



UCL Academic Manual 2021-22

Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

Annex 4.3.6

Boards of Examiners Emergency Procedures

Summary

1. Preparatory meetings take place virtually
2. Boards of Examiners meet virtually
3. Boards can change the date of the meeting if deadlines for confirmation of results can still be met
4. Boards follow normal regulations unless:
 - a) The External Examiner cannot attend
 - b) The Board is not quorate
 - c) Marks are missing
5. Boards which have not been able to follow standard procedures report to UCL Education Committee on any additional steps which they have taken to assure standards.

1 Governance

1. These procedures should be used when UCL Education Committee declares an emergency affecting the work of Boards of Examiners.
2. UCL Education Committee is responsible for upholding the academic standards of the degrees awarded by UCL and for ensuring that the system of assessment and award remains robust and rigorous.
3. Chairs of Boards of Examiners and Faculty Boards of Examiners are responsible for assuring these academic standards on the programmes and modules under their remit.
4. The [Boards of Examiners Regulations](#) and the [Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes](#) must be followed as closely as possible, except where a regulation has been specifically amended or suspended by the Examinations and Assessments Contingency Panel on behalf of UCL Education Committee.
5. In line with the existing regulations the Provost reserves the right, at any time, to delegate the power to assess students and confirm their awards to other officers of UCL deemed suitable by the Provost, should emergency circumstances require it.

2 If the Board Cannot Meet in Person

1. For 2021-22, UCL has confirmed that all Boards of Examiners should meet virtually.
2. Full Boards of Examiners should be held live by video-conferencing using MS Teams or Zoom.
3. Sub Boards, Extenuating Circumstances Panels, Academic Misconduct Panels, pre-meetings, parity meetings etc. can be held by video-conferencing or by correspondence via a UCL-supported platform.
4. All virtual meetings must take steps to assure the security of student information, using encryption and/ or secure platforms to share data in accordance with UCL's GDPR Data Protection Policy (Ch 4, 13.3.8, para 4).
5. When an emergency is formally declared by UCL Education Committee, the following regulation is suspended:
 - Chapter 4, Section 13.3.8, paragraph 5 - Virtual Boards of Examiners: "The decisions of the Virtual Board must be confirmed in writing by all members taking part".
 - Instead, the secretary should ensure that accurate attendance records are kept and reflected in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes should be circulated to all members within one week of the meeting, with an invitation to raise any objections or amendments within a specified timeframe. Once the minutes are agreed, they will act as confirmation of the Board's decisions.

3 If the Board is Not Quorate

1. Boards should follow the normal quoracy regulations in [Chapter 4, Section 13.3.3](#):
 - a) The minimum number of examiners permissible at a Full Board of Examiners is five. This must include the Chair or Deputy Chair and at least one Internal Examiner and one External Examiner for each main subject area covered.
 - b) The minimum number of examiners permissible at a Sub Board of Examiners is two. This must include the Chair or Deputy Chair and at least one Internal Examiner for each main subject area covered.
2. **If the Chair is unable to attend:** All Boards should ensure, in advance, that a Deputy Chair is in place in case the Chair is unable to attend. Details of Deputy Chairs must be submitted to examiners@ucl.ac.uk as early as possible.
3. **If internal examiners are unable to attend** and substitutions cannot be found, the Chair and External Examiner(s) should determine whether the combined assessment experience of attendees is sufficient in order to proceed with the meeting. For example, it may not be necessary for there to be an internal examiner for every main subject area if the combined experience of the other attendees is sufficient. However, if the Board does not meet the quoracy regulations, the Chair must provide written assurances to UCL Education Committee of the additional steps taken to uphold the integrity of the assessment process – see Section 6 for further details.
5. **Alternatively, if the Board cannot be quorate on the pre-arranged date**, the meeting could be postponed to a time when it can be quorate. The Board must take place prior to the published deadlines for the exchange of marks and results publication. Date changes must be agreed with the External Examiner(s) and notified to examiners@ucl.ac.uk.

