

Communication from Taught Degrees Panel: Changes to examination and assessment policy

Taught Degrees Panel (TDP) approved a plan to substantially refresh the structure of information relating to examinations and assessment at its meeting in Trinity term week 8 2019.

Action required

All divisions, departments/faculties, and colleges are asked to **note** the publication of the new *Examinations and assessment framework (EAF)* (Annex A) which replaces the *Policy and Guidance for examiners* from 2019-20.

All Chairs of Examiners, examiners, assessors and exam administrators in particular are asked to **note** the specific policy changes, as agreed by TDP during the course of 2018-19, that have been incorporated into the new *Examinations and Assessment Framework* for 2019-20 (see paragraphs 7 to 26 below).

If you have queries regarding the regulation changes, please contact Rachel Dearlove, Head of Taught Degrees and Student Casework, Education Policy Support (rachel.dearlove@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Further information

Summary of changes undertaken to create the *Examinations and Assessment Framework*

1. TDP agreed at its meeting in week 8 of Trinity term 2019 that work should take place over the long vacation to transform the existing *P&G Examiners* into a new document that focused more clearly on explicitly education related policy and formal guidance, creating the first *Examinations and assessment framework (EAF)* for the University.
2. This is a step to clarify what is core education policy, as opposed to operational information, in a more streamlined format. This is becoming increasingly important in responding to student appeals and complaints and in responding to external policy pressures from bodies like the Office for Students.
3. This document is primarily for the use of examiners, but is also intended to be more useable by other staff (including those based in colleges) or students seeking to understand the University's core policy in this area.
4. Operational information, policy and guidance has been provided as part of the [examinations and assessment staff website](#) (E&A website) for a number of years, and it is intended that elements of detailed operational policy, guidance and procedures should be brought together in that site with content previously included in the *Policy and Guidance for examiners*.
5. Changes have included:
 - simplifying/abbreviating overly descriptive language
 - re-ordering both within and between sections (and removing duplication)
 - additional sub-headings to aid navigation
 - improving consistency of formatting and re-presenting information in tabular form where possible
 - ensuring that there is consistent terminology in terms of what is required (policy) and what is guidance (practice that is encouraged or may be appropriate depending on circumstances)
 - bringing in key information from the *Examination Regulations* where it was not previously included and more comprehensive cross-referencing
 - creating a table of definitions, again for consistency of expression through the document
6. More detailed information on what content has been or will be moved to the E&A website, or other policy documents is provided in Annex B. Work on the augmented E&A website is intended to be complete by the end of Michaelmas term. Consequential revisions to the *Policy and Guidance on undergraduate learning and teaching* and the *Policy and Guidance on postgraduate taught degrees* will be brought to TDP for approval in Michaelmas term 2019.

Summary of policy changes applied in 2019-20

Appointment of chair of examiners (section 2.3)

7. TDP agreed at its meeting in Trinity term week 8 that responsibility for appointment of chairs of examiners who meet the requirements for appointment as an internal examiner should be delegated to supervisory bodies. The change to the relevant *Examination Regulation* has also been made.

Change in nomination date for internal examiners (section 2.4)

8. TDP agreed at its meeting in Michaelmas term 2018 week 8 that the deadline for nomination of internal examiners should be moved from 1 October to 1 November. The change to the relevant *Examination Regulation* has also been made.

Clarification of policy around external examiners (section 3)

9. The *P&G examiners* 2018-19 stated that individuals may be nominated to serve as external examiners in one of two categories:

- (1) as an external arbiter of standards; or
- (2) to provide academic expertise not otherwise obtainable within the University.

All examination boards (except for FPE) must have an external examiner acting as an arbiter of standards, and the same individual may only serve as both (1) and (2) with the permission of the Proctors.

10. The UK Quality Code gives the following explanation of the role of external examiners:

Degree-awarding bodies engage external examiners to provide impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the degree-awarding body's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. External examiners confirm that the provider consistently and fairly implements their own policies and procedures to ensure the integrity and rigour of assessment practices. They also comment on the quality and standards of the courses in relation to the national standards and frameworks and comment on the reasonable comparability of standards achieved at other UK providers with whom the examiner has experience. External examiners also comment on good practice, and make recommendations for enhancement.

External examiners will have sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers, and where appropriate, professional peers. External examiners do not contribute to delivery through teaching or any other direct capacity.

11. This definition fits with the University's appointment and use of Type 1 external examiners. The *P&G Examiners* 2018-19 gave no guidance as to what external examiners appointed as Type 2 might be used for. They are currently appointed in the same way and with the same restrictive terms of office as Type 1 external examiners.

12. In some areas of the University there is a practice of routinely using academics from other institutions to be involved as examiners due to the nature of the assessment. In the Medical Sciences, academic staff from other institutions are used in the assessment of objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). These have been appointed as external examiners and there has been some confusion about their role and terms of appointment.
13. It is important that all University Examinations have in place at least one 'true' external examiner, someone responsible for acting as an impartial arbiter of standards. They must not be involved in any day to day operations of the course, nor any form of direct examining. However there is a clear need for academics from other institutions to be utilised in assessment processes where it forms part of the subject practice for such exchange to take place or on occasions where examining capacity is limited within the University. To avoid confusion with the role of external examiner, TDP at its meeting in Trinity term week 8, approved a new role type - 'external subject assessor' - replacing appointments under Type 2. The change to the relevant *Examination Regulation* has also been made.
14. As with external examiners, all external subject assessor appointments require approval by the Proctors who will be able to monitor the use of this category, which is expected to be limited. A new nomination form will be available. Payment will remain in line with that of external examiners but term of office will be aligned with internal examiners.
15. This section has also been updated to reflect changes to the UK Quality Code with the criteria for nomination of external examiners simplified and incorporated into the main body of the section whereas previously it had been detailed in an annex.

Process for the carry forward of marks (section 7.5.1)

16. Candidates who suspend their studies are entitled to 'carry forward' assessment completed before the start of the suspension. This is not an automated process and has to date involved Education Policy Support in a co-ordination role.
17. From 2019-20 this process will move to the Academic Records Office and a new set of forms and guidance have been developed for this purpose. These will be published shortly and notified through a dedicated circular.

Record keeping in the examination process – reconciliation and comments sheets (sections 11.2 and 11.5)

18. Policy changes as previously notified in Education Committee circular Ref 06-18/19 have now been incorporated into the EAF.
19. Section 11.2 Double marking and reconciliation of marks states that:

All markers of assessed work that is double marked are required to record the process by which initial marks have been reconciled to generate an agreed mark using a reconciliation sheet. This should be done whenever there is a discussion between markers, but is not required where a simple averaging of marks over a

narrow range (in accordance with the relevant examination conventions) has taken place.

Marks reconciliation must take place at the level of the mark for the paper (but may also take place at question level or at individual item level where a paper consists of multiple elements of assessed work). Exam boards should take a consistent approach for each paper as to whether marks reconciliation takes place at the paper or at question/item level, so that different markers do not reconcile at different levels.

Marks reconciliation sheets should be completed for each candidate for each paper or assessment item where a marks reconciliation process has taken place. This sheet should provide the marks of both first and second markers (and the third marker where applicable) and include an effective record, by comments or other means, of the reconciliation process. Exam boards should produce a standard sheet for all markers to use.

20. Section 11.5 Recording during the marking process (including comments sheets) states that:

Markers should generally not write on timed examination scripts during the marking process. This can compromise the independence of the second marker. In some subjects, however, the nature of the examination answers (such as translations or calculations) may be such that it is appropriate to indicate on the script objective errors for which the mark should be reduced. Comments should not be written on the scripts but on the sheets provided for the purpose. Exam boards should produce a standard sheet for all markers to use.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018, the University is not obliged to return scripts to candidates, but is obliged, if requested, to provide a transcript of anything written on them or separately about a candidate's performance.

Markers must record comments, using comments sheets, for all substantial assessment items. Substantial summative assessment item is understood to mean any thesis, dissertation, project report, extended essay, portfolio, research proposal, and any other summative assessment item that carries weight broadly equivalent to an unseen written exam.

Exam boards are strongly encouraged to use comment sheets for all assessed work (whether consisting of submitted work or written examinations), if they do not already do so. While the use of comment sheets for timed written examinations is not a requirement, it is recommended as best practice, and the consistent recording of comments will aid marks reconciliation processes.

Comments sheets must be completed independently (i.e. the second marker should not see the first marker's comments before marking or commenting on the script).

Departments and faculties are encouraged to include the marking criteria on the marking sheet or book: additionally subjects may wish to offer further guidance to examiners on the coverage of their comments.

To facilitate the process of providing comment sheets to students (see section 12.7), it is encouraged that if using comment sheets, boards should ask for a comment sheet for each candidate to be completed by each marker of each paper or assessment item.

Overall marks and ranking (sections 11 and 12)

21. TDP at its meeting in week 8 of Michaelmas term agreed a range of policy provisions related to the release of overall marks and ranking, upload of which is now available alongside results. These have been [communicated](#) as part of the implementation during Trinity term 2019 of the IT solution to bring this information into eVision and are now formalised in the *EAF* in sections: 11.7.1 calculation of overall marks, 11.7.2 calculation of ranking, 12.5.2 overall marks, 12.5.3 rankings in cohort and class.

Publication of results (section 12.1)

22. Previously, regulations required that information submitted to Student Registry from the final Exam Board meeting must be certified by the signature of all the examiners, except for those that have been excused by the Proctors. This sign-off sheet was then physically delivered to the Examination Schools. To reduce the administrative burden on exam boards, this regulation has been revised to allow the Chair of Examiners to certify that all members of the Exam Board have been present or excused by the Proctors and that this certification can be given electronically. This provision has now been incorporated into section 12.1 of the *EAF*.

Student access to exam related information (sections 12.5.1 and 12.7)

23. Policy changes as previously notified in Education Committee circular Ref 06-18/19 have now been incorporated into the *EAF* relating to facility for faculties and departments to provide comments sheets and reconciliation sheets directly to students where they wish to do so (section 12.7.1).
24. TDP agreed at its meeting in week 3 of Hilary term 2019 that restrictions on provision of examination scripts to students should be removed, expanding provisions previously made for student access to failing scripts in the event that they had failed the FPE (section 14.2). Unlike in the situation where a student has failed the FPE which remain, departments and faculties are not in any way required to facilitate student access to examination scripts, but they are now permitted to do so if they see fit.
25. TDP also agreed at the same meeting to remove the restriction on the release of question level marks (where reconciled and available) to the FPE and parts of the FHS before the final year of the course, allowing the release of question level marks for all University Examinations (section 12.5.1). However, the decision whether or not to release question level marks remains with the exam board.

Refresh of Annex F: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements

26. This annex has been refreshed to better reflect the kind of dispensations Education Committee grants in relation to major adjustments to course and assessment requirements. There are no formal policy changes. A more comprehensive review of this annex is planned for the future.

Changes in relation to non-academic misconduct

27. Annex C: Procedure for the investigation of plagiarism has been substantially revised, see Education Committee Circulars Ref 02-19/20 for more details.



Examinations and assessment framework

Valid from Michaelmas Term 2019

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Version history

1.0	October 2019	First publication
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document details the University's policy relating to University Examinations and assessment practices for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses. It aligns with and expands on the [Examination Regulations](#). It also provides more detailed guidance in relation to specific processes, primarily through annexes. Cross references to the *Examination Regulations* are provided in the format '(ER x.x)'.

The policy and guidance is provided in the following format:

- 'Must' or 'should' or 'required' indicates that the requirement has to be complied with, with no exceptions, by all relevant bodies or individuals.
- 'Strongly encourage' or 'encourage' indicates that this is agreed to be best practice and is expected, but not required of all relevant bodies or individuals.
- 'Normally' indicates that in most circumstances the requirement should be complied with, but the relevant body or individual may choose to make exceptions on clear and consistent grounds.
- 'May' or 'permitted' indicates that this is something that is permissible, but not required, and it is left to the discretion of the individual or body responsible to agree their position or practice.

