



UCL Academic Manual 2016-17

Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

Annex 4.3.9

## Procedures in the Event of an Emergency Affecting the Work of Boards of Examiners

### Regulations

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1. In the event of an emergency affecting the work of Boards of Examiners, it is the responsibility of Chairs of Boards of Examiners to ensure that the academic standards of UCL are maintained and that the system of assessment and award remains robust and rigorous.
2. The Provost reserves the right, at any time, to delegate the power to assess students and confirm their awards to other Officers of UCL, persons deemed suitable by the Provost, should emergency circumstances require it.
3. Throughout a period of emergency, Departments/ Divisions must keep their External Examiners informed and provide regular progress reports.
4. Throughout a period of emergency, Heads of Departments/ Divisions must keep students informed of developments; they should consequently ensure that this additional communication continues up to the award of degree or determination of progression.

### 1 Procedures to Follow in the Event of an Emergency

1. In general the following key points must be noted:
  - i) The academic judgement of the Board of Examiners remains of the utmost importance;
  - ii) UCL's academic standards must be maintained;
  - iii) UCL will maintain the best interests of its students, but will not compromise its academic robustness;
  - iv) Sufficient evidence of a student's ability must be shown in order to determine the level of award or progression;
  - v) Wherever possible, Boards of Examiners will be expected to meet as normal and undertake business as usual.

- vi) It is important that External Examiners attend the Boards of Examiners as arranged to ensure that the key points above are maintained and the Boards can undertake their duties. If an External Examiner cannot be present at a Board the procedures set out in Section 8.8 should be followed.
- vii) If there are no marks available, the Board of Examiners must put in place arrangements to conclude its business over the summer period once the marks become available. If marks are still missing the procedures set out in Section 8.7 should be followed.

## 2 Information for the Board of Examiners

1. Boards of Examiners should have the following information:
  - i) The recommendations of the Faculty/Departmental Extenuating Circumstances Panel;
  - ii) Results profiles for continuing and finalist students;
  - iii) The scheme of award for the degree;
  - iv) Information on absences from examinations, which will have been input by Assessment and Student Records;
  - v) Examination scripts, according to normal departmental/divisional practices;
  - vi) Other regulatory information, such as rules for referred and deferred assessment, and Special and Aegrotat Provisions;

## 3 Failure of the Board of Examiners to Meet

1. The procedures set out in Section 8.10.10 below should be followed when a Board of Examiners has failed to meet.

### Further guidance

1. Advice on the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency affecting the work of Boards of Examiners should be read in conjunction with the scheme of award for the degree in question and additional practices within the department/division and/or Faculty.
2. The arrangements for the assessment of and award of degrees to students as outlined in these Boards of Examiners Regulations and in this Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes should be followed as closely as possible including the preparation for a meeting of the Board of Examiners.

## 4 Preparing for the Meetings of Boards of Examiners

1. Boards of Examiners should be aware of the outcomes of the Faculty/Departmental Extenuating Circumstances Panel:
  - i) The Faculty/Departmental Extenuating Circumstances Panel is not formally part of the marking and assessment process and therefore should not form part of any action short of a strike. This meeting should therefore take place.
  - ii) The recommendations of the Faculty/Departmental Extenuating Circumstances Panel should be communicated to Boards of Examiners in the usual way.

## 5 External Examiners

1. When it comes to External Examiners, the following must be considered:
  - i) Departments/ Divisions are asked to keep their External Examiners informed and give them regular progress reports.
  - ii) External Examiners have been sent the Procedures in the Event of an Emergency Affecting the Work of Boards of Examiners, together with a covering letter from the Chair of the UCL Education Committee, or their nominee.
  - iii) It is expected that the meetings of the Boards of Examiners will take place as arranged, and the attendance of the External Examiners at these meetings is key, even if there are a number of missing marks. Please also refer to Sections 8.9.8 to 8.9.9 below for additional information.

