

EXAMINATION BOARD GUIDELINES

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GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION BOARDS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 These guidelines have been produced to assist staff involved in Examination Board meetings. They are not intended to provide detailed information on the conduct of the assessment process itself. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the programme regulations. Separate guidelines are also available on the appointment and duties of External Examiners.
- 1.2 Examination Boards are established under the authority of the Academic Council. For most programmes, decisions on student progress are made by a Progression Board and decisions on final awards are made by Award Boards. Some programmes may also hold Module Boards to make decisions on module results.
- 1.3 The frequency of Board meetings are determined by the assessment schedule of the individual programme. An academic timetable incorporating assessments and Board meetings will be produced by the Registry and circulated annually.

2 General Information

- 2.1 Edinburgh College of Art programmes are currently validated by Heriot-Watt University. External Examiners for validated programmes are nominated by the Edinburgh College of Art, following approval by its Academic Council, and are appointed by the Senate of Heriot-Watt University following approval by the Senate.
- 2.2 From September 2004 responsibility for the validation of College programmes will begin to transfer to the University of Edinburgh. External Examiners for validated programmes will be nominated by the Edinburgh College of Art, following approval by its Academic Council, and are appointed by the Senate of the University of Edinburgh via the College of Humanities and Social Science.

Students entering first year from September 2004 onwards will study on degree programmes validated by the University of Edinburgh. In 2004 only, students who enter directly to second and subsequent years will join existing students in being registered for degrees awarded by Heriot-Watt University.

From 2005, students entering second year will join degree programmes validated by the University of Edinburgh, although any students entering third or subsequent years will be registered for programmes presently in place validated by Heriot-Watt University.

3 Membership and Remit

3.1 Award Board Membership:

Convenor*
Head of School
Internal Examiner(s)
External Examiner(s)
Registry Officer
Registry representative, Secretary to the Board (*in attendance*)

* The Convenor of the Award Board shall be an impartial senior academic, who *will not* normally have been directly involved in the assessment of the students under consideration. Award Boards will be timetabled to accommodate this. The Registry will be responsible for the production of the timetable and appointment of the Convenor (in consultation with the Vice Principal).

3.2 The quorum for a meeting of the Award Board shall normally include the Convenor, at least one Internal Examiner, at least one External Examiner, Head of School and one Registry representative as Secretary to the Board.

3.3 Heads of Schools should notify Registry of the Internal and External Examiners who will be attending the Award Board at least four weeks before the meeting.

3.4 Progression Board Membership:

Head of School, Convenor
Internal Examiner(s)
School Administrator or School representative, Secretary to the Board (*in attendance*)
Registry Officer (*in attendance*)

3.5 The quorum for a meeting of the Progression Board shall normally include the Convenor, at least one Internal Examiner, and the Secretary to the Board.

4 Non-attendance of External Examiners

4.1 All External Examiners will be expected to attend Award Board meetings. However, in exceptional cases, an External Examiner who is unable to attend the meeting will be asked to confirm in writing to the Convenor that that he/she has participated in the assessment process and agrees with the decisions recorded on the result sheet, prior to leaving the College.

4.2 Where any External Examiner is taken ill during the examination period, or is unable to attend due to other unforeseen circumstances, the Head of the School and the Vice Principal shall have the authority to jointly appoint a replacement External Examiner.

5 Organisation/Administration of Meetings

- 5.1 The Registry will be responsible for the co-ordination and servicing of all Award Boards.
- 5.2 It will be the responsibility of each individual Department/School to undertake the committee servicing for Progression Boards. Copies of all minutes must be kept on file and copied to the Registry.
- 5.3 Full papers must be produced for all meetings – including agenda, minutes and additional reports, ie mitigating circumstances.
- 5.4 Committee servicing shall include but not be limited to the following:
- Organisation of the meeting (see para 6)
 - Preparation and circulation of all relevant paperwork (following the standard templates) including the agenda, copy of the previous minutes, result sheets etc
 - Minute taking and recording of the decisions made
 - Ensure signing of the conferment sheets by the appropriate Board members.

Note: Anonymity and projection of examination results at Examination Boards will be piloted in academic session 2003/04.

6 Before the Meeting

- 6.1 The following arrangements should be made in advance of the Board meeting:
- Arrange a venue (Secretary to the Board)
 - Arrange catering for the meeting if required (Secretary to the Board)
 - Co-ordinate the attendance of External Examiners, if required - this involves at a minimum, liaising with the External Examiners to arrange their hotel accommodation informing them of the date, time and venue of the meeting and the organisation of payment (Registry Officer).

7 Conduct of Meetings

- 7.1 Discussions that take place at Board meetings should be treated as confidential and no remarks made at the meeting should be reported to candidates. Comments should be minuted in particular cases.
- 7.2 Individual marks will not be changed by any Examination Boards but the classification/award can be altered (see 9.1 and 11.5 below).

- 7.3 The case for every candidate will be considered by noting the candidate's matriculation number, the aggregated mark and proposed classification/award.
- 7.4 Recommendations for final classifications/awards remain at the discretion of the Board.
- 7.5 All marks will be held by the Registry both before and after the meeting. Any additional copies of the result sheet will be shredded by the Registry once the proceedings have finished.
- 7.6 Any discussion should be restricted to issues of assessment and progression and should not stray into management and resource issues.
- 7.7 Decisions agreed by all Examination Boards are final. However, in exceptional circumstances, if an error is discovered in the assessment/markings/calculation/recording/notification of any result the College will correct the error, amend all records and notify the student of the correct result as soon as practicable.
- 7.8 Examination Boards will confirm the credit allocation from exchange institutions abroad and the conversion of grades to the College system.