1.2 Key terms

Assessed work	An element of University Examination, this can take many forms including: timed written examinations, oral examinations, submitted work, group work, dissertation or thesis, presentations, multiple choice examinations etc.
Assessment adjustments	Adjustments to timed examinations (see 7.1) Adjustments to submitted work (see 7.2 and Annex F: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements)
Assessment unit	See paper
Board of examiners	See 1.3.1
Candidate	A student entered for a University Examination
College	For matriculated students this is the college, for non-matriculated students any mention of college can be considered to refer to department.
Divisional Board	In relation to University Examinations and assessment the divisional boards have a general responsibility for various aspects of examinations and assessment arising out of their overall responsibility for the maintenance of educational quality and standards within the respective division. They have a specific responsibility for the consideration of the reports of examiners, including external examiners.
E&A website	A shorthand term for the information on the administration and operation of assessment available at the Examinations and Assessments staff website
Examination Regulations	Contains both the 'Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations' and the specific regulations for a course. The latter, complemented by the course handbook and examination conventions form the definitive record of a course.

First Public Examination (FPE)	The first part of an undergraduate degree course, as defined in the Examination Regulations.
Mitigating Circumstances Notice to Examiners (MCE)	A submission made by a college on behalf of a student to notify examiners about circumstances that may have had a serious impact on a student's performance in assessed work.
Nominating committee	A body with delegated authority from two (or more) supervisory bodies to act in their stead for joint courses
Paper (or assessment unit)	Highest level unit of assessment, they may comprise one or more items (and types) of assessed work.
Second Public Examination (SPE)	The second part of an undergraduate degree course, as defined in the Examination Regulations. Also known as the Final Honour School.
Standing orders	Set out the composition and terms of office of boards of examiners and any nominating committee
Submission	Any item of assessed work that is presented for marking to a specific deadline e.g. essay, project report, dissertation/thesis, fieldwork report
Supervisory body	See 1.3.2 below
Timed examination	A written or oral, invigilated or otherwise supervised formal examination that takes place at a specific place and time and normally has a specified duration.
University Examination	The totality of assessment required to be successfully completed in order to meet the requirements of the relevant <i>Examination Regulations</i> for a given part or totality of a degree or other award i.e. the First Public Examination (FPE), Second Public Examination (SPE), totality of assessment for other undergraduate qualifications, and totality of assessment for a Postgraduate Taught award.

1.3 Key bodies involved in University Examinations

1.3.1 Boards of examiners

The board of examiners has collective responsibility for the operation and integrity of the University Examination for which they have charge ([ER 2](#)). Can be abbreviated to 'exam board'.

Every board of examiners has a chair, as well as performing specific duties laid down in regulation and in this policy, the chair is responsible generally for ensuring that the business of the board of examiners is properly conducted and that the requirements of the regulations and this policy are fulfilled by that Board ([ER 5](#)).

1.3.2 Supervisory bodies

Boards of examiners operate under the oversight of a 'supervisory body', who has overall responsibility for a subject area or a group of subjects ([ER 2](#)). They set the general parameters within which boards of examiners operate: approving standing orders, examination conventions, appointing or nominating examiners etc. They also have overall responsibility for the content of University Examinations within their remit, as specified in the relevant *Examination Regulations* and examination conventions, and for keeping assessment under review, including the extent to which the assessment methods used:

- remain a valid, fair and reliable means of assessing student achievement
- provide appropriate evidence of the academic standards of the course being met by the majority of candidates

- are appropriate to the teaching methods employed and the intended learning outcomes of the course
- are appropriate in terms of volume and timing of assessment taking into account the consideration of student workload.

For subjects where there is a Faculty board, that acts as the supervisory body for all University Examinations for which the Faculty is responsible. For all other subjects the supervisory body is the relevant Divisional board (or equivalent for courses located in the Department for Continuing Education). Supervisory bodies may approve their own local policies, as long as these do not contradict this *Examinations and assessment framework*.

Supervisory bodies may delegate their authority to nominating committees for any University Examination which falls under two supervisory bodies ([ER 2.7](#)).

1.3.3 Proctors

The Proctors are required to ensure that examinations are properly conducted and in accordance with the statutes and regulations governing them; and they may make such regulations concerning the conduct of examinations as they consider necessary. The Proctors are concerned with ensuring that regulations are applied justly and equally in all cases. They may consider aspects of policy and draw points of concern or areas for clarification to Education Committee's attention. They may also bring concerns about the conduct of examinations directly to the attention of boards of examiners or supervisory bodies.

Under the *Examination Regulations*, in relation to individual candidates the Proctors have powers to:

- Approve assessment adjustments in relation to timed examinations (see 7.1).
- Accept late submissions (see 8.2)
- Agree extensions to the deadline for submitted work (see 8.2)
- Excuse a candidate who did not take a timed examination (see 9.3)

For late submissions and extensions in respect of students within the remit of the Board of the Department of Continuing Education, the Proctors have delegated their powers to the Board.

For routine requests for assessment adjustments in relation to timed invigilated examinations the Proctors have delegated their power to the Examinations and Assessments team.

All queries regarding University Examinations from colleges or students must be directed through the Proctors, examiners are not to be approached directly, and any examiner who receives such an approach must redirect it to the Proctors. Candidates may also make a formal academic appeal or complaint to the Proctors if they are dissatisfied with the conduct of a University Examination (see [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#) and the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#)).

2 Boards of examiners

2.1 Role of supervisory bodies in nominations

Supervisory bodies are required to:

- Agree standing orders for each board of examiners. These must include terms of office for internal, external and chairs of examiners in line with the requirements of the *Examination Regulations* ([ER 2.5](#)).
- Appoint chairs of examiners for each board if individuals are qualified as internal examiners, if not nominate for approval of the Proctors (see 2.3).
- Appoint a sufficient number of internal examiners - if the individual is a full member of the Faculty or whose first appointment as an examiner has been previously approved by the Proctors, or if not qualified on these criteria nominate individuals for approval of the Proctors ([ER 2.1](#); [ER 3.1/2](#); see 2.4).
- Nominate external examiners ([ER 6](#); see section 3).
- Keep under review their local processes for the nomination and appointment for all types of examiners and for ensuring their competence. This includes ensuring that nominees have relevant experience and qualifications, ensuring that appropriate support is provided to inexperienced examiners and the avoidance of conflicts of interest in relation to all examiners.

Apart from a small number of specialist examinations, the number of examiners and assessors appointed is for the supervisory body to determine in accordance with their standing orders.

Supervisory bodies may:

- Appoint assessors, as they see fit (see 2.5)
- Appoint external subject assessors, as they see fit (see 3.5)

Supervisory bodies should ensure that boards of examiners are aware of:

- requirements relating to declarations of personal interest;
- requirements relating to attendance at examination board meetings (see 4.3);
- the minimum numbers of internal and external examiners who must be present for decisions to be valid as prescribed by the relevant standing orders (see 4.3);
- the requirement to keep appropriate records of meetings and the reasons for any specific decisions in relation to individual candidates (see 4.4)

2.2 Standing orders

Standing orders set the key parameters for the composition of each board of examiners including: number of examiners; terms of office for chairs of examiners, internal and external examiners; and composition and constitution of any nominating committee. These should be reviewed annually and provided to the Exams and Assessment team by 1 October of the academic year for which the standing order is applicable (i.e. 1 October 2019 for 2019/20 academic year) ([see E&A website](#)).

2.3 Appointment of chair of examiners

A chair of examiners must be appointed or nominated (as necessary) by the supervisory body or nominating committee for each board of examiners within its remit ([ER 5](#)). The nomination should be provided to the Exams and Assessment team no later than 1 October

of the academic year for which the nomination is intended (i.e. 1 October 2019 for 2019/20 academic year) ([see E&A website](#)). Any individual who does not meet the requirements for appointment as an internal examiner will be nominated to the Proctors for approval.

Wherever possible, individuals who have been course or programme directors or their equivalent in the year of the examination concerned should not be appointed as the chair of the board of examiners.

Chairs are required to be in Oxford when the timed examinations for which they are responsible are taking place. Chairs should also ensure that an appropriate person is available to respond during investigation of examination complaints or academic appeals over the Long Vacation: this may be the chair, or a deputy (notified to the Proctors) if the chair will be away from Oxford for a long period.

2.4 Appointment of examiners

Supervisory bodies or nominating committees should approve the appointment of internal examiners who meet one of the following criteria:

- has faculty membership (or)
- has previously been appointed to act as an internal examiner and/or assessor at the University.

The nomination should be provided to the Exams and Assessment team no later than 1 November of the academic year for which the nomination is intended (i.e. 1 November 2019 for 2019/20 academic year) ([ER 3.4](#)) ([see E&A website](#)).

The appointment of examiners who do not meet either of the criteria require approval by the Proctors ([see E&A website](#)). Examiners must be formally approved prior to acting in any capacity in a University Examination.

Examiners may be appointed for a term of up to four years, and may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms ([ER 4.2](#)). At least a one year gap should be observed before any further appointment to meet this regulation.

2.5 Appointment of assessors

Assessors are appointed to complement the examiners and to assist in the setting and marking of papers ([ER 7](#)). Before a list of assessors is supplied, the chair is encouraged to consult the Senior Nominator for the subject. The nominators should keep a tally of how frequently individuals have acted as examiner and assessor and may recommend that someone should not act in a particular examination.

Assessors who meet the requirement to be an examiner (see 2.4) can be appointed by the supervisory body or nominating committee. Any individual not qualified, including **all** postgraduate research students (PGR) must be nominated for approval to the Proctors ([see E&A website](#)). Assessors must be formally approved prior to acting in any capacity in a University Examination.

Criteria for the appointment of PGR students as assessors are as follows:

- Only students who have successfully completed transfer of status are eligible for appointment, though exceptions may be made in certain circumstances.
- PGR students should not be responsible for the setting of questions/papers.
- Students should only be appointed to mark postgraduate examinations in exceptional circumstances. In these exceptional cases, they are required to have passed Confirmation of Status.

- Students must have relevant expertise or experience. They should normally have teaching experience of the relevant paper.
- It is preferable that nominees are employed either as Graduate Teaching Assistants / Teaching Associates etc. or as college tutors.
- PGR students should only be nominated with the consent of the paper setter and the convenor of the subject teaching group.
- They should have attended appropriate training or received individual instruction from an experienced examiner.
- They should have access to information about the paper, examination conventions, marking procedures and general expectations of candidates.
- Provision should be made for the supervision and monitoring of their performance.
- Their scripts should be subject to additional sampling and consistency checks.
- Otherwise qualified students without teaching experience should be confined to marking questions for which there is a precise model solution and an approved marking scheme.

Appointment of PGR students as assessors is subject to the approval of the Proctors in each case and will only be given for a term at a time.

2.6 Role of secretary

One member of the board of examiners, or an academic administrator, should be identified to act as secretary. Their role is to record the names of those present at meetings and the decisions which were taken. Other roles (e.g. of communication with candidates) may be delegated to the secretary by the chair.

3 External examiners and external subject assessors

3.1 External examiners – appointment

Individuals are nominated to serve as external examiner to act as an external arbiter of standards. All nominations are subject to approval by the Proctors ([see E&A website](#)). There must be at least one external examiner appointed to the board of examiners for each University Examination (except the First Public Examination) ([ER 6](#)). Courses with large cohorts should have more than one external examiner to cover the full breadth of the examination and courses combining more than one subject (e.g. joint schools) should include at least one external examiner for each subject.

The term of office for external examiners may be either three or four years, as designated in the standing orders. An appointment can be extended by one year in exceptional circumstances. Reappointment of an individual who has previously served as external examiner may only take place after a period of five years or more since the last appointment.

External examiners must meet the following criteria in order to be appointed:

- have academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience if appropriate
- be familiar with the standard expected of students to achieve the award being assessed
- have relevant experience in the fields covered by the programme of study

- be fluent in English and the relevant language for the programme being assessed, if necessary
- meet any applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies

Appointees should also have appropriate sector-level knowledge regarding the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of quality, experience relating to the design and operation of different assessment types and procedures, an awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula, and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience. All external examiners should be of sufficient standing and credibility within the appropriate discipline so as to be able to command the respect of academic and, where appropriate, professional peers.

