

Lancaster University

Composition, membership and conduct of examination boards (all taught UG and taught PG programmes)

(Approved by Senate on 20 February 2008)

External examiners

1. (R) There shall be a board of examiners for each degree programme which comprises external and internal examiners. External examiners (at least one for each approved degree programme) for all programmes and awards offered by the University) shall be appointed in accordance with the procedures set out below and internal examiners shall be drawn from the body of permanent academic staff of the University (although temporary members of the academic staff who have primary responsibility for the delivery of a programme or module are also eligible to be internal examiners).

Selection and appointment

2. (R) The University shall appoint appropriate external examiners on the nomination of heads of departments and subject to approval by the relevant faculty teaching committee(s) and by the Committee of Senate to whom they are responsible. The Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Director of the Graduate School have delegated authority to approve external examiners for undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes on behalf of the Senate. Appointments made under this delegated authority shall be reported to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (UGSC) and Graduate School Committee (GSC) as appropriate.
3. (SP) An annual report listing all current external examiners shall be made to the Senate.
4. (R) The period of appointment for external examiners shall be for a maximum of three years although an extension for a fourth year may be possible if necessary or appropriate. No individual may be appointed to serve again within five years of the end of the previous period of appointment.
5. (R) Members of staff in corresponding departments in other Higher Education Institutions where Lancaster staff are already serving as external examiners are ineligible to be appointed as Lancaster externals.
6. (R) Lancaster University former staff shall not be eligible to serve as external examiners at Lancaster University within five years of leaving Lancaster.

Remit and duties of external examiners

7. (SP) Examiners will be expected to comment on the content, balance and structure of degree programmes and their component modules in addition to participating in, and commenting on, the following assessment processes:
 - academic achievements by individual students
 - academic standards within a cohort of students
 - the scope and appropriateness of learning opportunities available to students
 - the comparability of standards of programmes within the national context
 - the quality and fairness of assessment strategies and procedures
 - the organisation and arrangements for student assessment

Departments must give external examiners explicit guidance as to what material will be made available to enable them to comment on the above.

8. (R) External examiners will be expected to attend meetings of boards of examiners for the degree programmes for which they are acting. If, in exceptional circumstances, an external examiner is unable to attend the scheduled examination board then this should be reported to the Student Registry for approval by the Director of the Graduate School or the Director of Undergraduate Studies as appropriate. External examiners will still be expected to participate in all other duties prior to the examination board and to the decision making process by making themselves available for consultation in the period immediately before and during the scheduled meeting of the board of examiners.

9. (R) External examiners shall submit an annual report to the University via the Teaching Quality Support Office and this report shall be considered by the appropriate department (or equivalent teaching unit) as part of the Annual Teaching Review Process. A summary of issues raised by external examiners in their individual reports shall be produced annually for the relevant thematic committee (UGSC, GSC, CAI or CLLWPO) and for the Senate.

Internal examiners

10. (R) All permanent members of academic staff (and any temporary members of academic staff who have primary responsibility for the programme or modules) in the department(s) (or equivalent units) contributing to the degree programme shall be entitled to be members of boards of examiners and shall be termed "internal examiners".
11. (R) The following people shall, *ex officio*, be members of all University boards of examiners and shall be regarded as internal examiners:
- the Vice-Chancellor or nominee
 - the Director of the Graduate School or nominee (for postgraduate boards)
 - the Director of Undergraduate Studies or nominee (for undergraduate boards)
 - Associate Deans for Teaching or nominees (as appropriate for undergraduate boards and postgraduate boards in their faculties)
12. (R) Individuals who teach and who participate in the assessment of candidates' work but who are neither permanent members of the academic staff of the University nor temporary members of staff with primary responsibility for specified programmes or modules but will be termed "assessors". They will not be entitled to full membership of examination boards and will not be entitled to vote on decisions but they will be invited to have input into examination board discussions and may, subject to the discretion of the heads of departments concerned, be invited to attend meetings of examination boards.
13. The Academic Registrar or nominee shall be entitled to be present at any board of examiners.

Conflicts of interest

14. (R) No student may be a member of an examination board, or of any subsidiary examination committee appointed by it, or attend any examiners' meeting other than as a candidate for assessment. If, however, a person who is otherwise qualified to be an examiner for a course, such as a member of staff or an approved external examiner, is a student because they are registered on another course either within the University or in another institution of higher education, that shall not in itself disqualify that person from carrying out normal examining commitments unless there should be a conflict of interests. Where there is any unavoidable potential clash of interests the procedures below must be followed.
15. (R) Any examiner who is aware of any potential conflict of interest (for example being related to, or a close friend of, any student registered on the degree programme for which that person is an examiner) must declare their interest as soon as the possibility arises and must not be the sole examiner for the student concerned on any individual contributory module.
16. (R) Any examiner who has a potential conflict of interests as described above, must draw this to the chair(s) of the appropriate examination board(s) and the connection must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and the person involved shall not take any part in any discussion covering the student(s) concerned; but may, at the discretion of the chairperson, be permitted to remain in attendance for the duration of the discussion.