8 Minutes

- 8.1 The minutes of the meeting will follow the standard template and will record who attended the Board as a formal member and any other academic staff who were 'in attendance' for any other reason.
- 8.2 All decisions of the Board will be minuted. Details of any modification to results should be recorded together with the reason for this.
- 8.3 A concise but full factual account of any discussion and outcome on issues such as mitigating circumstances and plagiarism should be given.
- 8.4 Minutes of all Examination Boards to be held on file in the Registry.
- 8.5 The minute is a confidential document, although information on a particular candidate may need to be disclosed to that candidate under the Data Protection Act and generic information may need to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act.

9 Marks

- 9.1 If the aggregated mark used to determine the final degree classification falls within 0.5 of a mark below a higher classification level the Board would normally award the higher classification, for example a 59.5 and above would automatically be given a 2.1. There will be no routine lowering of classification level.

10 External Examiner Comments

- 10.1 The External Examiner(s), or the senior member of a team of External Examiners, will be invited to make a brief verbal report at the end of the meeting. These comments will be minuted. In addition, the standard detailed written External Examiner report will be submitted to the Principal via the Head of QA&E as soon as possible but **not later than one month** after the meeting.

11 Mitigating Circumstances

- 11.1 Registry will send a letter to all final year students term addresses prior to the examination diet reminding them of the requirement to submit any mitigating circumstances in writing by the agreed date. Registry will send an email reminder to all progressing students.
- 11.2 Where a student believes he/she has been prevented by 'good cause' from completing a piece of summative assessment or performing adequately therein then he/she must promptly notify the Registry and submit appropriate written evidence via the Registry Manager.
- 11.3 In any event details of the mitigating circumstances should be made available to the Registry Manager *in advance* of the Examination Board in question. Mitigating circumstances will not be considered unless notification and written evidence is provided by the student (not a third party or member of College staff) prior to the Board meeting.
- 11.4 Any mitigating circumstances and medical evidence or relevant evidence shall be made available to, and considered by the Mitigating Circumstances Board which will meet prior to the Examination Boards. This Board will comprise of the Registry manager (or nominee), Vice Principal, Head of Student Services and one Head of School (rotational appointment). The Board will determine, on the basis of the evidence presented, if and/or to what extent the mitigating circumstances presented affected the assessment. The outcome and relevant documentation will be forwarded to the Convenor of the Examination Board. All other Board members will receive a summary table showing students to be considered under mitigating circumstances.
- 11.5 The Examination Board shall consider the mitigating circumstances and have the authority to adjust the student's classification/award accordingly (see 7.2).
- 11.6 For the purposes of these guidelines, 'good cause' and mitigating circumstances shall mean illness or other adverse personal circumstances.
- 11.7 Mitigating circumstances are normally accepted on medical grounds (a full medical report is required) or grounds of adverse personal circumstances (police report or certificate required).

12 Disagreements

- 12.1 At all Board meetings, formal voting shall not normally be used as a means of reaching decisions.

- 12.2 Every effort will be made to resolve disagreements, and to reach unanimous conclusions. If, despite this effort, disagreement between members of the Board cannot be resolved, the view of the External Examiner(s) must be taken into consideration.
- 12.3 If there is failure to reach an agreement and voting is necessary, the Convenor will have the casting vote. The External Examiner(s) and all other members will have voting rights. Those in attendance will not have voting rights.

13 Signing of Results Lists

- 13.1 Following discussion at the Examination Board, the Secretary to the Board will arrange for the results lists to be signed by the Convenor and External Examiner(s) as appropriate. For Award Boards the signature of at least one External Examiner should be appended to the following declaration, which must appear on the results lists, "I declare that I approve the process of examination which produced the examination results reported on this list".
- 13.2 If no External Examiner will sign the final list or if an External Examiner refuses to sign it, then the Head of School after consultation with the External Examiner(s), and then with the Principal and Vice-Principal, has delegated authority to sign a list. After exercising such authority, the Head of the School must fully report the circumstances, including the views of the External Examiner(s), to the Principal.

14 After the meeting

- 14.1 The Secretary to the Board will prepare the minutes of the meeting for the approval of the Convenor (normally within 10 days of meeting). Once approval is obtained, a copy of the minutes will then be circulated to the Head of School.
- 14.2 All original signed results lists will be forwarded to and held on file in the Registry.

15 Publication of results

- 15.1 Award Board results notices will be posted on the Registry notice board and on the College intranet at an agreed and advertised time. To comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998), all results will be displayed by matriculation number. Examination Board notices will show the final award/classification for each student. Progression Board results will be posted on the intranet only and will show all module/programme element marks for each student.
- 15.2 The Registry will produce and issue all final year undergraduate award letters and transcripts, normally at 12pm on the day following the Award Board. Students must collect their results in person from the Registry office on presentation of their matriculation card.
- 15.3 All postgraduate award letters (final year and progression) will be produced by the Schools and issued via the Registry, normally at 12pm on the day following

the Board meeting. Students must collect their results in person from the Registry office on presentation of their matriculation card. (The production and issuing of postgraduate award letters will be reviewed for session 2004/05).

- 15.4 All undergraduate progression letters and transcripts will be produced and sent to students' home addresses by the Registry, normally no later than two weeks after the Progression Board.
- 15.5 Details on all resit requirements will be produced and issued to the student directly by the School/department concerned.
- 15.6 A timetable for the issuing of award letters and posting of notices will be implemented by Registry.