In some cases, proposed appointments may not fulfil all the criteria. This may occur, for example, when a proposed appointee has significant professional experience in a relevant field of business or industry, but lacks the formal qualifications anticipated, or in disciplines which are very small and specialist and where the pool of potential external examiners is therefore restricted. In cases such as these, full details should be included on the nomination form in order that the Proctors can determine whether a legitimate case exists for making an exception. In cases where exceptions are approved, supervisory bodies should ensure that appropriate additional training and support for the external examiner are implemented.

To avoid any potential conflict of interest external examiners should not be appointed if they fall into any of the following categories:

- a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners
- anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
- anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
- anyone who is, or knows they will be in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
- anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
- former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
- a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
- the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution
- the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.

3.2 External examiners – support

Supervisory bodies should ensure that external examiners have sufficient and appropriate information for their role, i.e. organisational procedures, practices, and academic regulations, including a written statement on the nature and scope of the external examiner's role, and responsibilities and powers within the examination process. This information from the supervisory body should be passed on by the secretary to the nominating committee **at the time of invitation**. External examiners should be supplied with all the course information needed to carry out their task in time for the commencement of their duties (the course

handbook and examination conventions being the minimum requirement). External examiners should be sent the timetable for meetings of the board at the earliest opportunity.

3.3 External examiners – duties

Boards of examiners will work with their external examiner(s) in a variety of ways, but the University expects external examiners to have sufficient evidence to enable them to discharge their responsibility to act as an external arbiter of standards, i.e. to:

- have opportunity to comment on all examination papers in draft form;
- have access to all scripts and other material submitted by candidates;
- see a sample of scripts including scripts at the borderlines of classes or Fail/Pass/Distinction;
- see a sufficient sample of dissertations, extended essays and course work to be able to comment on the marks awarded;
- be in a position to comment on the fairness of any procedures for the reconciliation of marks, moderation, scaling and adjustments arising out of medical or other evidence;
- be provided with sufficient evidence to endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes concerned.

External examiners must not act as a first or second marker. In addition, the University does not expect external examiners routinely to be asked to make decisions on the reconciliation of marks (i.e. to act as third markers) in cases which can be resolved internally, but rather to be in a position to report on the soundness of the procedures used to reach final agreed marks, in their role as arbiter of standards. Similarly the University does not expect external examiners to make individual decisions relating to medical or other mitigating circumstances affecting performance but it does expect external examiners to be in a position to endorse the overall fairness of the procedures followed. External examiners understandably attach considerable importance to having sufficient time to undertake the tasks in (b)-(e) above; the timetabling of arrangements should take account of this.

3.4 External examiners – reports

The University requires external examiners to prepare a report addressed to the Vice-Chancellor at the end of each year of their period of office. Reports should be submitted on the [provided form](#), c/o Education Policy Support, via external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk, with a copy to the relevant division. External examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the head of the institution, if necessary by a separate confidential written report.

External examiners are asked to report on the aspects listed below.

In relation to academic standards:

- whether or not the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience;
- whether or not the threshold academic standards set for the University's awards appropriately reflect the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
- whether or not the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s);

In relation to process:

- whether the assessment process was conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
- whether sufficient information and evidence was received in a timely manner to enable the role to be fulfilled effectively;
- whether issues raised in any previous reports were responded to and have been, or are being, properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon.

External examiners are also invited to:

- comment on good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment they have observed;
- comment on opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students; and
- give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).

Divisions should take steps to ensure that all external examiners receive feedback.

The University is responsible for the standard of its awards, and is under no compulsion to implement particular recommendations made by external examiners, but the supervisory body must always be in a position to explain why it did or did not adopt a particular proposal.

The annual reports of external examiners are an important part of the University's quality assurance framework, as set out in the [Procedures for the annual monitoring of courses](#).

External examiners' reports must also be made available to students. They will also be retained in local academic committee papers, according to any retention policy for those committee papers.

3.5 External subject assessors

External subject assessors are appointed to provide expertise otherwise unavailable in the University. All appointments are subject to approval by the Proctors ([see E&A website](#)). They may undertake tasks as required of them by the board, including involvement in the setting and marking of papers. They are not required to submit any formal report.

The term of office for external subject assessors is no more than 4 years, at which point individuals are able to be reappointed for a further term with no restrictions.

4 Meetings of boards of examiners

4.1 Meeting schedule

A timetable of meetings for the board of examiners should be drawn up and provided to all examiners and external examiners as early as possible to facilitate attendance. Student Registry should be notified of examination board meeting dates as soon as they are set, normally with 10 days of the examiner nomination deadline (i.e. 10 November), and by Friday, 8th week of Michaelmas term at the very latest.

4.2 Initial meeting

At the initial meeting, the examiners:

- i. should be reminded of the importance of the confidentiality of the examination process;

- ii. are made aware of the marking scheme and examination conventions previously approved by the supervisory body (see 6.1)
- iii. agree on the form of marks sheets to be used and arrange for their production (see also **Error! Reference source not found.** for policy on the use of comment sheets);
- iv. check that submission dates, and content of the syllabus to be examined are set out consistently in the Examination Regulations, course handbooks, examination conventions and any materials made available on the web. Any serious inconsistencies or problems in these areas should be reported to the Proctors;
- v. inform themselves of any changes in syllabuses or course handbooks that override the precedents offered by past examination papers (also see xii below);
- vi. identify papers shared with other examinations and establish responsibilities for setting as well as ensuring clarity in examination conventions to be applied;
- vii. identify chairs for joint schools, and responsibilities for setting of shared papers;
- viii. arrange for the appointment of assessors to complete the range of expertise available to (or reduce the burdens upon) the examiners;
- ix. allocate individual duties for setting papers and producing camera-ready copy in accordance with dates determined by the examiners;
- x. determine whether any papers have special requirements (materials to be provided or permitted; reading time) or shared content with other papers;
- xi. consider, if appropriate, the compilation of a list of acceptable calculators;
- xii. consider what information should be communicated to candidates and subject tutors ahead of the examination (see section **Error! Reference source not found.** and consider iv and v above);
- xiii. consider the most effective ways for the external examiner(s) to carry out their role and provide them with any appropriate course information in addition to the briefing statement approved by the division/faculty and provided on appointment (see section 3 above);
- xiv. establish a schedule for the examination process, covering meetings to scrutinise question papers, proof-read camera-ready copy, enter marks, examine candidates viva voce, if necessary, determine the date by which the chair will finalise the timetable for publication; and the date of specific key meetings: any pre-meeting to consider mitigating circumstances notices to examiners, the final meeting to adjudicate on the merits of candidates and resit examination boards (where relevant). Examination boards for nine-month PGT courses should also provisionally schedule an additional meeting after the final meeting to deal with any late submissions (e.g. approved as a result of disability or ill health). This meeting may be held by teleconference if necessary and may confirm the results of more than one candidate.

External examiners may wish to attend this initial meeting of examiners but are not required to do so.

After its initial planning meeting the board may follow up with further meetings to address particular aspects of the preparation of the examination for which it is responsible. At the chair's discretion it may be sufficient for different sub-sets of the examiners to be present on such occasions (without needing to obtain Proctors' permission).

4.3 Meetings at which marks are considered

Examination board meetings at which marks are considered may take three different forms, each of which has different requirements for attendance and different powers to confirm

marks and awards. Attendance of all examiners **in person**, as well as the taking of full minutes, is required at all exam board meetings where marks are considered.

Meeting type	Attendance required	Powers
Internal	All internal examiners	<p>Cannot finalise marks or awards.</p> <p>Can consider and approve the release of unconfirmed marks to students by the department accompanied by the wording '<i>the marks provided are provisional and may be reviewed and amended at the final meeting of the Board of Examiners</i>'. Unconfirmed marks should not be submitted to ARO and will not appear on Student Self-Service.</p>
Interim	<p>All internal examiners</p> <p>External examiner(s) (who may participate remotely - through video or teleconference - without Proctors permission (following the remote attendance protocol)</p>	<p>Can finalise marks, including the outcome of PGT qualifying examinations. All final marks must be submitted to ARO.</p> <p>Cannot finalise awards (except any milestone outcome which means a candidate cannot progress on the course having had a re-sit opportunity).</p> <p>In circumstances where final marks cannot be confirmed, e.g. where the examiners consider that scaling may be required, the board may, exceptionally, release unconfirmed marks, following the guidance above for their release.</p> <p>Interim Boards for PGT courses should follow the direction of the Supervisory Body regarding the provision of feedback to students.</p>
Final	<p>All internal examiners</p> <p>External examiner(s) (in person)</p>	<p>Must receive the minutes of all interim boards.</p> <p>Can finalise marks and awards (including re-sit outcomes and any outcome which means that a student cannot progress on the course).</p> <p>Finalised marks and results must be submitted to ARO.</p>

4.3.1 Problems with attendance

Where exceptional circumstances will prevent an examiner or external examiner from attending a meeting, the meeting should be rescheduled or an alternative examiner should be nominated through the normal process ([see E&A website](#)).

In the most exceptional circumstances, where there is a compelling reason that the board cannot be rescheduled AND that an alternative examiner cannot be nominated, the Proctors may grant permission on a one-off basis for an examiner to attend remotely or be excused attendance entirely, noting that there must always be an external examiner participating in interim or final exam board meetings.

Applications should be made to the Proctors by the chair of examiners setting out the reasons in full, also confirming how many members of the Board remain and whether the relevant subject expertise will be maintained (if the examiner cannot participate remotely).

4.3.2 Meetings by confidential correspondence

In certain limited circumstances, chairs of examiners may apply to the Proctors for results to be considered by confidential correspondence. Such circumstances may include:

- the consideration of marks for candidates who have been granted extensions to submission deadlines which fall after the relevant Final board meeting (but within the same academic year)
- for re-sit candidates (if such results cannot be considered by a scheduled board of Examiners within a reasonable time)
- for candidates whose outcome to a complaint or appeal to the Proctors has necessitated that a board reconvene.

Education Committee may also give permission for a meeting to take place by confidential correspondence if necessitated through the granting of a dispensation.

4.4 Minutes of examiners' meetings

Minutes should be kept of examiners' meetings. Information contained in the minutes about individual candidates should be restricted to a note of their final marks and how authorised information about medical or other mitigating circumstances was taken into account (see Annex E: Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners).

4.5 Examiners' reports

The University regards the reports made on behalf of all the examiners as an important element of its quality assurance arrangements, demonstrating that they have adhered to University regulations, policy and procedures, and met expectations regarding academic standards.

The examiners must prepare a report on the examination using the approved template (see [E&A website](#)) which should be sent to the Secretary of the appropriate divisional or faculty board.

The points on which examiners are particularly asked to comment in their reports are:

- any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to the existing content of the course
- any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to the existing methods of assessment
- any need to review specific papers or areas of the curriculum indicated by student performance
- the overall standard of performance in the examination, including any trends in results
- any possible changes in examination conventions, procedures or regulations suggested by the examiners' experience of the examination process including in relation to any errors on papers identified after submission for bulk printing.

Examiners must not make comments that might enable individual students to be identified in any part of the report other than Section E of Part II. To assist examiners, a Tableau report is available presenting number of students by classification (please contact sdma@admin.ox.ac.uk).

4.5.1 Sharing reports with students

All parts of the report, with the exception of Section E of Part II (where information on identifiable individuals is recorded), should be shared as a matter of course with joint

consultative committees (or equivalent) and made available to students directly, as should the external examiner's report.

The [Policy and Guidance on course information](#) requires course handbooks to provide a link to where students can access examiners' reports. It also suggests that information in course handbooks on the opportunities offered for feedback on summative assessment might include an explanation of the role of generic feedback on cohort performance through examiners' reports.