### **From the Procedures:**

1. The following key points must be noted:
  - a) The academic judgment of the Board of Examiners remains of the utmost importance;
  - b) UCL's academic standards must be maintained;
  - c) Wherever possible, the Regulations for Boards of Examiners For Taught Courses must be followed except in extreme situations;
  - d) UCL will maintain the best interests of its students, but will not compromise its academic robustness;
  - e) Sufficient evidence of a student's ability must be shown in order to determine the level of award or progression.
2. Wherever possible, Boards of Examiners will be expected to meet as normal and undertake business as usual. Boards of Examiners have the responsibility to ensure that marks for each student assessed are correctly reported by the due date to Assessment and Student Records in Student and Registry Services and, in good time, to any other Board of Examiners requiring marks from the Board for the assessment of its students. Boards of Examiners also recommend to the relevant Faculty Board of Examiners awards to students, including, where appropriate, recommendations for the award of honours, taking into account any circumstances which may affect the performance of a candidate and which have been properly reported, according to UCL regulations.
3. With regard to (c) of the Procedures as set out above, it is not expected that postponement will occur. However, in exceptional circumstances, and in consultation with the External Examiners and the Faculty, the date could be adjusted but the meeting must have occurred prior to the marks deadline set.
4. It is important that External Examiners attend the Boards of Examiners as arranged to ensure that the key points above are maintained and the Boards can undertake their duties. The External Examiners' role is to assure the standards of our degree programmes and the performance of the students registered on them.
5. Without the attendance of an External Examiner, the Board of Examiners is not valid and cannot proceed with its business and must therefore refer this to the Faculty Board of Examiners, unless the External Examiner has been unable to attend for reasons, as set out in the Regulations for Taught Programme Boards of Examiners., but has still had the opportunity to input into the marking process and the determination of the award of degrees. This is not a departure from normal practices.

6. If there are no marks available, the Board of Examiners must discuss arrangements made to conclude its business over the summer period once the marks become available. For further information, see Section 8.9.10 below.

## 6 Quoracy

1. In certain circumstances the rules of quoracy can be flexible.
  - i) It is for the Chair of the Board and the External Examiner(s) to determine whether the attendance at the Board is sufficient in terms of experience in the examination process in order to proceed. These emergency procedures mean that normal rules of quoracy do not have to be strictly followed as long as this assurance is given.
  - ii) The normal rules specify that the minimum number of examiners considering final year students is either five members, or one fifth of the membership, including (in either case) the Chair (or, in the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair) whichever would be the higher number, and where the number of finalists is up to three, the minimum number is three.

## 7 Records

1. A record of each meeting should be made as usual, giving the detail of the Board, the date of the meeting, members present and the business conducted. Absence notified prior to the meeting should be noted as normal and as per the regulations in the Regulations for Taught Programme Boards of Examiners. Where a Board is not able to proceed to conduct its business, due to absence of members or other reasons, this should be recorded.

## 8 Classifying the Students

### 8.1 Finalist Students

#### **From the Procedures:**

- i) Boards of Examiners should consider the range of marks awarded to students together with the scheme of award for the degree and recommend award of honours.
- ii) Where the full range of marks is available for a given finalist student, the Board of Examiners should consider the results and make a decision on whether or not the student qualifies for an award. Where the student qualifies for an award the Board should determine the classification of degree to be recommended.
- iii) Where the range of marks available for a given finalist student is not complete, the Board should consider whether or not the student has obtained sufficient academic achievement to be awarded a degree.
- iv) Where the Board is satisfied that the student has obtained sufficient academic achievement to be awarded a degree, but not sufficient to determine a classification, the Board should recommend a provisional pass with honours. The classification will be determined when all marks have been submitted or sufficient to determine the final classification beyond reasonable doubt.
- v) Where it is not possible to determine whether a student has passed enough units to be awarded a degree, the Board of Examiners should defer making a decision and refer the case to the Faculty Board of Examiners, with information on marks and

assessments awarded, together with other relevant information, such as Extenuating Circumstances and confirmation of attendance at examinations.

1. There are four main options available to Boards in considering the performance of their finalist students:
  - i) Classification as normal, where all the marks are available;
  - ii) A provisional pass with honours, which will be recorded as Honours degree (classification to be determined), where the Board is satisfied that the student has obtained sufficient academic achievement but is unable to determine the classification;
  - iii) Non-classification, where it is not possible to determine whether a student has passed the minimum to be awarded an Honours degree, and thus where no judgement can be made;
  - iv) Where it is clear that a given case falls within the Aegrotat and/or Special Provisions, the Departmental/ Divisional Board of Examiners should consider the case and make a recommendation to UCL Education Committee's Special and Aegrotat Provisions Panel.
2. Where there are marks missing, but it is clear the classification is unaffected by the missing marks, the classification of the degree should be recommended, indicating that there are still marks missing. This is clear where a student has all marks but for a half unit, where all the other marks fall in the Upper Second Class Honours band, and the missing mark will have no impact on this. However, it is imperative that any decision should be wholly consonant with the scheme of award.
3. Where the majority of marks are available, but it is not entirely clear what the classification should be, Boards of Examiners should determine whether there is sufficient for the award of degree, including the requirement that at least two final year course units have been passed, and then consider possible awards, delegating it to Chair's Action, on the basis of the discussion in the Board of Examiner, to determine the final recommendation when all the marks are available. For example, where a student is on the borderline of a Lower or Upper Second Class Honours, but has a critical mark missing, the Board should discuss the case, and delegate the Chair to take Chair's Action, along the lines of, for example, if the missing mark is 60 or over, the student should be awarded an Upper Second Class Honours degree, but if the mark is 59 or under, the award should be at Lower Second Class Honours.
4. Where there are sufficient marks to determine that a degree will be awarded but where the marks received do not indicate that a student is clearly in a given class or near a borderline, then the Board of Examiners can indicate only an Honours degree (classification to be determined).
5. Where there are insufficient marks, then a Board of Examiners will not be able to indicate an award. This is clear, for example, where there are only marks to the value of 8 course units, when, for example, the minimum passed for an honours degree is 9 course units.

