Leaders/Course Directors will be notified of the due date for the completion of these attendance reports during the academic year. Our auditors require that Subject Leaders/Course Directors complete these reports to confirm whether or not they are accurate. A response is required, even if there are no problems. Failure to respond by the due date will lead to the involvement of the Registrar and Head of School. A continuing failure to respond will be referred to the Vice Chancellor.

6.0 MARKING AND RETURNING ASSIGNMENTS

For guidance on the marking scheme used in the Undergraduate Modular Scheme, see section 6.2 in the Modular Scheme Guide for Students, 'A Guide to Marking Criteria'. This should however be amplified by the documentation on assessment criteria for the individual module and assignment.

Bath Spa University's Modular Scheme continues to accept the principle that anonymous marking of coursework should be adopted wherever possible. Where a module has a particular assessment, which cannot be conducted anonymously (e.g. a seminar presentation or performance) then it would be beneficial if other form(s) of assessment in the module were conducted anonymously.

Examinations, which are centrally scheduled and managed by Student Administration Services, are marked anonymously.

It must be noted that it is not possible to maintain anonymity in all cases. Exceptions might include modules where the number of students was small; assignments, which reflected the known enthusiasms of particular students; or where special arrangements had been made for students with special needs. It should also be noted that anonymity might not be possible where a student had discussed a draft assignment with a tutor. It follows from this that a breach of anonymity cannot in itself be grounds for complaint or appeal; it would be necessary to demonstrate that bias had resulted.

Assessed work will be double-marked on a sample basis. As a guide, 20% of each component of the assessment should be sampled, although this may vary depending upon the number of students taking the module and the nature of the assignment.

No assessed piece of work will be failed without reference to a second marker, unless the nature of the work makes this impossible.

All first class and failed work above Level 4 will be referred to the External Examiner, unless the nature of the work makes this impossible or impracticable. A 20% sample across the range of marks for all other assessment above Level 4 will also be sent to the External Examiner, unless the nature of the work makes this impossible or impracticable.

Double marking and reference to the External Examiner is particularly important in the case of assignments where the University has accepted that anonymous marking is impracticable.

Marks and grades for all assessment items are to be submitted to Student Administration Services as percentages, in whole numbers, with no decimal points. Student Administration Services using the validated weighting between the assessment items calculates totals for the module. Always mark a piece of work using the full range of marks, even if you think it is a referred assessment or has been submitted after the deadline has passed. It may eventually receive only 40% or zero, but this is a decision for the Assessment Board.

Neither tutors nor Subject Boards may apply discretion in respect of mitigating circumstances. All work must be marked on its academic merits. The Assessment Board will take mitigating circumstances into account.

The Modular Scheme uses standard assessment report forms for all coursework assignments, which students collect from Student Administration Services. One set (2 copies) is attached to each assignment.

Please return coursework assignments to students as soon as possible. The exact turnaround time will depend to some extent upon the nature of the assignment, but it is reasonable to return assignments within 2-3 weeks of the due date.

7.0 SUBMITTING ASSESSMENT MARKS AND GRADES

Entry of Marks for each module should be done online via the Staff Portal. This will be open for a specific period of time during the academic year and will then be closed to allow the marks to be downloaded into SITS. When all the marks and grades for a module have been input, the module result can be calculated for each student (i.e. SITS takes the raw marks and applies the relative weightings defined in the module's assessment scheme).

WHAT TO DO ABOUT MARKS RECEIVED AFTER THE ENTRY of MARKS APPLICATION HAS CLOSED

Rather than sending in these marks one at a time to Student Administration Services, they should be retained until the Subject Board meets to consider the module and changes should be made then online via the Staff Portal. They will subsequently be entered into SITS in time for the appropriate Assessment Board.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT MARKS FOR EC/OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Marks for EC/overseas students can be problematic. Some students do not undertake all the assignments associated with a module, or are required merely to pass the assignments that they complete. However, normal procedures should be followed:

- If a student completes an assignment, assess it and record the mark in the usual fashion (i.e. as a percentage).
- If a student does not undertake an assignment record it as non-submission (i.e. 0 F).