In order to enhance the role of examiners' reports in providing feedback to students and in aiding examination preparation, the following is encouraged:

- Communicating clearly to students both the availability of examiners' reports and their role in providing feedback on summative assessment, including an explanation of their role both in providing feedback on past cohort performance and in aiding examination preparation for future cohorts;
- Reminding students of the availability of examiners' reports at appropriate times of the year, for example when students are revising for examinations;
- Using examiners' reports where appropriate in revision/examination preparation lectures/classes/tutorials. This might include encouraging students to read the relevant examiners' reports in conjunction with past examination papers.

Supervisory bodies should note that they are permitted to publish an **interim examiners' report for students**, including Section D of Part II (comments on papers and individual questions), as soon as this material is available, and before the final report can be published. This interim report could be published at the same time or very soon after the release of results to students.

Supervisory bodies are strongly encouraged to consider the publication of such an interim report following the First Public Examination, as this may aid students in understanding their results and in preparing for the rest of their course, or for resit examinations. Students should be informed as soon as any interim report is available.

4.5.2 *Retention of reports*

Section E of Part II should be retained for **one year** following the final exam board meeting. The remainder of the report will be retained in local committee papers according to any retention policy for those committee papers.

4.5.3 *Review of examiners' reports*

Detailed information on supervisory bodies' review of examiners' reports and examination procedures is available in the [Procedures for the annual monitoring of courses](#).

5 Information for and communication with candidates prior to assessment

Supervisory bodies should ensure that full and appropriate information is made available in good time for all students and academic staff involved in the assessment process and should follow the requirements set out in section 6.1 and in Annex A: Examination conventions in the preparation of examination conventions.

There should be no direct communication between those setting examinations and individual candidates.

Chairs and examiners must not receive or accept gifts from candidates.

Any circulars to candidates concerning the fine detail of arrangements must be clear, accurate and timely. Should there be any discrepancy between the *Examination Regulations* and any other published course material, the *Examination Regulations* take precedence. The wording of any circular should be composed with great care as candidates may be entitled to rely on it, any discrepancy between information provided in advance and the process actually followed could give rise to a complaint or academic appeal.

Candidates should be individually provided with copies of any communications from the chair directed to all candidates, this should be done in addition to general online publication.

Such circulars should include or link to examination conventions and the dates reserved for *viva voce* examinations (as appropriate). There may be a standard set of instructions to candidates in their examination provided, for example, in the course handbook, but a circular may be needed to emphasise additional information, for example, changes to the syllabus or rubric.

Equivalent information must be provided in advance of any resit examination, if necessary during vacations, via a student's college.

The following information is strongly encouraged to be included as standard:

- That there will always be an examiner present during the first half-hour of timed examinations, to whom questions about the paper can be addressed
- Information on the use of script booklets for rough working and the restrictions on which items they may bring with them into the examination room
- When the University Examination includes provision for assessment other than timed examinations, detailed instructions as to how and where work is to be submitted (ensuring this matches the information in the *Examination Regulations* or course handbook) (see section 8 below), including the consequences for submitting work late or non submission (referencing the scale of late penalties in the examination conventions)
- Referring candidates to the examinations material in the [Student Handbook](#) and on the [Oxford Students Website](#) including the material on [plagiarism](#) and to the regulations regarding the use of calculators and computers in examinations ([ER 10](#)).
- The requirement to take University Cards to timed examination as a means of identification.

6 Preparing a University Examination

6.1 Examination conventions

Examination conventions are the University's formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which students apply. They are a student-facing document and should be written in a clear and comprehensible manner. The same version of the examination conventions should be used by examiners, with more detailed local operational guidance appended if necessary. Examination conventions should be prepared in accordance with Annex A: Examination conventions. The examination conventions should be published on departmental/faculty websites or on the VLE, alongside or as part of the relevant course handbook(s)

Examination conventions must be published to prospective candidates not less than one whole term before the first element of the University Examination takes place or, where assessment takes place in the first term of a course, at the beginning of that term ([ER 8](#)).

6.1.1 Responsibility of supervisory bodies

Supervisory bodies are responsible for approving examination conventions ([ER 8](#)) and ensuring they have been prepared in accordance with Annex A: Examination conventions.

6.1.2 Responsibility of examiners

At their first meeting, the examiners should satisfy themselves, e.g. in the light of comments from the previous year's board, that their examination conventions are comprehensive and unambiguous. If this is not the case, they may suggest amendments and formalise interpretations: any such modifications must be approved by the supervisory body responsible for the course and the examination, subject to the right of a board of examiners to make minor adjustments to the examination conventions during any particular examination if required by exceptional circumstances, without reference to the supervisory body.

If the examiners find it necessary to make major and immediate changes to examination conventions *after approval by the supervisory body*, the chair should seek the approval of the supervisory body **and** the Proctors. The Proctors will need to be satisfied that such changes will not have an adverse or discriminatory effect on candidates. In considering any major changes, examiners should be aware of policy on vested interests, as detailed in [Policy and Guidance on new courses and major changes to courses](#).

No changes should be made to examination conventions *after marks are known* (except when a particular run of marks reveals unsuspected ambiguities or omissions that have to be resolved). If, at the end of the examination process, the examiners wish to propose major changes to the examination conventions they will pass on to their successors, they should include the proposals in their examiners' report for consideration by the supervisory body.

6.2 Setting of assessed work

Examiners are obliged to set assessed work in accordance with the prevailing regulations and examination conventions for the course, and in line with any current course handbook. Precedent represented by past papers should also be taken into account.

When setting assessed work examiners should take the following into account:

- any substantial changes in the rubric or format of a question paper should be notified to candidates and tutors at an early date.
- straightforward English should be used, ensuring clear and unambiguous expression.
- material for examination papers should not be taken from the Internet. In the case of foreign language sources this is particularly important because of the transcription problems that can arise.
- where a piece of assessed work, particularly a timed examination, is to be shared with another University Examination, or where a timed examination has shared content with another paper, this information should be notified to the Examinations and Assessments team (exam.arrangements@admin.ox.ac.uk) at an early stage in order to ensure that the timetable takes this into account and examination integrity is maintained.

The setting of assessed work, particularly for timed examinations, should be completed according to a systematic schedule overseen by the chair involving setting, scrutiny and proof-reading. Further guidance on the production of question papers for timed examinations is available from the [E&A website](#).

Question papers should be subject to careful scrutiny by the whole board of examiners. In the case of small subjects, a draft paper must be scrutinised by at least one established member of staff who is not the paper setter. The external examiner should have the opportunity to comment on draft examination papers or the equivalent such as set essay titles for submitted work, group work specifications etc.

When the content of all timed examination papers has been agreed, final versions should be prepared as camera-ready copy under secure conditions in faculty or departmental offices. Full details are given in the [E&A website](#).

7 Arrangements for individual candidates

7.1 Adjustments to timed examinations (alternative examination arrangements)

Candidates apply through their college to the Examinations and Assessments team (working under delegated authority from the Proctors) to request approval for any adjustments to timed examinations as a result of a disability or other need (e.g. use of a computer, papers to be taken in college or with extra time in the Examination Schools) ([ER 12](#)). In most circumstances, a Student Support Plan or medical certificate will be required. Applications should be submitted by colleges via a secure SharePoint site. Details of the process and relevant deadlines are available in the [E&A website](#).

Chairs will be notified of arrangements and should make particular note of cases when timed examinations will be sat at different times from those timetabled for the main cohort, as this may affect planning for marking.

When, in exceptional circumstances, a candidate has been allowed to sit an examination in their college, the college is required to provide a suitable room and an invigilator ([ER 15](#)). See the [E&A website](#) for guidance for colleges and examiners.

7.2 Adjustments to the timing of assessed work (timed exams and submitted work)

Any adjustments needed for an individual candidate to the schedule of timed written examinations that cannot be accommodated within the normal exam timetable, to deadlines for submitted work, or when a candidate requires an alternative mode of assessment are considered a major adjustment, and are normally considered on the grounds of disability or complex mitigating circumstances. Full guidance is given in Annex F: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements.

7.3 Taking a University Examination under a previous syllabus (old regulations)

Candidates are entitled to sit their examination according to the regulations/syllabus in force at the time they were taught within the following time limits:

- For FHS candidates, within six terms of the original assessment date
- For FPE candidates, within three terms of the original assessment date
- For taught postgraduate students, as laid out in the [Regulations Concerning the Status of Graduate Taught Students](#).

Outside of these time limits, students will usually be examined under current regulations.

Notification that a student needs to be examined according to a previous set of regulations or syllabus within these limits should be made to [Education Policy Support](#). Requests to be examined under a previous syllabus which are outside these limits may be made by applying to Education Committee via Education Policy Support for a [dispensation from the regulations](#).

7.4 Withdrawal from a University Examination

A candidate may withdraw from any University Examination before any summative assessment is attempted or up to the point when the last assessment element is attempted or submitted (i.e. the date of the last submission, or prior to the last timed examination, whichever is the latest) ([ER 14](#)). Candidates are not permitted to withdraw after all parts of the examination have been attempted. Withdrawal from a University Examination voids any marks for already completed assessed work, unless a dispensation is approved for it to count.

7.5 Suspension of a University Examination

If a candidate suspends their studies after the start of the examination process, the examination process is also suspended. For information on the administrative process to follow see the [E&A website](#).

For students who suspend during a vacation or by the start of term, the regulations suspend the examination process for the duration of the suspension period. For students who suspend mid-term, the examination process may be suspended from the start of the term in which they suspend until the start of the term in which they return. Assessments cannot be submitted nor written papers sat when the examination process is suspended. Any assessment submitted or written papers sat during a period for which a candidate is later considered suspended will be considered void unless a dispensation is requested from Education Committee via [Education Policy Support](#).

Where students are permitted to suspend for periods other than terms, i.e. months, the suspension of the examination would be concurrent with that period.

7.5.1 *Impact of suspension on completed assessment*

Candidates who suspend their studies should have all assessments which were completed before the start of the suspension 'carried forward' to their return to studies within the following limits ([ER 14](#)):

- for candidates suspending during Full Term, the candidate will be withdrawn from all assessments that are due to be submitted or sat from Monday of week 1 of that Full Term until Friday of week 0 of the Full Term in which the candidate resumes their studies;
- for candidates suspending outside Full Term, the candidate will be withdrawn from all assessments that are due to be submitted or sat during the approved suspension period;
- where candidates are permitted to suspend for periods other than terms, candidates will be withdrawn from all assessments that are due to be submitted or sat during the approved suspension period.

Candidates who repeat a term or terms of study are expected to repeat any assessment that is due in the repeated term(s) of study.

The 'carrying forward' of assessment is not an automated process and requires that a form is sent to the Academic Records Office. The forms and further information on the process are available from the [Academic Support website](#).

Requests to 'carry forward' work outside the above limits and requests *not* to repeat assessment in a repeated term may be made by applying to Education Committee via Education Policy Support for a [dispensation from the regulations](#). Such requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

8 Submitted work

8.1 Date, time and format of submission

The published regulations and/or course handbook should stipulate when, where and in what format (e.g. hardcopy to Exam Schools, via WebLearn) work must be submitted. It is strongly encouraged that deadlines for submitted work should always be:

- During normal working hours (to allow for submission to Exam Schools and/or candidates to notify of problems with electronic submission)
- On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (to avoid Bank Holidays and disproportionate late penalties due to late submission after a Friday deadline)
- At noon (to allow for late submission on the day for students experiencing difficulties submitting thereby minimising late penalties)

8.2 Extensions and late submission

If a candidate is unable to submit by the required date and time, their college may make an application to the Proctors for permission for late submission (or for most students in the Department for Continuing Education to the Department under delegated authority, see 1.3.3). An extended deadline may be approved, or late submission excused where there are grounds of 'illness or other urgent cause' ([ER 14](#)). Applications may be made in advance of a deadline, or up to 14 days from when the candidate is notified that they have not submitted. In all cases, the applications will be considered on the basis of the evidence provided to support the additional time sought.

Neither college nor candidate is permitted to approach the examiners directly to request an extension of time and candidates must **not** be offered extensions informally by tutors, supervisors, or departmental staff.

