

IMPERIAL

Conduct of Boards of Examiners 2023-24

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the requirements for the constitution and operation of Boards of Examiners considering results, progression and award decisions for Undergraduate programmes of Study and for Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study.
- 1.2 The principles and guidance included in this document help Imperial College London (hereafter ‘the University’) to provide assurance of the academic standards of its awards through decision made by the Boards of Examiners and set out how the Boards should be established and operate effectively. This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

Academic Regulations

All taught students at the University are subject to:

- [*Regulations for Students*](#).
- [*Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure*](#)
- [*Academic Misconduct Procedure*](#)

In addition:

Undergraduate programmes of study which commenced prior to September 2019 are governed by the relevant [*Academic and Examination Regulations*](#), with the [*General Regulations*](#). “Regs B”

Continuing part time Postgraduate programmes of study that have not been re-approved through curriculum review (see [*Academic Regulations*](#) website) are governed by the relevant [*Academic and Examination Regulations*](#), with the [*General Regulations*](#) “Regs B”.

All undergraduate programmes of study which commenced September 2019 onwards, and all postgraduate programmes of study listed on the [*Academic Regulations*](#) website (new programmes and curriculum reviewed programmes which commenced September 2019 onwards) are governed by the [*Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study - “Regs A”*](#).

- 1.3 Additional guidance is provide in the [*Board of Examiners Notes*](#), available from the website at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/exams-and-assessment/> alongside the template documents for the agenda and minutes.

2. AUTHORITY OF THE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- 2.1 Boards of Examiners operate with delegated authority from the Senate to confer academic awards. Each Board of Examiners is appointed annually for each programme or suite of programmes in accordance with the relevant University Academic Regulations.

3. STRUCTURE OF BOARDS

- 3.1 The University operates a two-tier Board of Examiners structure. All Exam Board operate anonymously, to ensure parity of treatment for all candidates.
- 3.2 **Pre-Boards** (also referred to as Sub-Boards or Internal Boards) determine the overall module/component/element marks and agree, if required, any scaling or adjustments. Approved procedures for dealing with borderline candidates may be considered at the Pre-Board and provide recommendations to the EPAB meeting.
- 3.3 **Examiners' Progression and Award Board (EPAB)** agree the awards of final year candidates and where appropriate confirm whether or not students in earlier years can progress. The Board will also confirm re-sit or retake opportunities for candidates.
- 3.4 **Resit Boards** consider results of any reassessment or deferred examinations taken following the EPAB. These Boards make decisions in line with those of the EPAB for awards of final year students and progression for those in earlier years.
- 3.5 Where credit-bearing activity is regularly not available for consideration at the usual EPAB for progression or award, such as the outcome of study abroad, a Department will need to consider the most appropriate set up of their Boards of Examiners to ensure that the moderation and ratification process of marks/credit is completed in line with the University processes and procedures.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS

- 4.1 The membership of the Boards and Joint Boards shall consist of a [Chair](#), together with "College Examiners¹" and the External Examiners appointed to act for the relevant subjects.
- 4.2 Normally a minimum of 60 per cent of the membership of the Board of Examiners should be present for valid decisions to be taken (quoracy).
- 4.3 **Pre-Boards or Sub-Boards** should include: The EPAB Chair (or nominee) and the minimum of College Examiners to enable the consideration of the modules under review as well as any other key members of departmental administrative staff involved with assessment. A member of the Department's Mitigating Circumstances Board (MCB) should also be in attendance. For undergraduate medicine only, External Examiners should attend sub-board meetings.
- 4.4 **Examiners' Progression and Award (EPAB)** must include: The Board Chair, College Examiners (unless granted dispensation by the current Head of Department), key members of departmental administrative staff, and all External Examiners.
- 4.5 For undergraduate medicine, EPAB meetings take place in years four (BSc) and six (MBBS) and only consider the award of degrees to candidates. It is recognised that for undergraduate medicine a slightly different system operates whereby the sub-board meetings for each year of the programme are responsible for the detailed discussion of

¹ A College Examiner is a member of the Department that has responsibilities for teaching and learning, and assessment activities and maybe employed with the University on either the Academic or Teaching Learning job families.

student progression, including consideration of borderline cases. For this reason, it is a requirement for all relevant External Examiners and College Examiners to attend the appropriate undergraduate medicine sub-board for which they are responsible. Only one External Examiner is required to attend each of the BSc and MBBS EPAB meeting.