The appropriate Assessment Board will sort it out.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT REASSESSMENT TASKS

Recommendations for Reassessment Tasks should be entered on the Staff Portal and should be as specific as possible. For example, if it is to be recommended that an essay or project should be submitted, the exact title should be given. Please state the member of staff who will be responsible for marking the reassessed work. By default, this will be the Module Co-ordinator, who has responsibility for all assessment in the module.

8.0 SUBJECT AND ASSESSMENT BOARDS: GENERAL STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES

Arrangements for Assessment Boards operate within the general framework set out in the University's Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Handbook.

There are two tiers to the assessment structure. The lower ('sub-board') level is the Subject Board. It is purely concerned with the assessment of students within the modules they have taken. The higher level is the 'assessment board', and is concerned with student profiles, progression, classification of awards, mitigating circumstances, etc.

Between the meeting of the Subject Boards and the Assessment Boards, there may be a need for various meetings - such as between Student Administration Services staff and Subject Leaders, between External Examiners to identify common issues of concern, etc. However, all such meetings are informal in the sense that they may not make decisions that are properly the prerogative of the Assessment Board itself.

8.1 SUBJECT BOARDS: MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES

In the Modular Scheme, Subject Boards fulfil the role of the 'sub-board'. (For this purpose, a 'Subject' is identified by a code (e.g. EN, HS, MU) which is responsible for a group of modules).

The Subject Board consists of all those academic staff with assessment responsibilities for the modules to be assessed, plus the External Examiner(s) (if appropriate). **It includes all staff teaching a Subject's modules at associated FE Colleges; at least one representative from each FE College should attend each meeting.**

The Chair of the Subject Board should be the Head of School or his/her nominee.

The Head of School should also nominate a Secretary to the Board.

The Chair or his/her nominee should convene subject Boards at the end of the academic year. Each board is not scheduled centrally, though subject boards are expected to take place on either 23rd or 24th June 2010. A deadline will be provided by which subject boards should complete their deliberations and pass their minutes to Student Administration Services.

The Subject Board establishes marks and grades for the modules for which it is responsible. It also makes precise recommendations in connection with any referred or deferred assessment. This information is passed via Student Administration Services to the Assessment Board.

The meeting may formulate a point of view about a candidate's performance in the modules for which it is responsible, and identify candidates deserving particular deliberation at later stages of the examining process. However, it may not enquire about, nor discuss, the overall performance of candidates, nor adjust marks to compensate for performance elsewhere.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Sub-Board (or his/her nominee) to:

- liaise with the external examiner(s) for all modules for which the Sub-Board is responsible;
- ensure that a full and accurate profile of marks is available for all modules for which the Sub-Board is responsible;
- check that the list of marks put before the Assessment Board is an accurate transcription;
- ensure that precise and detailed recommendations on the work required in connection with any referred or deferred assessment (including titles for coursework) is available at the meeting of the Assessment Board;
- forward to Student Administration Services any material relating to mitigating circumstances.

The Sub-Board is not concerned with the overall performance of candidates, and should not adjust marks to compensate for performance elsewhere.

8.2 SUBJECT BOARDS: PROCESSES AND DOCUMENTATION

As noted earlier, the task of Subject Boards is to assess students' performance in individual modules. They should thus consider results on a 'one module at a time' basis, rather than a 'one student at a time' basis.

The possible module results are as follows:

70 and above	A	
60-69	B	
50-59	C	
40-49	D	
40 and above	QF	
0-39	R	(eligible for reassessment) (i.e. not reassessed before)
0	N	(nothing submitted, no extension approved - may be eligible for reassessment)
0	L	(late, with approved extension)
0-39	F	(not eligible for reassessment) (i.e. has already been reassessed once)
0-100	UP	(Used to flag suspicion of unfair practice in one or more assignments)
0-100	U	(failed qualifying mark for assessment(s). This is used where a pass is required for a particular assignment - e.g. School Experience. Where the required pass is not achieved, the student cannot pass the module regardless of marks in other assignments.)