8.2.1 *Marking of work submitted late and late penalties*

Examiners may mark work submitted up to fourteen days late after the notification of non-submission and release the mark. The examiners should impose an academic penalty according to the scale published in their examination conventions (see Annex A: Examination conventions), *unless* the Proctors have notified the chair that the late submission has been excused.

The examiners should not mark work submitted fifteen or more days late after the notification of non-submission, unless instructions have been received from the Proctors that the candidate has made a successful application for an extension, but should be recorded as a non-submission or 'technical fail'.

8.2.2 *Consequences of non-submission*

The following rules apply to candidates who fail to submit work for examination and so receive a 'technical fail' ([ER 14](#)).

- University Examinations in which honours are awarded (except Honour Moderations in Classics) (i.e. all or Part of the Second Public Examination): examiners should fail the candidate in the whole examination or Part of the examination.
- University Examinations in which honours are not awarded or Honour Moderations in Classics (i.e. First Public Examination, undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, Masters): examiners should fail the candidate only in the assessment unit in question. If the assessment unit includes other assessment items (such as a written exam or group assignment) these should also be failed.

See *Annex B: Consequences of non-attendance or non-submission* for a tabular representation of the consequences of non-submission of an assessment unit which is not excused by the Proctors (a ‘technical fail’).

8.3 Other contraventions of regulations

8.3.1 Overlong theses

Examiners may impose an academic penalty where written work exceeds the length prescribed in the course regulations ([ER 16.6](#)) as specified in their examination conventions.

8.3.2 Unauthorised change of title or subject

Where a candidate submits a thesis or other exercise whose title or subject matter differs from that which was approved by the supervisory body concerned, the examiners may similarly reduce the mark by up to one class (or its equivalent) as specified in their examination conventions ([ER 16.6](#)).

8.3.3 Poor academic practice and plagiarism

Examiners may apply penalties for poor academic practice in accordance with the examination conventions. For guidance on the types of cases to be dealt with as poor academic practice and the role of examiners and the Proctors in investigating and considering cases of alleged plagiarism see Annex C: Procedure for the investigation of plagiarism.

Academic penalties for poor academic practice can only be imposed by the whole board of examiners. If examiners or assessors have concerns about an assessment, they should raise them with the Chair to deal with under Annex C: Procedure for the investigation of plagiarism. Such concerns should not be followed up in a viva.

Guidance on the use of Turnitin in assessment and the potential detection of plagiarised material is provided on the [Academic Support website](#).

9 Timed examinations

N.B. Guidance for examiners and invigilators on the operation of written examinations is provided on the [E&A website](#). Guidance for candidates is provided on the [Oxford Students website](#).

9.1 Presence of examiners

Chairs **must** arrange for an examiner or assessor familiar with the exam paper to be present prior to (to check the question paper) and for half an hour at the start of an examination to address any questions concerning the paper. That examiner or assessor must be able to contact any individual question setters for queries if needed.

Examiners attending for the first half an hour of an examination **must present themselves at the examination venue in academic dress (i.e. gown and hood) and formal clothing**; this may include ‘subfusc’ clothing, but this is not required.

9.2 Invigilation

Trained invigilators must be present in all examination rooms. Invigilation is arranged on the basis of one invigilator to every 50 candidates ([ER 15.3](#)).

The Proctors, or Pro-Proctors, may attend at any point in an examination to satisfy themselves that it is properly conducted.

9.3 Absence of a candidate from a timed examination

If a candidate is unable to attend a timed examination, their college may make an application to the Proctors for permission for that non-attendance to be excused. Non-appearance may be excused on the grounds of 'illness or other urgent cause' ([ER 14](#)). Applications may be made in advance of the examination or subsequent to the non-appearance. In all cases, the applications will be considered on the basis of the evidence provided.

9.3.1 Unauthorised absence

The following rules apply to candidates who fail to attend an examination without approval from the Proctors for their non-appearance ([ER 14](#)):

- Examinations in which honours are awarded (except Honour Moderations in Classics) (i.e. all or Part of the Second Public Examination): examiners should fail the candidate in the whole examination or Part of the examination.
- Examinations in which honours are not awarded or Honour Moderations in Classics (i.e. First Public Examination, undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, Masters): examiners should fail the candidate only in the assessment unit in question. If the assessment unit includes other assessment items (such as a written exam or group assignment) these should also be failed.

If a candidate is absent from a particular paper without explanation, the Head of Examinations and Assessments will inform the candidate's college.

See *Annex B: Consequences of non-attendance or non-submission* for a tabular representation of the consequences of non-attendance of an examination which is not excused by the Proctors (a 'technical fail').

9.4 Behaviour of candidates

Candidates are bound by the [Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations \(Proctors' Regulations 1 of 2003\)](#), including the follow provisions.

No candidate may leave the room during the first thirty minutes or last thirty minutes of the examination without the Proctors' permission, except in the case of medical emergency or fire

A candidate who arrives more than thirty minutes after the time when the examination began should be allowed to attempt the paper, finishing at the same time as the others, but should be advised that the work cannot be taken into consideration without the consent of the Proctors. The invigilator will report the circumstances to the Head of Examinations and Assessments, who will contact the Proctors.

No candidate is allowed to leave the examination room for any purpose during the examination without an invigilator's permission.

If a candidate is taken ill while an examination is in progress, or for other reasons choose to leave, then that examination is considered to be have been attended, and any work completed will be marked on its merits ([ER 14.15\(2\)](#)). The student may submit a mitigating circumstances notice to enable the examiners to explain the circumstances (see 11.7.3 and *Annex E: Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners*).

9.4.1 *Unauthorised materials*

If candidates are found or suspected to have unauthorised materials (e.g. paper, mobile phones, other electronic devices) an invigilator will inform the Head of Examinations and Assessments, who will contact the Proctors. Disciplinary action may be taken under cl.12, [Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations \(Proctors' Regulations 1 of 2003\)](#).

9.4.2 *Candidate dress*

Candidates (with the exception of students taking University Examinations as non-members) must present themselves for examination in full academic dress, i.e. cap, gown and 'subfusc' clothing, which is defined as a dark suit, skirt or trousers with dark socks, black tights or stockings, black shoes or boots, a plain white collared shirt or blouse and white bow tie, black bow tie, black full-length tie or black ribbon, and, if desired, a dark coat (cl. 5, [Regulations relating to academic dress made by the Vice-Chancellor, as authorised by Council \(Vice-Chancellor's Regulations 1 of 2002\)](#)).

9.4.3 *Conclusion of an examination*

Candidates are not allowed to remove any examination booklets (used or unused) from the examination room.

10 Use of vivas

Examiners (and, if invited, an assessor) may examine a candidate *viva voce* in a University examination only where the specific regulations make provision for the use of vivas. Examiners should be clear as to the purpose of a *viva voce* examination, for example it should not be used as a means of assessing suspicions about possible plagiarism.

If examiners, following *Examination Regulations*, intend to call some or all candidates for a *viva voce* examination, the dates should be included as accurately as possible in the chair's circular to candidates early in the year of the examination. When examiners have retained the option of vivas, any request from a candidate for dispensation from the possibility because it conflicts with travel or vacation plans will be refused; the Proctors may, however, seek from the chair an indication of the probability of a *viva voce* examination, so that the candidate may judge the risk involved in travelling at the specified date. Remote attendance at a *viva voce* for an undergraduate or postgraduate taught examination (e.g. via videoconferencing) is **not permitted**. If examiners are certain that they will not hold vivas at all, this can be communicated to candidates. A viva need not be held on a failing candidate if it is not specified in the requirements of the course and the failure is beyond any margin of doubt.

When examiners call candidates for *viva voce* examinations, the conduct of the *viva* should be sufficiently formal to ensure fairness of treatment for all candidates examined in this way. Notes must be kept of the questions asked, together with an indication of the level of response, and assessment made at the time. This material must be given to the chair of examiners (see 11.8 concerning the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018).

11 Scripts, marking and adjudication

11.1 Standardised expression of agreed final marks

Numerical marking, which must be expressed in whole numbers on a scale from 0 to 100 for agreed final marks, must be used for both undergraduate and graduate examinations. These are known as University standardised marks (USM).

Examiners should be encouraged to use the entire range of the marking scale.

All examiners are required to express agreed final marks for individual papers (including those for formally assessed coursework) in the following form on the basis of the following class boundaries.

11.1.1 Undergraduate degrees

For Moderations and Preliminary Examinations		For the Second Public Examination and Honour Moderations	
70 – 100	Distinction (where relevant)	70 – 100	First Class
40 – 69	Pass	60 – 69	Upper Second
0 – 39	Fail	50 – 59	Lower Second
		40 – 49	Third
		30 – 39	Pass in Finals/Honour Mods
		0 – 29	Fail

Some integrated Masters courses use the Postgraduate taught course scale for assessment taken in the final Part of the University Examination, and for determining the outcome of the final award.¹

11.1.2 Undergraduate certificates and diplomas

For undergraduate certificates and diplomas offered by the Department for Continuing Education	
70 – 100	Distinction
60 – 69	Merit
40 – 59	Pass
0 – 39	Fail

An overall award of distinction may be made to candidates who have shown excellence over the whole examination. An overall award of merit may be made to candidates who have produced work of particularly high quality in the whole examination.

¹ MMathPhys – for cohorts completing from 16-17; MMath Mathematics, MMathStat Mathematics & Statistics, MCompSci Mathematics & Computer Science, MCompSci Computer Science for cohorts completing from 2020-21.

11.1.3 Postgraduate taught courses

70 – 100	Distinction
65 – 69	Merit
50 – 64	Pass
0 – 49	Fail

An overall award of distinction may be made to candidates who have shown excellence over the whole examination. An overall award of merit may be made to candidates who have produced work of particularly high quality in the whole examination. Examination conventions should make clear the rules for the awards and these should normally exclude from consideration any candidate who has initially failed an assessment. Exceptionally, supervisory bodies may approve examination conventions that allow examiners to consider for distinction or merit otherwise excellent candidates who have initially failed a minor assessment item (no more than 10%). Examination conventions should specify the element(s) that may be disregarded.

11.1.4 Postgraduate taught courses – alternative model

70 – 100	Distinction
50 – 69	Pass
0 – 49	Fail

This alternative model is permitted to be used by the following awards for the expression of agreed final marks:

- Master of Business Administration
- Executive Master of Business Administration
- Master of Science by Coursework in Major Programme Management
- Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Strategy
- Postgraduate Diploma in Global Business
- Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Leadership
- Postgraduate Diploma in Strategy and Innovation

11.1.5 Postgraduate taught courses – historic models

For students who started their courses **before** Michaelmas term 2018 only, agreed final marks for individual papers should be expressed according to one of the following scales:

Model 1		Model 2	
70 – 100	Distinction	70 – 100	Distinction
50 – 69	Pass	60 – 69	Pass
0 – 49	Fail	0 – 59	Fail

11.2 Double-marking and reconciliation of marks

Double marking must be used to judge the performance of candidates in the Second Public Examination, undergraduate certificates and diplomas, and all graduate level examinations, with the exception of papers with precise model solutions (see 11.3), or those given special

permission by Education Committee to use alternative methods of marking (see below) ([ER 2.2](#)).

Double marking identifies discrepancies of judgement between two markers, which must then be resolved. It is not proper to average the two marks; the markers need to identify the reasons for the difference and agree an appropriate mark. If reconciliation is difficult, a third marker should act as arbiter in agreeing the appropriate mark. Only in exceptional circumstances (if such academic expertise is not otherwise obtainable within the University) should an external examiner be asked to act in this capacity.

There must be a mechanism to verify the marking of all papers for undergraduate second public examinations, undergraduate certificates and diplomas, and graduate examinations under the aegis of all boards, and the minimum standard must be as follows:

- There should be an explicit process in place to ensure that a student's mark is not affected by relatively severe or lenient marking
- The majority of courses in the University use independent double marking for this purpose
- Alternative methods such as those used by Jurisprudence are permitted, if it can be demonstrated that they serve the same purpose.