### **Oral Examinations**

6. Oral examinations should be undertaken in the best interests of the students; that the arrangements should replicate as close as possible normal practice; and that no student should be disadvantaged. Boards of Examiners/Departments that hold oral examinations are asked to consider their own individual situations and then liaise with either the Chair of UCL Education Committee or their nominee.

## 8.2 Non-finalist students

### From the Procedures:

- i) Boards of Examiners should consider the range of marks awarded to students together with the rules for progression for the degree and recommend progression to the next year of study. If the full range of marks is not available, the Board of Examiners should determine whether the student has sufficient academic achievement to be allowed to proceed.
  - ii) If the number of marks available for a given non-finalist student is almost complete, and it is satisfied that the student has sufficient academic achievement to proceed, the Board should recommend progression.
  - iii) Where it is not possible to determine whether a student has passed enough units to proceed to the next year of the degree, the Board of Examiners should defer making a decision and refer the case to the Faculty Board of Examiners, with information on marks and assessments awarded, together with other relevant information, such as Extenuating Circumstances and confirmation of attendance at examinations.
1. There are a number of options available to Boards in considering the performance of their continuing students:
    - i) Decisions on progression can be made as normal, where all the marks are available;
    - ii) Decisions on progression can be made, where the range of marks available makes it clear whether the student has met the progression rules for the degree or has clearly fallen foul of them;
    - iii) No decision can be made because of the number of course unit marks missing.
  2. Department/ Divisional Boards of Examiners should determine, wherever possible, whether a student is eligible for consideration for deferred assessment, and make arrangements for the deferred assessment in order that it be taken before the start of the following session.
  3. For students on the harmonised scheme of award, Departmental/ Divisional Boards of Examiners should determine, wherever possible, whether a student is entitled to referred assessment, and make arrangements for the referred assessment in order that it be taken before the start of the following session.

## 9 Failure of a Board of Examiners to Meet

1. Where a Board of Examiners has not been able to meet or has failed to meet the rules about being quorate as set out in the Regulations for Taught Programme Boards of Examiners, the Faculty Board of Examiners should meet to consider finalist and non-finalist students in the jurisdiction of the Board.

### From the Procedures:

- i) The Faculty Board of Examiners should ensure that it has sufficient expertise present at a meeting to consider finalist and non-finalist students, including attendance of External Examiners, and meets the requirements for being quorate as set out in the Regulations for Taught Programme Boards of Examiners.
- ii) The Faculty Board of Examiners should consider the range of marks awarded to students together with the scheme of award for the degree and recommend award of

honours. If the full range of marks is not available, the Faculty Board should determine whether the student has sufficient academic achievement to be awarded a degree.