Grades A-D lead to a module result of P (Pass), grades QF, R, N, L and U to a result of D (Decision Deferred), grade UP to a result of H (Held) and grades F and U to a result of F (Fail).

The External Examiner(s) should sign and date a cover sheet for all modules thus confirming the set of results. These cover sheets are provided by Student Administration Services (see Appendix 2.0), must be returned to Student Administration Services after each subject board, and copies retained by the Chair.

AQSC requires that Subject Boards be minuted. A standard agenda for the minuting of Subject Exam Boards is given in Appendix 1.0. The minutes of the Subject Boards should reflect this agenda. A copy of the minutes must be lodged with Student Administration Services.

9.0 ASSESSMENT BOARDS: MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES

The composition of the Assessment Board is:

- Senior Academic nominated by the Vice Chancellor (Chair);
- Registrar or his/her nominee;
- Heads of School or his/her nominee, provided that they are fully briefed and identified to the Chair at the start of the meeting;
- Chief External Examiner(s) as appropriate;
- Up to two other members nominated by the Chair.

Other members of academic staff (e.g. Chairs of Subject Boards) are welcome to be in attendance at preliminary meetings of Assessment boards.

A member of Student Administration Services will also be in attendance to service the Board and take minutes.

Unlike earlier stages, which are charged with examining performance in individual modules, the Assessment Board is responsible for making judgements about the student's performance as a whole, considering mitigating circumstances, and making formal recommendations about awards, credits, and progression. They will examine results on a 'student-by-student' basis.

There will be a Modular Scheme Assessment Board for students registered for:

- BA/BSc Single and Combined Awards
- Specialised Awards in the Modular Scheme
- Dip HE

- Foundation Degrees
- Individual Programmes (International Students)
- EC and other overseas exchange students
- Associate Students

Assessment Boards take place at the beginning of March, in July and early in September, and are scheduled centrally by the Registrar.

9.1 PROCESSES AND DOCUMENTATION

Assessment Boards will look at the students registered for each award, in alphabetical order. The documentation available will consist of an alphabetical list of all students taking the award, together with their results in each module taken during the academic year.

Each student's results for the academic year will be examined in turn; pausing where necessary to check the minutes of Subject Boards, consider mitigating circumstances, etc.

As soon as the Assessment Board has concluded its business, the Chair and the Chief External Examiner will sign a set of papers.

Following the Assessment Board, a copy of the minutes will be prepared, to be signed and dated by the Chair. These minutes list any student where the results differ in any way from the actual marks originally recorded for assignments by the Module Co-ordinator.

9.2 PUBLISHING RESULTS

Assessment Boards are executive sub-committees of the Academic Board. Their decisions have immediate effect, but results may not be communicated to students until the agreed publication date.

Results are published as soon as possible.

9.3 DEFERRED OR FAILED WORK

Informing students about deferred or failed work and the resubmission process is the responsibility of Student Administration Services. Students will receive recommendation(s) on Late or Failed Work, supplied by the Subject Board and confirmed by the Assessment Board via the Student Portal.

Students will be instructed to send or hand in referred or deferred coursework to the Student Administration Services office in Main House, Newton Park, where they will be logged and a receipt issued. They will then be retained until collected by the Subject Leader. The Subject Leader will be responsible for distributing work to colleagues.

Please note that this applies to all deferred and referred coursework, no matter when it is handed in. Colleagues should not accept assignments directly, or tell students to send them direct to tutors or put them in staff pigeonholes.

Student Administration Services is also responsible for the management of resit exams and the distribution of exam scripts to Subject Leaders.

The procedure for recording and entering marks for late or reassessed work is similar to that used for 'first time' assessments, i.e. online via the Staff Portal.

Please note that although a module, which has been reassessed, can only be awarded 40%, the actual percentage mark and grade for the individual assignment should be recorded. The software will do the rest.