Every script or dissertation must normally be identified solely by a candidate number and marked independently by two examiners or assessors (unless another marking method has been approved).

Each division should have a consistent method across disciplines for reconciling the marks awarded by two markers.

Where subjects permit averaging of marks (over a narrow range) in reconciliation between markers, the system used must be clear and justifiable, and not operated to the detriment of candidates. If reconciliation is difficult, a third marker should act as arbiter in agreeing the appropriate mark.

All markers of assessed work that is double marked are required to record the process by which initial marks have been reconciled to generate an agreed mark using a reconciliation sheet. This should be done whenever there is a discussion between markers, but is not required where a simple averaging of marks over a narrow range (in accordance with the relevant examination conventions) has taken place.

Marks reconciliation must take place at the level of the mark for the paper (but may also take place at question level or at individual item level where a paper consists of multiple elements of assessed work). Exam boards should take a consistent approach for each paper as to whether marks reconciliation takes place at the paper or at question/item level, so that different markers do not reconcile at different levels.

Marks reconciliation sheets should be completed for each candidate for each paper or assessment item where a marks reconciliation process has taken place. This sheet should provide the marks of both first and second markers (and the third marker where applicable) and include an effective record, by comments or other means, of the reconciliation process. Exam boards should produce a standard sheet for all markers to use.

In order to enable external examiners to undertake their role as an arbiter of standards, where they are asked to certify the fairness of the approach used for the reconciliation of such discrepant marks, the comments provided must describe the mechanism used by the internal examiners to reach an agreed final mark. If, in rare cases, external examiners are asked to reach a final decision on significantly discrepant marks from the first and second

markers, it is essential that they are provided with sufficient comments to understand the rationale for each of the initial marks awarded.

Section 11.10 below sets out the responsibilities of the chair of examiners in respect of the retention of reconciliation sheets along with other examination material. All material must be lodged with the chair, who must make arrangements for its retention for two years following the examination.

11.3 Papers with a model solution

In the case of papers for which there is a precise model solution and marking scheme approved by the examiners for every question, each script must be marked by an examiner or assessor; and every script must be checked independently (not necessarily by an examiner or assessor) to ensure that all parts have been marked and the marks and part-marks have been correctly totalled and recorded.

11.4 Issues in marking

Particular problems may arise in the marking process:

- **Illegible Scripts:** If a chair considers a script to be illegible, they must inform the Senior Tutor of the candidate's college as quickly as possible. If there is a dispute between the Chair and the Senior Tutor as to the illegibility of a script or scripts, the question should be referred to the Proctors for a ruling. Chairs will need to return any illegible scripts, by hand, to the candidate's college asking for them to be typed. The college will either make arrangements to use the Examinations and Assessments team transcription service or else will contact the Proctors for permission to type the script(s) in house. Chairs will be informed about the arrangements. The cost of the typing and invigilation shall not be a charge on the University.
- **Missing or incomplete scripts:** If an examiner or assessor finds that a script is missing from the delivered package, or that a script is conspicuously incomplete, the chair should be notified immediately, so that a check can be initiated with the Examinations and Assessments team and other markers. The Proctors should be informed promptly if it is not found.
- **Scripts with inappropriate content:** Where examiners feel that the content of a candidate's script indicates that they may require professional help, the chair should contact the Proctors' Office for advice. The scripts and submitted work of candidates whose dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulty has been notified through the Proctors will each have a cover-sheet advising markers of this fact and indicating in what ways the condition may have affected candidates' written work. The scripts are to be marked as normal, but the marks-sheet should show when a candidate has a SpLD, so that this information can be considered by examiners in adjudicating on the candidate's performance.

11.5 Recording during the marking process (including comments sheets)

Markers should generally not write on timed examination scripts during the marking process. This can compromise the independence of the second marker. In some subjects, however, the nature of the examination answers (such as translations or calculations) may be such that it is appropriate to indicate on the script objective errors for which the mark should be reduced. Comments should not be written on the scripts but on the sheets provided for the purpose. Exam boards should produce a standard sheet for all markers to use.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018, the University is not obliged to return scripts to candidates, but is obliged, if requested, to provide a transcript of anything written on them or separately about a candidate's performance.

Markers must record comments, using comments sheets, for all substantial assessment items. Substantial summative assessment item is understood to mean any thesis, dissertation, project report, extended essay, portfolio, research proposal, and any other summative assessment item that carries weight broadly equivalent to an unseen written exam.

Exam boards are strongly encouraged to use comments sheets for all assessed work (whether consisting of submitted work or written examinations), if they do not already do so. While the use of comments sheets for timed written examinations is not a requirement, it is recommended as best practice, and the consistent recording of comments will aid marks reconciliation processes.

Comments sheets must be completed independently (i.e. the second marker should not see the first marker's comments before marking or commenting on the script).

Departments and faculties are encouraged to include the marking criteria on the marking sheet or book: additionally subjects may wish to offer further guidance to examiners on the coverage of their comments.

To facilitate the process of providing comments sheets to students (see section x.x.x.), it is encouraged that if using comments sheets, boards should ask for a comments sheet for each candidate to be completed by each marker of each paper or assessment item.

11.6 Scaling of marks

Education Committee considers that it is appropriate to scale marks for a paper where it has been established that either:

- (a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or
- (b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or
- (c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

In each case, examiners need to establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Different considerations need to be taken into account for each of cases (a), (b) and (c).

<p><i>(a) A paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years</i></p>	<p>Examiners may wish to consider scaling where a paper has a higher or lower median or mean mark for a paper relative to previous years as this may indicate that the paper was easier or more difficult than intended, especially in a core paper taken by a large cohort. However, this would not in itself constitute sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling is not a mechanistic process but one which requires academic judgement. Further evidence should also be identified, for example, via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examiners' academic evaluation of the performance of the candidates (possibly guided by qualitative descriptors of each class); • a comparison with the questions set in previous years' papers; and/or • an analysis of the spread of candidates' performance in compulsory papers compared to their performance in the paper in question. <p>Scaling should not be used mechanistically to fit the spread of classes on a paper to historical norms (i.e. norm referencing).</p>
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<i>(b) An optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year</i>	Again, a higher or lower median or mean mark for an optional paper relative to other optional papers would not in itself constitute sufficient evidence for this. The differences in mean or median scores of students taking different optional papers could simply be the result of natural variation in ability within the cohort of students. If the number of students taking options is small, statistical analysis (say of performance of students in optional versus compulsory papers) can be an unreliable tool
<i>(c) A paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance against the University's standard scale for expression of agreed final marks.</i>	Boards should take all steps which they consider to be reasonable academically to set questions and mark schemes which seek to generate a spread of marks that fairly reflect the student cohort's performance compared with the University's scale for standard expression of agreed final marks and the class descriptors set out in the course examination conventions. However, it is recognised that despite the very best efforts at the examination setting stage, an examination, particularly in a quantitative subject where there is a precise model solution and mark scheme, may not generate such a spread of raw marks. Scaling, with qualitative checks, may then be needed to translate raw marks to marks that are a fair reflection of the performance of candidates on the University scale. Again, academic judgement will be critical here.

In all cases, the general principles below must be followed by all boards of examiners when scaling is used:

- Scaling should only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed;
- If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, examiners should review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes a paper in each class. External examiners should be asked to report on this stage of the process;
- All scaling of marks must be done in the year in which the paper(s) in question is/are taken. This point will be particularly pertinent for subjects with second-year examinations and for supervisory bodies considering initiating such examination arrangements;
- Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied should be included in the examiners' report;
- All examiners and boards should seek expert advice on the construction and operation of algorithms, where appropriate;
- All algorithms used for the purposes of scaling must be transparent and justifiable, and must be published as appropriate for the information of all examiners and students.

Examiners should also satisfy themselves that, if a computer algorithm is used in the classification process, its rules are fully consistent with the current examination conventions, especially if changes are being made to the examination conventions (see Annex A: Examination conventions for further detail).

11.7 Adjudication on the merits of candidates

The chair must arrange for all examiners and assessors to report the marks for those scripts they have marked. Marks are entered against candidates' numbers on the marks sheet, and the examiners must then be provided with complete lists of marks that will form the basis of their adjudication (assessors do not take part in the final adjudication process but may be present in an advisory capacity only ([ER 7.7](#))).

Attention must be paid to the accuracy of data entry into marks spreadsheets and to ensuring that any changes in the list of candidates do not lead to knock-on errors

(withdrawals are the most likely changes but the reinstatement of withdrawn candidates can also happen). It is good practice to test new software on a set of dummy results before it is used in the examination.

During the process of adjudication, the scripts of all candidates should be available to the examiners as a whole. **All examiners *must* be present at all Examination Board meetings unless prior permission has been obtained from the Proctors on the basis of *exceptional* circumstances.** Section **Error! Reference source not found.** provides information on when examiners may attend remotely.

11.7.1 Calculation of overall marks

Where final outcomes criteria include the consideration of overall marks, these should be calculated to two decimal places.

Overall marks should not be changed if the final outcome or classification has been upgraded as a result of a Mitigating Circumstances Notice (MCE).

Exam boards are not required to calculate overall marks where not already part of the final outcomes process, but where overall marks are calculated they should be reviewed and formally ratified by the exam board along with final marks, and uploaded along with the results list so they can be provided directly to students (see also section 12.5.2).

This facility is not currently available for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, or postgraduate taught awards.

11.7.2 Calculation of ranking

Where exam boards rank candidates according to overall mark, this ranking should apply to the full Final Honour School, and not be subdivided into different course strands or combined across different Final Honour Schools (e.g. FHS English Language and Literature is divided into Course I and Course II, but are subject to a single set of regulations, therefore they can and should be ranked together; similar all students in Modern Languages or in Oriental Studies should appear in combined rankings).

Rankings can be provided for the overall cohort only, or also ranked within classification bands. Where candidates are ranked in classification bands, they should be ranked by classification precedence then by overall mark (e.g. that all students awarded a first class degree will rank ahead of any awarded a 2:1, 2:1s above 2:2s, and 2:2s above third class degrees, pass/unclassified degrees, and fails).

For students whose results are incomplete at the time of the final exam board meeting they should not be included in the ranking. When their results are available they should be ranked as follows:

- If the overall mark is equal to the mark of another result within the classification, then it will share the same rank for both classification and cohort;
- If the overall mark is higher than any other mark within the classification, it will share the ranks in classification and cohort of the first placed result in the classification
- It will share the ranks of the result within the classification with the overall mark immediately above it.

Exam boards are not required to calculate rankings, but where they are calculated they should be reviewed and formally ratified by the exam board along with final marks and uploaded along with the results list so they can be provided directly to students (see also section 12.5.3).

This facility is not currently available for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, or postgraduate taught awards.

11.7.3 Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners

Information about medical or other circumstances affecting a candidate's performance may be submitted by the candidate via their college to be considered by the board of examiners via a Mitigating Circumstances Notice (MCE) ([ER 13](#)).

It is the candidate's responsibility to raise any issue that may have impacted on their performance with the designated college officer, to complete a candidate statement, and to provide appropriate evidence in support. The candidate's college will send a completed mitigating circumstances notice to examiners (via the secure SharePoint site provided for this purpose, moving to eVision during 2019-20) to the Examinations and Assessments team, which will forward this to the chair, provided that the form is received by noon the day before the final examiners' meeting. If a notice is received after this deadline, it will be forwarded to the Proctors for consideration, and will only be passed on to examiners if received within **three months** of the publication of results **and** if one of the following criteria is met:

- The candidate's condition is such as to prevent them from making an earlier submission;
- The candidate's condition is not known or diagnosed until after the final meeting of the examiners;
- There has been a procedural error (beyond the candidate's control) that has prevented the candidate's information from being submitted.

Full guidance is available in *Annex E: Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners*.

11.7.4 Incomplete examinations

If the candidate has missed any papers (i.e. did not sit the paper), the chair should check whether the Proctors have provided authorisation to consider the candidate for an estimated classification, particularly where a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners has been received in respect of the candidate. The Proctors will only contact the chair if an application for excusal has been approved.

