

## LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

### GUIDANCE FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS - UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

The University places great importance on the role played by external examiners in the maintenance of academic standards and is grateful to all those external examiners who carry out this valuable function.

#### 1 Introduction

The following guidelines and appendices aim to clarify the University's expectations of the roles and responsibilities of its external examiners, the structure and timetabling of the academic year (in relation to the functions of the examiners), plus other terms and conditions of the appointment. For further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact the following:

Enquiries about academic matters:  
Chair of the Board of Examiners

Enquiries about the payment of fees:  
LTS Assessments and Quality Office  
E-mail: [exams@uea.ac.uk](mailto:exams@uea.ac.uk)

#### 2 University Structure

Schools of study are organised into a four-Faculty structure, with administrative support for teaching and learning provided by Learning and Teaching Services and school-based Local Support. The four Faculties are:

- Arts and Humanities (HUM)
- Medicine and Health Sciences (FMH)
- Science (SCI)
- Social Sciences (SSF)

#### 3.1 Common Course Structure (CCS)

In common with many other universities, UEA has a modular course structure, organising the academic year on a semester basis. Students normally study for 120 credits in any given year of their programme. Successful completion of 360 credits (for 3-year programmes) or 480 credits (for 4-year programmes) will lead to the award of an Honours degree. Assessment may take one of the following modes: EX (Examination), CW (Coursework), WW (Coursework + Examination), CP (Coursework + Project), CA (Coursework and assessment of practice), AP (assessment of practice) or PR (Project). For CP and WW modules, the proportion of marks derived from the coursework component shall not be greater than 50%. Assessment by examination normally takes place at the end of each academic year (in May/June) whilst other forms of assessment normally take place in the semester in which the module is taken

(with certain exceptions such as modules in the School of Health Sciences). Modules may be offered within a semester or across an academic year.

The main characteristics of CCS are:

- Undergraduate pass mark is 40% (except certain Pharmacy modules where a higher pass mark is prescribed by the relevant Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body and the MB BS where modules are assessed on a pass or distinction basis)
- Capping of reassessment marks: If a candidate passes reassessment, the reassessment mark for the element, section or module is capped at the pass mark of 40%. The capped mark is recorded and used in calculating the aggregate mark and degree classification. If the candidate fails, the higher of the 2 marks is used to calculate degree classification.
- Actual marks obtained from Reassessment are used for the purpose of determining whether the student has satisfactorily completed the Stage.
- Modules contributing to programmes are categorised as:

Core: a module designated as one that students must take on their chosen programme. Students must attain the pass mark in all modules designated as core for their chosen programme

Compulsory: a module designated as one that students must take on their chosen programme

Optional: a module included in the range of options from which a student must select, subject to the approval of the Board of the School

- Progression Rules

Satisfactory completion of a Stage of Study will be achieved where the student has obtained:

(a) an overall aggregate for the whole of the Stage of at least the pass mark (40.0 %);

AND

(b) at least the pass mark (40%) in at least 80 credits for Honours

Degree students or in at least 60 credits for Ordinary Degree Students;

AND

(c) at least the pass mark (40%) in all modules designated 'core' for the programme.

The Regulations and Instructions also set out what happens in the event of failure to complete a Stage satisfactorily, including the possibility of the exercise of discretionary permission to progress, with defined boundaries. Particular provisions continue to apply with regard to students taking courses that lead to professional registration.

### **3.2 Common Masters Framework (CMF)**

Full-time students normally study for 1 year, with exceptions of up to 2 years for some courses which lead to professional registration. Successful completion of 180 credits is required for the award of a Masters degree. Assessment may take one of the following modes: EX (Examination), CW (Coursework), WW (Coursework +

Examination), CP (Coursework + Project), CA (Coursework and assessment of practice), AP (assessment of practice), PR (Project) or DS (Dissertation). Assessment by examination may take place in January, April or May/June, with other forms of assessment taking place at other times during the academic year.

Intermediate assessment:

Boards of Examiners will consider all confirmed marks for full-time students who have attempted all taught modules for the course and part-time students who have completed all taught modules in an academic year.

Characteristics of CMF are:

- The pass mark of a Master's level module is 50%.
- Capping of reassessment marks: Where the actual mark achieved at reassessment is above the pass mark, a mark capped at the pass mark shall be recorded and used to determine the award.
- Actual marks obtained from Reassessment, or the higher of the 2 marks where the student has failed, are used for the purpose of determining whether the student has satisfactorily completed the taught component.
- Modules contributing to programmes are categorised as:

Core: a module designated as one that students must take on their chosen programme. Students must attain the pass mark in all modules designated as core for their chosen programme

Compulsory: a module designated as one that students must take on their chosen programme

Optional: a module included in the range of options from which a student must select, subject to the approval of the Board of the School

- Completion of Taught Components:

Satisfactory completion will be achieved where the student has obtained:

- (a) An overall aggregate for the taught component of the course of at least 50%, **and**
- (b) At least the pass mark in each taught module, except for modules totalling no more than 40 credits (Master's or Postgraduate Diploma) or 20 credits (Postgraduate Certificate). In these remaining modules the student must have achieved a mark of at least 45.00%, **and**
- (c) The minimum specified mark in such elements within a module which is required in order to obtain a pass in the modules as a whole, **and**
- (d) At least the pass mark in all modules designated core for the course.