Where students are allowed to resit/resubmit, unless explicitly determined by an Assessment Board, this should be within the current academic year, and will not require additional attendance. Where the nature of the assessment (seminar presentations, ensemble playing, etc.) cannot readily be duplicated at the time of referral, colleagues should substitute an equivalent form of assessment.

Where a student has to be referred into the next academic year, the University will charge an additional registration fee. The fee will be waived in the case of deferral into the next academic year.

Where a student fails up to 2 modules on resit, they may be allowed to trail the failed modules into the next academic year, and continue as a full-time student. If the failed module was a compulsory part of their programme they will have to repeat it; if it was an optional module, they may decide either to retake it or to take an alternative module at the same level. In such cases, the retaken or new module is considered to be an *ab initio* attempt. Students should be informed that:

- they must attend all classes;
- they must do all assignments (whether or not they passed it last time);
- the full range of marks will be available.

Where a student fails three modules, they usually will not be allowed to trail them and continue full-time. The options for the Assessment Board will usually be to allow the student to rectify the situation as a part-time student before returning full-time.

Where a student fails more than three modules, they will not be allowed to continue with their course of study.

10.0 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The External Examiner system is the major formal mechanism by which the University seeks to ensure that the standards of programmes match its intentions. It is essential that external examiners for University awards have the proper objectivity and information to carry out their duties.

At least one External Examiner is appointed for every programme above introductory level. Examiners are appointed typically for a period of four years.

10.1 PURPOSE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External examiners are asked to examine the programme/subject as validated, within the regulations made by the Academic Board. Their function is different in kind from internal examiners'. The role is not "second marker" or even "third marker", or adjudicator between conflicting judgements of internal markers. Their role is to ensure that the marks of internal examiners are consistent both internally, and with marks awarded for similar subjects in relation to similar awards elsewhere in the UK HE system.

In addition to their independent judgements on the relationship of marks to the declared assessment criteria, their reference points will be their experience in other HEIs, and such expressions of national consensus as the QAA "benchmark" statements. On the basis of samples the external examiner moderates or confirms the marks of cohorts, or runs of marks, not individual marks or assessment items.

The rights and responsibilities of external examiners are formally defined in the BSU Academic Regulations.

10.2 DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN EXAMINERS

Final judgements on, or approval of marks and classes of awards must be academic peer group processes. As with any such process, it is possible that members of the group will disagree. Where the dispute is between an internal marker and the others, the means of resolution is straightforward: discussion and vote. Where the dispute is between an external examiner and the internal examiners, or between external examiners, it is more problematic, since the mark sheet that forms part of the record of an assessment board's decisions is not valid unless it is signed by the appointed external examiner(s).

The Academic Board is the final authority for any award of Bath Spa University, or for any marks assigned in connection with a BSU award. Therefore any dispute that cannot be resolved at the level of an assessment board (i.e. where an external examiner has not signed an assessment board mark sheet) may come to Academic Board for resolution. Clearly this is cumbersome and a means of last resort.

However, when an external examiner proposes to moderate a whole run of marks upwards or downwards in the interests of preserving the standard of the BSU award, then he or she is performing precisely the function for which he or she was appointed. In such a case an assessment board should consider rejecting the view of the external examiner(s) only after considerable deliberation and in the recognition that a rejection implies that the

external examiner is unable to perform his or her proper function. Where the external examiner differs from the assessment board even after discussion, he or she must exercise the right not to sign the mark sheet, and the Academic Board will make adjudication.

Inevitably, and despite the comments above, external examiners will encounter individual marks with which they disagree, even where they believe a general run of marks to be accurate. In such cases, it is open to an external examiner to suggest to the responsible internal marker that an individual mark is anomalous. The difference of opinion may still not have been settled at the assessment board stage. Even here, the external examiner has the right not to sign the mark sheet. However, the external examiner will exercise this right in these circumstances only when he or she considers the perceived error to be so serious as to compromise whole cohorts' marks.