If a candidate does not complete an examination, the Proctors can ([ER 14.18](#)):

- Authorise examiners to examine the candidate at another place or time under such arrangements as they deem appropriate. Or, if the candidate has already submitted sufficient other work, to act as if they had completed the part of the University examination which they were unable to attend, and to award an estimated classification; or use the words 'declared to have deserved Honours' in the case of a classified degree if the examiners are unable to classify the candidate but none the less judge that the candidate would have obtained Honours if they had been able to complete the examination; or else fail the candidate.
- In the case of a pass/fail degree, the examiners must consider whether the candidate has submitted sufficient work of sufficient merit for them to judge whether it is appropriate to award a Pass.

Where a candidate has missed one or more papers in a First Public Examination, chairs will be instructed to examine the candidate during the Long Vacation, i.e. when they would normally provide re-sits if a candidate had failed.

11.8 Sharing information between examiners

Marks should be transported between examiners and assessors and the chair or relevant administrative officer by hand, sent by Special Delivery, or transmitted via an authorised additional verification WebLearn site. They should not be sent electronically unless encrypted. Advice on the encryption and decryption of marks sheets may be obtained from IT Services. No electronic transmissions should be made without previously informing the Proctors. WebLearn additional verification is available to aid boards of examiners in sharing marks and submitting marks to the chair, and the chair should contact the Head of Examinations and Assessment to discuss applying to set up a site and the practicalities of implementation.

Any exception to these rules must be agreed in advance by the Proctors, who will need to be convinced (taking technical advice if necessary) that it will cause no breach in security.

It is not good practice to use e-mail as a method of communicating between examiners about examination matters. The condensed style of e-mail communication is open to ambiguity and can give rise to errors. Examiners should note that e-mail communications about individual students would be disclosable under the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR/DPA 2018).

11.9 Confidentiality

Comments, examination scripts and raw marks (i.e. the marks from individual examiners before agreement or reconciliation) are strictly confidential and in no circumstances may be shown to or discussed with anyone other than examiners or properly appointed assessors (subject to section 12.7 regarding access by candidates). Details of the discussions at examiners' meetings are equally confidential. Apart from the chair, only authorised administrative staff may process the entry of marks and otherwise assist in the handling of information.

11.10 Retention of records

Supervisory bodies should ensure that all examiners acting on their behalf are aware of the Proctorial requirements relating to the retention of records as detailed on the [E&A website](#).

12 Results

12.1 Results lists

The Academic Records Office (ARO) is responsible for the publication to students of final results via the online Student Self-Service. These are based on the Results Lists approved and signed off by the chair of examiners on behalf of the exam board ([ER 17](#)). Operational guidance is available on the [E&A website](#).

12.2 Change of results

After the results have been released to the students it is not possible to change the results unless:

- **An error has been identified.** Where the change in marks to correct the error results in a change in the year/examination outcome, or to the final award outcome, the examiners must seek the permission of the Proctors by completing the Change in Results Form. Where the change in results does not result in a change in the year/examination, or final award outcome, the Change in Results Form should be submitted to the ARO signed by the Chair.

- **A candidate has been accidentally omitted from the results list.** In such instances the examiners must apply to the Proctors for permission to compile an additional Results List. This additional Results List should contain the candidates missing from the original Results List.

12.3 Incomplete results

Candidates whose results are incomplete at the time of the final examiners' meeting are usually recorded as an INCOM on the Results List. Candidates might be incomplete because they are under Proctorial investigation or were granted an extension. When the examiners are ready to examine the 'late results' they should meet as a full board unless the Proctors have granted permission for them to meet with reduced numbers or consult by correspondence. The results should be submitted to the ARO in the same way as the original Results List, as described above. In the case of results which are late due to candidates having been granted an extension, there is no requirement to seek Proctorial permission to produce a further Results List. In the case of results delayed due to Proctorial investigation, or due to late or non-submission without prior approval from the Proctors, Proctorial permission is required to produce a further Results List.

12.4 Prizes for examinations

Where examiners are responsible for awarding prizes on the basis of examination results, it is the duty of the chair to send notification of the awards to the secretary of the appropriate divisional or faculty board. The secretary will arrange for payment to be made to the prize-winners.

12.5 Disclosure and publication of candidates' results

When the entire examination is complete and the results released into eVision, the candidates' assessment marks and award outcomes will be available to the candidates and to staff with eVision access to the candidates' assessment records. In the case of a multi-part FHS, the agreed marks should be disclosed *after* the completion of each part of the FHS.

The Senior Tutor (and their delegates) at a candidate's college may access candidate results from the eVision dataviews. Senior Tutors can make the marks available to subject tutors. Chairs of examiners should not send separate lists to Senior Tutors because of information security issues with using email to circulate personal data.

Examiners should not disclose agreed marks to candidates or to staff until the results have been formally released into eVision. No candidates' marks should be released by examiners to colleagues in departments. Staff in departments may view results through eVision if they have appropriate access.

12.5.1 Question level marks

Exam boards may choose to provide question-level marks to students where such question-level marks are reconciled and available. If boards wish to do this, they should be aware that they will need to use local processes to release question-level marks (they will not be released into eVision) and will need to be able to provide technical support for this in-house.

Question-level marks must not be provided to students until **after** results are formally released into eVision. Examination boards must also comply with data protection requirements in relation to question-level marks (see 12.7).

If boards wish to begin providing question-level marks and have not done so previously, they should contact the Education Policy Support team for further information and guidance before beginning to provide such marks.

12.5.2 Overall marks

If examiners calculate an overall mark (sometimes known as an average mark) as part of the consideration of the results for the First Public Examination or Second Public Examination (see section 11.7.1) this is provided to students through student self-service.

This facility is not currently available for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, or postgraduate taught awards.

12.5.3 Rankings in cohort and class

If examiners produce a ranking of candidates (see section 11.7.2), the information is provided to students through student self-service except in the following circumstances:

- Rankings will not be made available to students where the number in the classification or cohort is fewer than or equal to five.
- Where the number in the classification is five or fewer, but the number in cohort is more than five, the ranking in cohort should be released but not the ranking in classification.
- Where the entire cohort is five or fewer, no rankings will be released, only the overall mark will be available against the student record.

This facility is not currently available for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, or postgraduate taught awards.

12.6 Transcripts of results

All examination candidates will be provided with a transcript showing their final agreed marks using the standardised expression of marks (see 11.1) for the individual papers, and (for undergraduate degrees) how these marks relate to the final degree classification.

The transcript will show the final agreed marks according to the common scale and indicate the basis by which the classification is achieved. This may be on average mark alone, or may include specifications as to mark distribution (5 papers in the 2.1 class, etc.).

12.7 Candidate access to other types of assessment related information

12.7.1 Comments sheets and reconciliation sheets

All exam boards are permitted, but not required, to provide records of examiners comments ('comments sheets') and of the reconciliation process ('reconciliation sheets') directly to students. Where examination boards decide to do this, it will negate the need for students to submit a subject access request to obtain these sheets. Boards may decide to release sheets either to individual students on request or proactively to all students.

12.7.2 Examination scripts

All exam boards are permitted, but not required, to give students access to their examination scripts as they see fit in controlled circumstances within the department or faculty. Boards can set their own access policy as to whether scripts are accessible only on individual request, or whether to specify sessions where any student could attend to view scripts. Boards can also set local policy as to whether scripts for only certain papers or all papers are available for access (particularly where access would compromise the integrity of the examination process such as multiple choice questions (MCQs)).

Student access should be supervised by academic or administrative staff according to local policy. Students are not permitted to remove their scripts from the department or to photograph or copy them.

12.7.3 Information via subject access requests

For boards who choose not to directly provide information under section 12.7.1, or for other categories of exam related information the following provisions (under the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR/DPA 2018)) apply.

Students may make a subject access request for information related to the assessment process that is otherwise treated as confidential. By making such a request a student may obtain all personal data generated as part of the examination process, including:

- all marks held, including raw marks;
- copies of markers' comments on their work;
- (if identifiable separately from other individuals) comments recorded about their performance, whether by name or candidate number, in material presented to or in the minutes of examiners' meetings
- any other information relating to their performance, such as information about medical problems

All subject access requests submitted to the University are processed centrally by the [Information Compliance team](#). Under no circumstances should examiners, assessors, or administrative staff respond to direct requests for disclosure of information relating to the examination outside of the provisions of section 12.7.1. and 12.7.2.

However, due to a specific provision in GDPR/DPA 2018, **examination scripts** are exempt from this general right of access, although a student is still entitled to any marks or comments recorded in the margins of a script. Therefore student access to examination scripts is at the discretion of the department under section 12.7.2.

13 Resits

13.1 Organisation of resits

The chair must publish a timetable for resit examinations and communicate with candidates in the same way as for other examinations. Chairs must ensure that examiners are available for invigilation, marking and for the meeting of the board of examiners at the appropriate time; this is particularly important for the Long Vacation resit examinations. For resits where only a subset of papers are taken, the chair may nominate a subset of the original examiners to assist, provided that the Head of Examinations and Assessments is notified before the start of the examination (who will notify the Proctors). An external examiner must be included in this subset where they formed part of the original exam board.

All resit examinations must cover the same material as the original examination. If the examination regulations have changed between the date of the original examination and the resit, the resit should reflect what the candidate was originally taught.

13.2 Entitlement to resit

Students are entitled to one resit of any failed assessment unit of a University Examination.

A candidate is not permitted to resit an assessment unit that has been passed unless the whole University Examination (or Part of the Examination in the case of multi-part SPE) has been failed, i.e. it is not possible to resit an assessment unit in order to improve the mark.

13.3 Arrangements for resits for postgraduate taught awards

The relevant general regulations for postgraduate awards require that resits should be taken at the next opportunity, and that they must be taken within the next two opportunities, unless the special regulations permit an alternative practice.

Departments are encouraged to consider earlier re-sits or re-submission dates that will enable students who have incurred a fail, or who have had to withdraw from the examination at the end of the course for urgent reasons, to complete the award. These arrangements should be reflected in the regulations and other course information.

Where an assessment unit of an examination has been successfully completed at the first examination, the mark for the successful assessment unit can be carried over to the succeeding year and only the assessment unit or units which have been failed at the first examination re-taken unless otherwise specified by the special regulations for a course. In this context, an 'assessment unit' can refer to a single timed examination, a submission, other exercise, or a combination of assessment items. Where the assessment unit consists of more than one assessment item, for example a submission and a timed examination, if the student passes the submission but fails the timed examination, they are only required to resit the failed assessment item, not all the assessment items for the assessment unit.

13.4 Arrangements for resits for undergraduate certificates and diplomas

The relevant general regulations for undergraduate certificates and diplomas require that resits should be taken at the next opportunity, and that they must be taken within the next two opportunities, unless the special regulations permit an alternative practice.

14 Feedback on summative assessment

14.1 Feedback to students on formative assessment

Information on the policy for feedback on formative assessment can be found in the [Policy and Guidance on Undergraduate Teaching and Learning](#), and the [Policy and Guidance on Postgraduate Taught Degrees](#).

14.2 Feedback on the First Public Examination

Exam boards of all First Public Examinations are required to:

- provide candidates who fail the Examination at their initial attempt with as detailed a breakdown of marks as is available for all the failed papers.
- permit candidates who fail any papers, and are planning to re-sit the examination, to see their examination scripts for any papers which they have failed.

Exam boards are encouraged to make the experience of seeing examination scripts as helpful as possible for these students. This could include giving students the opportunity to discuss their script with a tutor, and/or providing students with the marking criteria used alongside their script.

Examinations which consist of multiple choice questions (MCQs) which use question banks are exempt from the requirement to permit failed candidates to see their examination scripts, as doing so could compromise the integrity of the examination.