- iii) If the number of marks available for a given finalist student is almost complete, the Board should continue to determine the level of the award, ensuring that it is satisfied that, in its academic judgement, the classification is correct and beyond reasonable doubt. If it is satisfied that the student has sufficient academic achievement to be awarded a degree but not in order to determine a classification, the Board should recommend a provisional pass with honours. The classification will be determined when all marks have been submitted or sufficient to determine the final classification beyond reasonable doubt.
  - iv) Where it is not possible to determine whether a student has passed enough units to be awarded a degree, the Faculty Board of Examiners should refer the case to the UCL Aegrotat and Special Provisions Panel, with information on marks and assessments awarded, together with other relevant information, such as Extenuating Circumstances and confirmation of attendance at examinations.
  - v) Faculty Boards of Examiners should consider the range of marks awarded to students together with the rules for progression for the degree and recommend progression to the next year of study. If the full set of marks is not available, the Faculty Board of Examiners should determine whether the student has sufficient academic achievement to be allowed to proceed.
  - vi) If the number of marks available for a given non-finalist student is almost complete, and it is satisfied that the student has sufficient academic achievement to proceed, the Board should approve progression.
  - vii) Where it is not possible to determine whether a student has passed enough units to proceed to the next year of the degree, the Faculty Board of Examiners should refer the case to UCL Education Committee, with information on marks and assessments awarded, together with other relevant information, such as Extenuating Circumstances and confirmation of attendance at examinations, who will be required to make a decision about progression before the start of the next session.
2. Where a Departmental/ Divisional Board of Examiners has not been able to fulfil its responsibilities, and a Faculty Board of Examiners is called upon to determine the award of degrees for students in that Department/ Division, it should ensure that it has the following in order to undertake the work:
- i) The scheme of award for the degree;
  - ii) The presence of External Examiners for that degree;
  - iii) The recommendations of the Faculty Extenuating Circumstances Panel;
  - iv) The results profiles for continuing and finalist students;
  - v) Information on absences from examinations, which will have been input by Assessment and Student Records;
  - vi) Examination scripts, according to normal practices;
  - vii) Other regulatory information, such as rules for referred and deferred assessment, and Special and Aegrotat Provisions.
3. Where Faculty Boards of Examiners act in this capacity, they must make judgements on marks available for students consistent with the advice set out in Section 8.10.
4. Faculty Boards of Examiners must not undertake the work of the Departmental/ Divisional Board of Examiners where it is clear that they do not have the expertise in the examination process to do so. It is for the Chair of the Board and the External Examiner(s) to determine

whether the attendance at the Board is sufficient and appropriate in order to proceed. These emergency procedures mean that normal rules of quoracy do not have to be strictly followed as long as this assurance is given.

5. Faculty Boards of Examiners should also ensure that Departmental/ Divisional Boards of Examiners have communicated with their External Examiners, where the Departmental/ Divisional Board of Examiners meeting cannot take place.

## 10 Completion of Business Once Marks Are Released

1. Departmental/ Divisional Boards of Examiners should agree with External Examiners the strategy for completing the work of the Boards of Examiners once the full range of marks is known. This could be undertaken in a number of ways including:
  - i) Arranging a second Board of Examiners meeting, or a first meeting where the original Board of Examiners meeting did not take place;
  - ii) Making arrangements with External Examiners to communicate with them via electronic means for the ratification of results;
  - iii) Discussing cases by telephone or conference call.
2. Chairs of Boards and External Examiners should ensure that the arrangements made do not compromise academic standards and that they ensure fairness and equity of treatment of students.
3. Chairs of Boards should ascertain the availability of External Examiners over the summer. They should also ensure, in conjunction with the Head of Department/ Division, as appropriate, that there is someone available to deputise for them in the event of their absence when the marking has been completed.

## 11 Communication

### Communication with UCL

1. Communication within UCL is the managerial responsibility of the Head of Department/ Division, who must inform the Faculty if it is likely that the Board of Examiners will consist of the External Examiners and the Faculty observer only, so that alternative arrangements can be made.
  - i) The Chair of the Faculty Board of Examiners is expected to inform Assessment and Student Records when it is known that a Board of Examiners is not likely to meet and provide information on alternative arrangements.

### From the procedures

- ii) UCL Education Committee will consider all recommendations for the award of degrees, noting whether the set of marks for a given student is complete or not, and ratify the recommendations made by the Departmental/Faculty Boards of Examiners and/or its Sub-Committee, considering awards under the Aegrotat and Special Provisions.
- iii) The Chairs of the Faculty Boards of Examiners are expected to make regular reports to UCL Education Committee on progress and difficulties through the Director of Student Administration.



2. Heads of Departments/ Divisions have been instructed to keep students informed of developments; they should consequently ensure that this additional communication continues up to the award of degree or determination of progression.
3. Students are being kept up-to-date about the action in general terms through web communications on the UCL Exams and Awards website. Students are also being informed about the Emergency Procedures.

### **Communication with students**

4. At the point when students are informed of the provisional outcomes of the Boards of Examiners, Heads of Departments/ Divisions, tutors and departmental/ divisional administrative staff should ensure that the results are explained in the context of the different outcomes outlined in the Emergency Procedures: i.e. a classified degree; Honours degree (classification to be determined); or still to be determined.
5. Heads of Departments/ Divisions are expected to ensure that External Examiners have been kept informed of the developments within a programme of study and about the arrangements for the Faculty/Departmental Extenuating Circumstances Panel and the subsequent Board of Examiners.
6. The Chair of the Board of Examiners has written to the External Examiners informing them of the Emergency Procedures.

### **Further advice**

7. If you require any clarification about this advice or the Emergency Procedures, please contact Assessment and Student Records in the first instance.