10.3 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS IN THE MODULAR SCHEME

External examiners in the Modular Scheme are appointed at subject level or award level or both.

Assessment boards at subject level do not and should not see the “run” of marks for a single candidate, not should they consider any evidence relating to circumstances which might explain why a candidate has not performed as well as expected. Their role is to judge performance in a particular assessment item against the declared criteria for assessment, in the context of their experience and knowledge of marking similar items.

Students' performances across all assessment items, and circumstances that might have affected their performances, are considered only at the award level. The unavailability of students' “profiles” and the omission of any consideration of “mitigating circumstances” at subject-level boards are issues of principle as well as practical difficulty. It is important that any “compensation” or allowance for individual circumstances should be taken into account once only. The place for such consideration is the award board.

SAMPLES

The Academic Regulations state that External Examiners should see all assessed work proposed for the highest available grade-band and for failure, and samples of the assessed work proposed for each other grade-band, unless the nature of the work or the approved marking scheme makes this impracticable. The sample should represent not less than 20% of the total scripts or other items for assessment.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

It is the responsibility of the Academic Office to communicate with External Examiners regarding terms of appointment, submission of reports and payment of fees and expenses. They will also provide external examiners with a copy of this document, the University Regulations for Students, the University's Quality Assurance Handbook, the Undergraduate Modular Scheme Guide for Students, the Guides to Modules and a fees and expenses claim form. (Further claim forms may be obtained from the Academic Office as required). The Academic Office book accommodation for external examiners only on request. It is essential that either the Programme Manager of the External Examiner contacts the Academic Office Administrator with precise accommodation requirements. Accommodation will not be booked automatically. All other queries regarding assessment boards and any apologies for absence should be made to the Registrar.

Expenses are paid on receipt of a completed claim form. Fees are paid on receipt of the examiner's annual report. Claims should be addressed to the Academic Office Administrator who will answer queries on payment.

An External Examiner shall be appointed to each Subject within the Scheme. Such Examiners will be full members of the Subject Board. Where expressly permitted by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, two or more Subjects may share the same External Examiner.

Subject External Examiners are not required to attend meetings of the Modular Scheme Assessment Board.

A Chief External Examiner shall be appointed, with responsibility for the overall maintenance of the standards of awards in the Scheme. He/she will not necessarily be drawn from the Subject External Examiners, but will be experienced in the operation of Modular Schemes. He/she will sit on the Undergraduate Modular Scheme Assessment Board.

The provision of External Examiners for a Specialised Award shall be specified in that award's Definitive Programme Document.

The appointment of External Examiners, and the correspondence, which results from appointment, is the responsibility of the Academic Office. Thereafter, all communication with the External Examiner is the responsibility of the Subject Leader.

11.0 MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

In a University-wide scheme, it is important that there is a uniform and clearly understood policy relating to mitigating circumstances.

A Mitigating Circumstances Form is available from Student Administration Services for students to use when they consider their performance to have been adversely affected by personal or medical problems. It is really important to emphasise to students that they must make any claim for mitigating circumstances promptly, and in writing - supported by appropriate evidence - medical notes, etc. **Unsupported self-certification will not be accepted under any circumstances.** Assessment Boards will take all documented evidence into account, but are not allowed to consider word-of-mouth evidence.

A group consisting of the Registrar (Chair), and at least two other members of staff nominated by the Registrar, will meet to review claims to mitigating circumstances prior to the formal meeting of the Assessment Board. The group will make a recommendation, which will be communicated to the Assessment Board as to whether a claim should be (i) accepted; (ii) rejected; or (iii) referred to the Assessment Board for further consideration. The Registrar will explain the basis of each of the Group's recommendations for the Assessment Boards' endorsement.