4 If the External Examiner is Unable to Attend

1. External Examiners play a vital role in assuring the quality of UCL's degrees and are therefore expected to continue their duties by overseeing the assessment process and attending the (virtual) Full Board of Examiners meeting. However if one or more External Examiners is ill or has other difficulties which prevent them from fulfilling one or both of these duties, Boards must take additional steps to uphold the integrity of the assessment process.
2. **If an External Examiner can oversee the assessment process but cannot attend the Board of Examiners meeting:** The Board must be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of UCL Education Committee that adequate consultation has taken place with the External Examiner(s) in question and that the External Examiner(s) have submitted their views to the Chair in writing before the meeting.
3. **If an External Examiner cannot undertake any duties (i.e. oversee the assessment process or attend the Board):** Arrangements should be made for a replacement External Examiner to be appointed for the academic session:
 - a) It is often possible to identify another UCL External Examiner with appropriate subject expertise to take on the additional duties instead of appointing a new External Examiner.
 - b) If no other suitable External Examiner is available, it may be possible to appoint a replacement External Examiner by special permission at a late stage in the academic year.
 - c) If there is insufficient time to appoint a replacement External Examiner, the Programme Team should arrange for the appointment of a senior member of academic or teaching staff (who may be from another cognate department) with previous experience of having been an external elsewhere, to act as an additional internal examiner for the modules affected by the External Examiner's absence, to scrutinise the accuracy of marking on students work and exam scripts. This should not be the Chair of the Board. A justification of the appointment should be provided in respect of the appointee's expertise and experience as part of the Board's written assurances to UCL Education Committee on the additional steps taken to uphold the integrity of the assessment process - see Section 6 for further details.
4. As a minimum:
 - a) The assessment process for all **progressing** and **finalist** students must be overseen by at least one External Examiner.
 - b) All Board meetings which are conferring **final awards** must be attended by, or include written consultation with, at least one External Examiner.
 - c) Boards can make **progression** decisions in the absence of an External Examiner, but must provide UCL Education Committee with written assurances of the additional steps taken to uphold the integrity of the assessment process - see Section 6 for further details.

5 If Marks are Missing

1. **If there are any missing marks for individual assessments or students:** These will be identified and chased-up through the normal Student Records processes, in consultation with the Board's Examination Liaison Officer.
2. **If illness or other difficulties prevent an internal examiner from submitting marks for a whole group of students by the Board deadlines:** The Board can make one of the following decisions:

- a) Where the decision is algorithmic (e.g. PGT classification), the Board can delegate the final decision to Chair's Action at a later date.
- b) Where the decision is discretionary (e.g. outgoing UG borderline regulations), the Full Board can delegate authority to a Sub Board to make the final decision at a later date.

6 Providing Written Assurances to Education Committee

1. **Where an External Examiner has been unable to attend the Board but has been able to oversee the assessment process and submit written comments in advance:** Boards should submit dated evidence of these written comments to the Education Committee Secretary via examiners@ucl.ac.uk.
2. The following procedure should be followed where:
 - the Board is not quorate, or
 - an internal examiner is appointed to replace an External Examiner, or
 - the Board makes progression decisions in the absence of the External Examiner
3. The Programme Team must consider whether the upcoming business of the Board has been properly scrutinised and give evidence of correspondence to this effect.
4. The Programme Team must provide a report regarding the situation (what has caused the External Examiner to be absent, why the Board cannot be quorate, etc.).
5. The marking process and Board meeting must be conducted in line with the requirements of the Academic Manual.
6. The Programme Team should undertake a thorough statistical analysis of the marking of modules to determine that standards of assessment have been maintained within and across modules and what action has been taken to ensure that the standards of marking were sufficiently robust. Further guidance is available on the [Exam Board Support website](#) (staff login required).
7. Following the Board, the Chair of the Board should submit the following documentation to the Education Committee Secretary via examiners@ucl.ac.uk:
 - A document which sets out the situation, the reasons for it and the Programme Team's proposed response to the situation.
 - A document which summarises actions taken to mitigate the situation, including where relevant, the appointment of an internal examiner, who must be named, and his/her experience and qualifications for the role detailed.
 - A document which gives details of the analysis of module data and other processes undertaken in order to ensure the integrity of any awards made.
8. Examples of the kinds of documentation required are available from examiners@ucl.ac.uk.

7 Confirmation by Education Committee

1. The next available meeting of UCL Education Committee will be asked to ratify the decisions of any exam boards which have had to provide any of the written assurances outlined in this procedure.
2. Education Committee will decide whether to approve the procedures undertaken and make a judgement as to whether the appropriate academic standards have been maintained. If approval is given, awards then can be ratified.