- 4.6 **Joint Board of Examiner's Meetings** will normally be set up for candidates whose range of assessment has, in the opinion of the relevant Faculty Education Committee, been too wide for a single Board to deal with adequately. Any meeting of a Joint Board (and Sub-Board meetings where relevant) at which the classification of candidates is considered must be attended by (a) at least one External Examiner and (b) at least one College Examiner from each of the Boards concerned. It must, furthermore, normally be attended by at least one External Examiner in each of the principal fields of study concerned. The relevant Faculty Education Committee shall decide which fields of study and which Boards are concerned.

4.7 **Board of Examiners' Meetings for Collaborative Programmes**

Where programmes of study are run in collaboration with a partner institution there must be representation at the EPAB meetings (and sub-board meetings where relevant) by the partner(s) and the University. The composition of these Boards should be approved by the relevant Faculty Education Committee and detailed in the governing Memorandum of Agreement.

4.8 **Programmes of Study with a "Management Year"**

Management year results are considered by the Business School's EPAB rather than the students' home department. The management year results are passed to the students' home department prior to the departments' EPAB. A representative from the Business School should also attend the departmental EPAB to present the results. Decisions by the Business School EPAB for with management years are final and cannot be amended by the departmental EPAB. This is to ensure that the learning outcomes for the management year have been achieved and to ensure students with similar results for a module or for the whole management year are treated equitably across the University.

4.9 **Consideration of all other modules taught externally to the student's home department**

Where a module(s) is taught and assessed externally to the students' home department and are not covered by paras 4.7 or 4.8 above, such as I-Explore or other elective modules that are offered to broaden the curriculum, the Department in which they are taught and assessed will complete the moderation and ratification of marks as part of their sub-board or pre-board processes. These marks are final and any subsequent action within the EPAB in relation to scaling will not be permitted to applied to these module marks. This is to ensure that the learning outcomes have been achieved and to ensure students with similar results for a module are treated equitably across the University.

4.10 **Re-sit Boards:** the membership of resit boards must include: The EPAB Chair (or nominee) and the minimum of College Examiners to enable the consideration of modules under review as well as any other key members of departmental administrative staff. The Board decisions must be confirmed by at least one of the duly appointed External Examiners. This may be either through attendance at the Board (physically or virtually), or by correspondence post-Board. A representative from Assessment Records in Registry will be invited to attend but are not required for the meeting to be quorate.

5. **CONDUCT OF BOARDS**

- 5.1 The Chair of the Board is responsible for ensuring that the meeting is properly conducted and that appropriate decisions are reached, in line with the University Academic Regulations, policies and procedures.
- 5.2 All Board meetings should be serviced by Departmental Administrative staff. They are responsible for advising on the procedures, recording accurately the proceedings of the meeting and for transmitting the decisions reached by the Board.
- 5.3 It is recommended that departments confirm the dates of their Board meetings a year in advance, in particular the date of EPAB meetings which External Examiners are required to attend. Departments should also inform Registry's Assessment Records (assessment.records@imperial.ac.uk) team when a Board is taking place.
- 5.4 Boards of Examiners may be held as in-person meetings on a University campus (or other venue as appropriate for the programme under consideration), virtually through a secure video conferencing platform, or in a hybrid model. Each Department will confirm the expected mode of attendance for their Boards of Examiners when setting the dates.
- 5.5 Where a Board of Examiners is set to be held as an in-person meeting and an External Examiner is unable to physically attend, arrangements should be made for them to take part via video- or telephone-conferencing. If no External Examiner can attend the EPAB meeting in any mode, the Academic Registrar (via quality@imperial.ac.uk) should be informed. The EPAB meeting cannot proceed without an External Examiner unless this is authorised by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). If authorised, the Board is required to follow up with the External Examiner(s) after the meeting to confirm the results of the students prior to final publication.
- 5.6 Clear provision must be made to enable potential conflicts of interest - such as personal interests or involvements with students - to be identified and addressed. See the [Personal Relationships Policy](#) for details of the University's definitions of potential conflicts due to close relationships. These should be reported to the Chair in advance of the meeting and noted. Where a member of staff has a conflict of interest, they should not be involved in any discussion or decision making related to that candidate.
- 5.7 Any Chair's Actions (see section 6) taken since the last meeting should be presented to the Board and recorded in the formal minutes of the meeting.