Composition of boards of examiners

17. (R) For single subject degree programmes the board of examiners shall consist of all external and internal examiners.

18. (R) For combined degree programmes the board shall consist of at least one external examiner from each of the contributing departments, together with a number of internal examiners to be agreed by the departments concerned. The administering department for combined programmes shall be responsible for nominating one of its external examiners to be present at the final examination board. The external examiner from the contributing department shall not be required to attend the examination board but should be available for consultation by telephone.
19. (R) Departments teaching courses which contribute to degree programmes offered by other departments shall be entitled to representation at any board of examiners which involves a module in their subject. However they will only be required to send a representative if, in the opinion of the department responsible for the degree programme, the degree result(s) of any student(s) taking a module in another department cannot be easily or clearly decided. It shall be the responsibility of the administering department to notify the other departments involved if attendance by a representative of a contributing department is thought necessary and, if so, to notify the date and time
20. (R) In the case of consortial or non-standard programmes of study, boards of examiners shall be composed as follows:
- (a) if 50% of the modules (by credit weight) are offered by a department:
 - (i) the board must include an external examiner who should be present if possible and, if not, should be available for consultation
 - (ii) internal examiners from the subject(s)/department(s) concerned;
 - (b) if less than 50% but more than 25% of modules (by credit weight) are offered by a department, that department should send at least one internal examiner with appropriate knowledge and expertise to the board
 - (c) if less than 25% of modules (by credit weight) are offered by a department, an internal examiner from that department shall be entitled to attend the board if they wish but must attend the board, or be available for consultation, in the event of a marginal result.

Meetings of boards of examiners

21. (R). There shall be a physical meeting of the board of examiners which all external examiners and all internal examiners and assessors who have been involved in the teaching of the degree programme(s) concerned shall be expected to attend. If, for exceptional and unavoidable reasons, some external and internal examiners are unable to attend the meeting then the board of examiners shall be quorate only if the following people are present:
- at least one external examiner
 - at least two internal examiners from the department(s)/subject area responsible for the degree programme although, in exceptional circumstances, only one internal examiner from the department responsible for the degree programme will be required to be present and the other internal examiner(s) may be academic members of staff from a cognate discipline.
22. (R) Examination boards will take place at specific times as stipulated by the University and which enable results to be processed and awards made in time for students to graduate at the summer and winter degree ceremonies as appropriate. It shall be the responsibility of heads of departments to ascertain that sufficient examiners will be available to enable the examination board to take place on the scheduled date and to notify the Student Registry of any problems.
23. (R) Each Board of Examiners shall keep a record of the decisions and recommendations made at its meeting(s), prepared in accordance with guidelines held by the Student Registry, and which must include a list of attendees (together with their status as external or internal examiners or assessor) and a record of discussions leading to decisions and the reasons for such decisions. This record of the proceedings of the board shall be restricted and made available only to: the participating examiners and assessors, the Vice-Chancellor and other officers of the University as appropriate; the Committee of Senate; and appropriate review and appeal committees.

24. (R) In recommending the award of a degree or class of degree where boards of examiners have exercised discretion and/or where the recommended result is based wholly or in part on information derived from evidence other than examinations and/or project or coursework results, a record shall be kept of the way in which this decision was reached. This record shall be signed by the chair of the board of examiners and submitted to the Student Registry with the mark sheet(s) and the lists of provisional results. In keeping with all proceedings of boards of examiners, this record shall be of a restricted nature.

Remit of boards of examiners

25. (R) It is the responsibility of boards of examiners to consider the results of examinations and final marks and to make recommendations to the Committee of Senate as to the award of degrees (and the classes of degrees) within the approved degree programme classification scheme. Boards of examiners for undergraduate programmes also consider and confirm marks derived from all non final year modules taken and examined in the academic year under consideration. All results, final and interim, shall be submitted to the Student Registry and ratified by the Committee of Senate and any interim results shall also be reported to board of examiners in the student's final year for final confirmation.
26. (R) Examination boards shall take into account any evidence as may be relevant to a candidate's academic performance, including evidence presented to the board for consideration and may exercise discretion within agreed guidelines. The Committee of the Senate, in confirming decisions and recommendations made by the boards, shall retain similar discretionary powers although it is not expected that the recommendations of boards of examiners will be rejected or overruled where they have acted within the agreed guidelines.
27. Where the overall degree classification or the overall result for a unit of assessment remains unresolved as a result of differing opinions amongst examination board members then significant weight should be attached to the opinion of the external examiner(s) in reaching a decision. Such decisions however are subject to approval and confirmation by the Committee of Senate. In the event of disagreement between external examiners, their views shall be reported to the Committee of Senate for consideration and resolution.