In a modular scheme, assessment is closely coupled with each module. Students must successfully complete a module within the academic year in which it was taken. The academic year is deemed to begin with the start of Induction Week and conclude with a publication of results by the September Assessment Board (normally in the second or third week of September). All students taking a module will have had similar learning opportunities and will be assessed according to the same criteria. Assessment is solely on the basis of the academic standard achieved, marks and award classifications will not be modified according to the circumstances of the individual student; the submission of mitigating circumstances should therefore be seen as a request to delay the assessment point, not modify assessment standards.

Where appropriate mitigating circumstance evidence is provided, the Assessment Board may defer the assessment to a later point in the academic year. The deadline for the submission of deferred coursework is the end of August. Deferred examinations will be taken in the first week of September. In both cases, the September Board will consider deferred results.

Deferred work may not be carried over from one academic year to the next. Exceptions will only be made where the University, for whatever reason, is unable to provide appropriate assessment opportunities at the normal time. In such cases, a credit shortfall must be redeemed in the following academic year, either by retaking the incomplete module or another appropriate module at the same level.

Where mitigating circumstances are accepted and assessment items have been failed, it is the normal practice of Assessment Boards to defer the student. Where items have been passed, but performance appears below that expected of the student, Assessment Boards may decide to offer the student the option of a deferral. If the student accepts the offer, the effect is to set aside the original mark and use the later one, not use the best mark. If the student declines or does not respond, the extant mark will be used.

12.0 UNFAIR PRACTICES

The procedures to be followed where unfair practices are suspected are clearly set out in the Modular Scheme Guide. To ensure that the formal process can operate properly, it is important that evidence is gathered and suspected cases are reported through the proper channels as swiftly as possible.

Staff are requested to make it quite clear to students when collaboration between students is required, and when the assignment is to be conducted and assessed individually.

Students should be left in no doubt that collusion will be considered a serious academic offence, and treated under the regulations relating to unfair practice.

AQSC has approved the following procedures where unfair practice is suspected:

- Whenever plagiarism or cheating is suspected, a written report, summarising the nature of the offence, and providing appropriate evidence, should be made to Registrar.
- The Registrar will write to the student, enclosing the report and a copy of the relevant regulations, and requiring a written response by a specified date.
- This procedure is not intended to prevent preliminary meetings between students and tutors. However, at least two members of staff must be present at such meetings, and a written record made.

Cases of alleged unfair practice will be considered by the Unfair Practice Sub-committee, which is an executive sub-committee of the Academic Board. The sub-committee shall consist of the Vice Chancellor or his nominee (Chair), the Registrar, and two other senior members of the academic staff nominated by the Chair. The sub-committee shall have a range of powers at its disposal in the case of established accusations of unfair practise, including referring assessment, failing students in modules and withholding awards. Where necessary the student's results will be held until the above processes have been completed.

13.0 APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

It is an unfortunate fact of life that the volume of appeals and complaints is growing in most HE institutions. If colleagues are consulted by a student about a possible appeal or complaint, please ensure that they are aware of the Academic Regulations governing appeals and complaints. The appeals procedure covers all aspects of assessment and the conduct of Assessment Boards; the complaints procedure is broader, and covers any aspect of the student experience at BSU. Students should certainly be advised of the procedures to be followed, but colleagues should be very careful indeed about making any 'moral judgement' about the validity or otherwise of their case. The appeals procedure is restricted to all aspects of assessment and the conduct of Assessment Boards; the complaints procedure is broader, and covers any aspect of the student experience at BSU.

14.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.0 Standard Agenda for Subject Assessment Boards

APPENDIX 2.0 Specimen cover sheet to be signed by Subject External Examiner



Dr Kate Davies
Deputy Registrar (Academic)
October 2009



AGENDA

MODULAR SCHEME SUBJECT ASSESSMENT BOARD

####SUBJECT####

####Date, Time, Venue###

- 01 Apologies
- 02 Minutes of last meeting
- 03 Chair's remarks
- 04 Results of level 4 modules
- 05 Results of level 5 modules
- 06 Results of level 6 modules
- 07 Summary statistics
- 08 External examiner's comments
- 09 AOB
- 10 Date of next meeting