- 5.8 The EPAB receives the final marks from the sub-board(s), including any recommendations from the MCB made as a result of the consideration of mitigation or regarding borderline cases, for ratification and confirm progression and award.
- 5.9 The University's Academic Regulations (Regs A and Regs B) require EPABs to be conducted with anonymity for all candidates and so their marks profile will be presented by either **candidate number or CID only.**
- 5.10 All Boards should ensure that any decisions they make are transparent and recorded accurately in the minutes of the meeting. There should be transparent processes for dealing with anomalies in marking and arrangements for fair and appropriate adjustments. EPAB minutes must be sent to the Registry's Assessment Records Team.
- 5.11 Re-sit/re-take requirements must be agreed. These will be clearly recorded for each candidate with regards to session, and if they are capped or uncapped.
- 5.12 General preliminary comments made by the External Examiners on the outcome of assessments for the current academic session and their reflections on the assessment process and standards achieved should be recorded.
- 5.13 Potential changes to the examination arrangements and procedures, marking scheme and/or assessment formats for future cohorts should be discussed. A recommendation for any modifications should then be made to the appropriate committee.

Borderline Candidates/ uplift in classification

- 5.14 Boards must have objective and transparent processes for dealing with borderline cases/uplift in classification.

For candidates being considered under the [Academic and Examination Regulations](#) "Regs B" (candidates registered on programmes that have not completed curriculum review, see the [Academic Regulations](#) webpages for further details) the process of considering an uplift in classification may include viva voce and/or an algorithmic criteria such as; the number of questions answered at a specific level (i.e. grade profiling).

For candidates being considered under the [Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study](#) "Regs A" (relevant postgraduate taught programmes and 2019 entrants of undergraduate programmes, see the [Academic Regulations](#) webpages for further details) this must be based on algorithmic criteria. The methods to be used (including details of any algorithm) should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Education Committee for prior approval.

- 5.15 Boards should also consider candidates who have passed modules for which they had accepted Mitigating Circumstances that the Board have been unable to take into account previously. This may include consideration for an uplift in classification or exceptionally permitting continuance on integrated Master programmes where progression criteria are in place.

It is the decision of the Board in the knowledge that the student has an accepted claim for mitigation to consider the appropriate 'mitigation' to be offered, subject to the relevant Academic Regulations and any programmes specific requirements.

- 5.16 Departments using viva voce examinations to deal with borderline cases should refer to the University's [Conduct of \(Oral\) Examinations \(including Viva Voce Examinations\) for Undergraduate and Master's Level Programmes](#).
- 5.17 The Examiners who conducted a student's viva voce examination will provide their recommendation to the Board at its EPAB meeting. The EPAB will consider the recommendation and make a final decision but should not discuss the detail of the viva.
- 5.18 All Boards should keep full and accurate minutes of their reasons for moving a candidate up a classification grade "uplift" or their reasons for not. If appropriate, it is recommended that departments hold a pre-meeting to discuss any difficult cases prior to the final meeting of the Board.

Academic Misconduct

- 5.19 All proven cases of Academic Misconduct will be reported and formally minuted at the EPAB meeting. Where misconduct has been dealt with by the Department in accordance with the University procedure this will be clearly indicated. If there have been no instances of proven misconduct this should also be recorded.
- 5.20 Where a decision is pending at the time of the Board in relation to an allegation of academic misconduct, the Board should consider offering a resit opportunity to the student over the normal re-assessment period in order to provide as much notice as possible of the dates and requirements, should the allegation be proven and a re-assessment is offered. If a student has a significant level of failure excluding the assessment under consideration for academic misconduct offence, such that the Board would not normally offer a summer resit but require withdrawal for academic failure or a repeat of the year this may not be appropriate.
- 5.21 Should the allegation be found not proven, the Board will ratify the mark of the original decision and rescind the referral offer. If this occurs following the referral opportunity the first mark would stand and no resit will be recorded against the student record, except where the original submission has failed and so the student would be required to complete a resit.
- 5.22 Care should be taken when considering a student's profile where there is a proven allegation of Academic Misconduct and an accepted claim for mitigation for the same assessment(s) to ensure that there is no unfair advantage. For example, the Academic Misconduct panel have reduced the sanction in the light of severe mitigation, or that the student is granted an uncapped reassessment opportunity when they have been found to have committed misconduct.