The Regulations and Instructions also set out what happens in the event of failure to complete the taught component satisfactorily, including the possibility of the exercise of discretion to condone failure.

### 3.3 Integrated Masters Regulation Framework

Successful completion of 480 credits, including 360 credits of undergraduate study and 120 credits of master's level study will lead to an Integrated Master's degree. Students who do not successfully complete the final year of study may be recommended for an Honours degree and will be considered in accordance with the regulations governing undergraduate degrees.

Some integrated master's courses include a Year in Industry or a Year Abroad, which may be assessed on a pass/fail basis or which may have marks attached to assessment items related to the student's activities during the year.

The integrated master's regulations mirror the principles of the regulatory frameworks governing undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards.

The main characteristics of Integrated Masters are:

- The pass mark for undergraduate modules is 40% (except for certain Pharmacy modules where a higher pass mark is prescribed by the relevant Professional Statutory / Regulatory Body).
- The pass mark for Master's level modules (which can be taken in either Year 3 or Year 4 depending upon the course profile) is 50%.
- Where a student is referred to reassessment and passes, the reassessment mark for the reassessed element or module is capped at the pass mark (40% for undergraduate modules or 50% for Master's level modules and specified modules or elements in Pharmacy). Both the original merit mark and the capped mark are made available to the Board of Examiners, but the capped mark is used for calculating the aggregate mark and final classification.
- Depending upon course profiles, modules may be designated as core, compulsory or optional. A core module is one that a student must take and in which they must achieve a pass mark. A compulsory module is one that a student must take. An optional module is one that a student may select, subject to the approval of the School of Studies.
- At the end of each year of study (Stage) students are required to have achieved a specified academic standard in order to be permitted to progress to the next year of study or to final classification. The progression rules for the various integrated master's programmes are set out in the Instructions to Examiners (and vary by programme). The progression rules are based on the student achieving a pass mark in a specified number of modules plus a specified overall aggregate for the year.
- UEA has adopted a definition of credit across all its taught courses as a measure of the volume of study associated with a module or course, with marks being a measure of achievement.

Assessment may take one of the following modes: Examination, Coursework (written assignments, presentations, practicals or course tests), Project, or Assessment of Practice. Module assessment may combine two or more modes of assessment. The

regulations place limits on the volume of assessment that may be completed by coursework alone (either within individual modules or across the course).

### **3.4 New Academic Model (Bachelors and Integrated Masters) Regulations**

Please see Information sheet on the New Academic Model (Bachelors and Integrated Masters) regulations introduced in 2013-14 which can be found at the link below:

[Information for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Courses BIM Regs 2015-16](#)

### **3.4 Examination**

Examinations normally take place in January, April or May/June (Postgraduate students) and at the end of each academic year in May/June (Undergraduate students). Reassessment normally takes place in August. All draft examination and reassessment papers will be sent to external examiners for comment.

Schools may also run examination style assessments at other times of the year and for administrative purposes these are classified as Course Tests.

The University has been working over the past few years to ensure that conditions in course tests match those in examinations as far as possible and where appropriate.

### **3.5 Coursework and Projects**

As indicated above, some modules may be assessed wholly by coursework, project, practical or a combination thereof. Externals should expect to be involved in the moderation of these alternative forms of assessment, where appropriate. The University's Code of Practice for the External Examining System for Awards, paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6, sets out the basis on which sampling should take place and indicates that Schools should record such agreements with external examiners.

## **4 Boards of Examiners' meetings**

UEA's modular course structure is broadly based on the main Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS). Marks for each module are normally awarded on the completion of the assessment for that module. Credit is an indicator of the volume of study associated with a module. The Boards of Examiners or sub-groups thereof normally meet as Student Progress Meetings in late January/February after any module assessments (e.g. coursework or project modules) to review academic progress to date. They normally meet again as Boards of Examiners in June (Undergraduate) or in July (Postgraduate) to confirm marks. Once approved, the marks for these modules cannot be amended at a later meeting of the Board of Examiners. However, an external examiner may (in the light of his/her review of a candidate's work) comment on (an) approved mark(s) for a particular module(s).

External examiners are encouraged to attend all meetings at which marks contributing towards a student's final award, including degree classification, are formally confirmed, Module Assessment Boards (see Section 4.7 of the Code of Practice) and the Stage Assessment Board of Examiners' meeting, which makes decisions about a student's eligibility to progress to the next Stage of study. Attendance at Final Stage Boards of

Examiners' meetings (where students are considered for awards and degree classification, where relevant) is a requirement and external examiners must sign a copy of the pass list. If you are unable to meet this requirement, please alert the Chair of the Board of Examiners or the relevant Learning and Teaching Hub immediately.