External Examiners' Reports

- 5.23 External Examiners would normally be asked to provide general comments on the outcome of assessments for the academic session and their reflections on the assessment process and standards achieved at the EPAB meeting. This feedback is in addition to, and does not replace, the formal annual report that each External Examiner is asked to submit to the University.

Placement Provision (Year in Industry, Year abroad, or other credit bearing/ programme required placement activity)

- 5.24 EPAB must ensure that where a student has completed part of their programme via a placement that there is clear, minuted discussion in relation to the confirmation of any marks and outcomes, including any scaling or other moderation activity.

Modules taken outside of the home department

- 5.25 Where a student has taken a module from another department within the University, and so the ratification of marks has already been (or is due to be) considered at EPAB in another department, this should be clearly indicated to all members. The Board will note any decisions regarding progression or award that may be impacted by a later EPAB in another department (for example if a student is within the borderline for classification). No further action would be required by the Board to confirm the decision unless a change occurs that would impact on their original decision.

Progression and Award Data – Discussion at Boards

- 5.26 At the end of the Board meeting, members should consider management information set data for individual modules and for the awards overall. Boards should review and consider trends in the distribution of the award of honours, progression and failure rates. Boards may also wish to review year trends, including 3-year averages for the marks awarded on the different final year taught components of the degree programme and for examinations to ensure that parts of the programme are not consistently significantly different in marks awarded. This would exclude coursework only components such as projects, as these differ for explainable reasons.
- 5.27 This discussion is used to inform, and evidence, updates and changes to the programmes, for example minor and major modifications, and to support the annual monitoring process.

Consideration of Prizes, Awards and the Dean's list

- 5.28 Where it is appropriate to do so, the EPAB (or other Board) should confirm the outcome of relevant prizes or awards under their remit. They would also agree, where relevant, the Dean's list.
- 5.29 The EPAB may delegate detailed consideration of the above to the pre-board or other relevant groups/individuals. Those so delegated would provide recommendations to the EPAB for a final decision/ratification.

- 5.30 Where appropriate, the Head of Department should request confirmation from the Head of Student Casework of any pending or proven allegations of misconduct (consideration under [College Regulations Section 18: Student Disciplinary Procedures](#), previously Ordinance E2) prior to the confirmation of any prizes or awards.

6 FOLLOW-UP ACTION AFTER THE BOARD

- 6.1 After any Board, the minutes should be approved in a timely fashion. For an EPAB or Re-sit Board, the minutes must be forwarded to Assessment Records in Registry. The approved minutes are essential to ensure that actions following the Board, such as result production, can be completed or to explain the decision-making of a board if challenged such as through an academic appeal.
- 6.2 The marks and decisions from EPAB reported to Registry must be on the agreed template. Marks will be reported to two decimal places.
- 6.3 Details of the progression coding for the results return can be found in the appendix of the [Board of Examiners notes](#).

Chair's Action

- 6.4 Chair's action should normally only be used if the next Board of Examiners is more than six weeks away, to:
- a) approve an explicit and minuted Board decision, following completion of an action in respect of an individual student (e.g. outcome of an Academic Misconduct Panel)
 - b) reflect a decision following the acceptance of a late mitigating circumstances claim or the resolution of an academic appeal or review.
 - c) approve an exit award following the withdrawal the University during the academic year, where there are sufficient credits to make the award.
 - d) correct an administrative error or delay
- 6.5 A Chair's action may be planned or unplanned. A planned Chair's action is where the Board of Examiners is aware of a situation which means that they cannot make a final decision regarding a student(s), such as a missing mark, and agree a course of action depending on the outcome. For example, the Board of Examiners are made aware that there is a pending mark. They agree based on the marks profile of the student that if the mark is a fail, the student is offered a resit at the next opportunity, if the mark is a pass that the student progresses to the next year. An unplanned Chair's action is where the Board becomes aware of a change to a student(s) mark which is required to be ratified, for example, an error in reporting, proven academic misconduct, or that a student's outcome should be reconsidered following an upheld academic appeal or an accepted late claim for mitigation.
- 6.6 Of the above, an External Examiner's approval would usually only be required if circumstances have changed since the last Board the External Examiner attended. For example:
- a) A student is granted a final award of the University.
 - b) The student's final award classification is increased or decreased.
 - c) A student's award is rescinded.