Undergraduate Reassessment Module, Stage and Final Boards meet in September and External Examiners' input is required by e-mail and/or skype. /

Examiners should be invited to attend module assessment meetings.

## **6 Timetable**

### **6.1 *On appointment***

External examiners are appointed on an annual basis and appointments will normally be made for four consecutive years. An appointment notification will be sent from the Director of Learning and Teaching Services (via the Assessment and Quality Office) following recommendation from a School of Studies.

As set out in the Code of Practice, the following documentation will be made available to External Examiners via the LTS website:

- The UEA Code of Practice for External Examiners System for Awards (Taught Programmes);
- Degree Regulations and Instructions to Examiners;
- Notes for guidance
- Programme specifications
- Relevant University policies
- Pro-forma for external examiners' reports

External examiners are encouraged to contact the School or the Learning and Teaching Service (LTS) Hub if they need any further information, have any queries or would welcome further information about their role.

After appointment, specific arrangements for the Board of Examiners' meetings will be made by the Chair of the Board or the designated member of academic staff responsible for the programmes. Often communication is sent about this to the External Examiner from the contact with the LTS Hub or from the School Manager. The pattern for standard programmes under the New Academic Model, Common Course Structure (CCS) and the Common Masters Framework (CMF) is generally as follows:

### **6.2 *Semester 1***

October/November: Relevant subject area examiners will finalise nomination of modules to be covered by each external examiner. Reading lists and other information will be made available to the external examiners.

By November: Draft examination papers and reassessment papers are submitted to external examiners for approval and comment. Where an external examiner has

substantial comments, the School should engage in a dialogue with the examiner (Section 4.3 of the Code of Practice).

January/February: External examiners are invited to moderate Semester 1 Modules:

- (i) by auditing modules for marking standards;
- (ii) by arbitrating in the event of disagreements where assessment is double-marked, or of problem cases of other kinds;
- (iii) by commenting on the appropriateness of assessment to module content and learning outcomes;
- (iv) by commenting on the overall spread of marks for relevant modules (spread to be supplied with agreed sample of work sent for moderation).

Undergraduate Student Progress Meeting

- (i) external examiners may attend;
- (ii) Chair/internal examiners identify “at risk” candidates and take appropriate action.

### 6.3 **Semester 2**

April/May/June:

External examiners are invited to moderate Semester 2 / Year-long modules on the same basis as for Semester 1 modules.

6.4 June: Undergraduate Module, Stage Assessment and Final Assessment (including classification, where relevant)

July: Postgraduate Module and Intermediate Board

- Module Assessment Meeting
- Stage Assessment Meeting (Undergraduate) or Intermediate Meeting (Postgraduate)

External examiners should attend and be alerted to:

any problem cases, borderline cases, and be given the opportunity to sample the work of such cases, across the range;

June:

- Final Assessment (Undergraduate)

External examiners are required to attend as awards and classification of degrees (where relevant) for final year candidates will be determined. External examiners will be required to sign pass lists.

November:

- Final Assessment (Postgraduate)

External examiners are required to attend as awards for final year candidates will be determined. External examiners will be required to sign pass lists.

The pattern for non-standard CCS programmes may vary slightly and relevant Schools will inform their external examiners of their specific assessment pattern, timings and deadlines separately.

## **7 External Examiners' Reports**

External examiners are required to submit an annual report within 6 weeks of the Final Assessment Board meeting and no later than the specified deadline.

The Code of Practice sets out the topics to be covered in the report, which includes academic matters and procedural issues as well as recommendations for enhancement. The University provides a pro-forma for reports to capture these comments.

The University acknowledges the co-operation of external examiners in using the form which is available via the LTS website. External Examiner reports and responses will be made available publicly via the LTS website.

## **8 Payment**

Details about arrangements for payment of external examiners are as set out below:

### **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

It is the University's aim to reimburse all reasonable travelling expenses necessarily incurred by external examiners for attendance at Boards or other assessment events (eg final year project presentations etc). Second class rail fare only will normally be covered, plus appropriate local travel at either end of the journey.

Where the cost of travel arrangements exceeds these guidelines eg. air travel or longer distance travel by car, examiners are asked to discuss the position with the Chair in advance to avoid difficulties at a later stage.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Similar principles apply to the booking of overnight accommodation where this is required. Examiners requiring accommodation arrangements should discuss with the LTS Hub.

### **METHOD OF PAYMENT**

Expenses will be paid direct into a bank account by credit transfer as part of the monthly payroll run, so will be processed up to mid-month for that month's payments.

Please note that payment will only be made on receipt of the annual report.

Assessment and Quality Office

Learning and Teaching Service  
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