14.3 Feedback for taught graduate courses

Supervisory bodies are strongly encouraged to consider providing feedback, via exam boards, on any elements of summative assessment which are undertaken prior to the final term of the course. This may include Trinity term assessments for 12-month courses. Supervisory bodies may direct boards of examiners to provide feedback in one or more of the following ways:

- **Marks** – boards may provide marks in accordance with the provisions of section 4.3.
- **Written feedback** - this may accompany marks or be provided without marks. Where boards of examiners wish to give written feedback without marks, they are not obliged to meet in full, but the chair is required to approve the feedback on the board's behalf before it is released to students.

When providing feedback for part-time courses, boards may, alternatively, follow the arrangements for provision of feedback established by the Department for Continuing Education.

Supervisory bodies are required to implement (via boards of examiners) written feedback according to an agreed divisional template or framework for all PGT dissertations or theses or equivalent of 5,000 words or over.

Supervisors can be provided with copies of written feedback.

15 Queries and complaints from candidates

15.1 Queries about the conduct of the examination

Senior Tutors or tutors must not contact examiners regarding individual candidates.

Examiners must not discuss any matter relating to individual candidates with tutors, Senior Tutors, or candidates.

Any attempt at direct communication with examiners by individual candidates should be reported to the Proctors, who will advise the examiners. Such communications compromise the anonymity of the examination process, and are not in candidates' interests.

Students are entitled to make a formal complaint under the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#) in relation to examinations, noting that an academic appeal should be submitted instead if an individual candidate is dissatisfied with the decision of an academic body.

15.2 Queries about results

Students are entitled to make an academic appeal under the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

The Proctors have no power to consider appeals against the academic judgement of the examiners.

Annex A: Examination conventions

1. Introduction

Across the disciplines within each division in the University, there are many similarities in the way we teach and assess undergraduate students and teach and assess graduate students. Some common features in examining, marking and classification would therefore be expected within divisions. The QAA expects that 'Higher Education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment'.² This may involve a degree of variation from discipline to discipline.

Whilst academics in subject disciplines are best placed to determine the criteria used in marking and classification, Education Committee also has a duty to ensure that the processes used to apply these criteria are fair, explicit, and transparent.³ Where the criteria used in marking and classification differ from the norm and from cognate disciplines, there should be a rationale for the divergence.

2. Purpose of examination conventions

Examination conventions are the University's formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which students apply. They are a student-facing document and should be written in a clear and comprehensible manner. The same version of the examination conventions should be used by examiners, with more detailed local operational guidance appended if necessary.

Education Committee's [Policy and guidance on course information](#) states that there are three key sources of information for on-course students about their course of study. These are the [Examination Regulations](#), the relevant course handbook and the relevant examination conventions. Information about the structure of the course and the way it is assessed should be contained in those three documents. Key information on those matters on which students are entitled to rely should not be solely located elsewhere (for example, in a 'Notice to candidates' focusing on administrative arrangements).

3. Publication

Examination conventions must be circulated to all students and also published, either as part of the course handbook or separately, in a place easily accessible to students. Ideally, examination conventions should be publicly available so that prospective students may have access to them. If this is not possible, they should be accessible via Single Sign On (SSO) to anyone in the University so that the Proctors and colleges have access to them.

4. Content

The template below provides the headings of the information that should be supplied in examination conventions with a description of what is expected. In square brackets are references to further information in the [Examinations and assessment framework](#) and/or the *Examination Regulations* where available or relevant. Please ensure that information is provided in clear and comprehensible language.

Suggested or sample text is provided in [square brackets].

² From the Expectation of the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning](#).

³ From Indicator 2 of the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning](#).

Template for examination conventions

1. Introduction

Include:

- The full title of the course(s) to which the conventions apply;
- The year to which the conventions apply;
- Details of the supervisory body (divisional or faculty board) responsible for approving the conventions;
- The purpose of the examination conventions. You may wish to include the text below:

[Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.]

2. Rubrics for individual papers

Information on the structure of individual examination papers, for example, requirements relating to questions, number of questions, compulsory questions etc. Also include any paper specific regulations on, for example, the use of calculators, permitted reference material etc.

3. Marking conventions

3.1 University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks [EAF 11.1]

Include one of the following as appropriate:

Undergraduate courses

For Moderations and Preliminary Examinations		For the Second Public Examination and Honour Moderations	
70 - 100	Distinction (where relevant)	70 - 100	First Class
40 – 69	Pass	60 – 69	Upper Second
39 – 0	Fail	50 – 59	Lower Second
		40 – 49	Third
		30 – 39	Pass in Finals/Honour Mods
		29 – 0	Fail

Some integrated Masters courses use the Postgraduate taught course scale for assessment taken in final Part of the University Examination, and for determining the outcome of the final award.⁴

⁴ MMathPhys – for cohorts completing from 16-17; MMath Mathematics, MMathStat Mathematics & Statistics, MCompSci Mathematics & Computer Science, MCompSci Computer Science for cohorts completing from 2020-21.

For undergraduate certificates and diplomas offered by the Department for Continuing Education	
70 – 100	Distinction
60 – 69	Merit
40 – 59	Pass
0 – 39	Fail

An overall award of distinction may be made to candidates who have shown excellence over the whole examination. An overall award of merit may be made to candidates who have produced work of particularly high quality in the whole examination.

Postgraduate taught courses

70 - 100	Distinction
65 – 69	Merit
50 - 64	Pass
49 - 0	Fail

Postgraduate taught courses – alternative model

70 - 100	Distinction
50 – 69	Pass
49 - 0	Fail

This alternative model is permitted to be used by the following awards for the expression of agreed final marks:

- Master of Business Administration
- Executive Master of Business Administration
- Master of Science by Coursework in Major Programme Management
- Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Strategy
- Postgraduate Diploma in Global Business
- Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Leadership
- Postgraduate Diploma in Strategy and Innovation

Postgraduate taught courses – historic models

For students who started their courses **before** Michaelmas term 2018 only, agreed final marks for individual papers should be expressed according to one of the following scales:

Model 1		Model 2	
70 – 100	Distinction	70 – 100	Distinction
50 – 69	Pass	60 – 69	Pass
49 – 0	Fail	59 – 0	Fail

3.2 Qualitative marking criteria for different types of assessment

Marking criteria are a public statement of the main forms of judgement that assessors and examiners use when looking at a piece of examined work. Every different type of assessment should have in place a set of qualitative marking criteria. Marking criteria need to provide descriptors of the qualities that are expected in the assessed work and a description of the standard expected to obtain a mark in each of the standard bands for that course (for example for EG programmes: ≤39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, etc., and for PGT programmes: ≤49, 50-64, 65-69, etc.).

3.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks

[EAF 11.2]

For FPE

There should be a clear statement on how each script/item is marked and the moderation process which is to be followed.

For FHS, Honour Moderations, and PGT courses

For papers without a model solution, there should be a statement that each script/item of work is marked independently by two examiners or assessors (sometimes referred to as 'double-blind marking'). There should be a clear statement on reconciliation procedures demonstrating that any relevant University and divisional guidance is being followed. This statement should encompass an explanation of instances in which the marks from two examiners will be averaged, rather than reconciled using alternative means. Where subjects permit averaging of marks (over a narrow range) in reconciliation between markers, the system used must be clear and justifiable, and not operated to the detriment of candidates. If reconciliation is difficult, a third marker should act as arbiter in agreeing the appropriate mark. External examiners should not routinely be used as arbiters in reconciliation of marks. If an alternative method of marking has been approved by Education Committee, details of this should be provided.

For papers for which there is a model solution and marking scheme approved by the examiners, there should be a statement that each script is marked by an examiner or assessor and is checked independently to ensure that all parts have been marked and the marks and part-marks have been correctly totalled and recorded.

For papers which are made up of a number of elements, give an explanation of how marks are awarded for the individual elements of assessment and how these marks are translated into paper level marks on the scale set out above (see section 3.1). Information should be provided about the decimal precision of the calculations and the conventions used for rounding marks.

3.4 Scaling

[EAF 11.6]

Where scaling is used a clear description should be given of the circumstances in which it will be used and the methodology which will be used (detailed algorithms should be included as an appendix rather than in the main part of the examination conventions, and further detail should be given in examiners' reports). It should be made clear that scaling is not a mechanistic process, but one in which the examiners will use their academic judgement to ensure that appropriate classifications are awarded.

The following text is provided as an example:

- [The Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:
a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or

- b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or
- c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates' marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within in each class.

Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners' report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.]

3.5 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

There should be a statement on the short-weight convention that will be applied. If there are alternative arrangements (for 'compensation') these should be described.

The following texts are provided as examples:

[A mark of zero shall be awarded for any part or parts of questions that have not been answered by a candidate, but which should have been answered.

OR

The maximum deduction that can be made for short weight should be equivalent to the proportion of the answer that is missing.]

This section could also describe the treatment of instances where a candidate fails to comply with the paper rubric (for example by not answering a compulsory question).

The following text is provided as an example:

[Where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. The board of examiners will consider all such cases so that consistent penalties are applied.]

3.6 Penalties for late or non-submission

[EAF 8.2; [ER 14](#)]

There should be a clear statement of penalties for late or non-submission of items, or non-completion of practical work. It should be made clear that non-submission of a required assessment for the FHS will result in failure of the whole FHS or in the case of an FHS assessed in Parts, the whole Part of the FHS. For the FPE and PGT programmes, it should be made clear that non-submission of a required assessment for the FPE or for the PGT programme will result in failure of the assessment with any resit capped at the pass mark.

The following text is provided as an example:

[The scale of penalties agreed by the board of examiners in relation to late submission of assessed items is set out below. Details of the circumstances in which such penalties might apply can be found in the *Examination Regulations* (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14.)

Lateness	Cumulative mark penalty
After the deadline but submitted on the same day	[insert mark deduction]
[insert time period]	[insert mark deduction]
[insert time period]	[insert mark deduction]
[insert time period]	[insert mark deduction]
More than 14 calendar days after the notice of non-submission	Fail

]

AND

[Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the whole Second Public Examination/Part.]

OR

[Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.]

3.7 Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter

[\[ER 16\]](#)

There should be a clear statement of the penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter if these are in place.

The following texts are provided as examples in relation to over-length work:

[Where a candidate submits a dissertation (or other piece of written coursework) which exceeds the word limit prescribed by the relevant regulation, the examiners, if they agree to proceed with the examination of the work, may reduce the mark by up to one class (i.e. from a 1st to a 2:1, or its equivalent).

OR

The Board has agreed the following tariff of marks to be deducted for over-length work:

Percentage by which the maximum word count is exceeded	Cumulative mark penalty (up to a maximum of [insert mark deduction])
Up to [insert value] %	[insert mark deduction]
Over [insert value] % and up to [insert value] %	[insert mark deduction]

Over [insert value] % and up to [insert value] %	[insert mark deduction]
For each further [insert value] %	[insert mark deduction]

]

3.8 Penalties for poor academic practice

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit with the board responsible for deducting marks poor academic practice i.e. for derivative or poor referencing. There should be a clear statement of the penalties for poor academic practice.

The following text is provided as an example:

[The scale of penalties agreed by the board of examiners in relation to poor academic practice is set out below.

Band into which each case falls	Mark penalty (Must be between 1 and 10% of the marks available)
Band A: [insert example case]	[insert mark deduction]
Band B: [insert example case]	[insert mark deduction]
Band C: [insert example case]	[insert mark deduction]

OR

The Examination Board shall deal wholly with cases of poor academic practice where the material under review is small and does not exceed 10% of the whole.

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit with the board responsible for deducting marks for derivative or poor referencing.

Determined by the extent of poor academic practice, the board shall deduct between 1% and 10% of the marks available for cases of poor referencing where material is widely available factual information or a technical description that could not be paraphrased easily; where passage(s) draw on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion (and examiners consider that this represents poor academic practice rather than an attempt to deceive); where some attempt has been made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography); or where passage(s) are 'grey literature' i.e. a web source with no clear owner.

If a student has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism the case must always be referred to the Proctors.

In addition, any more serious cases of poor academic practice than described above should also always be referred to the Proctors.]

3.9 Penalties for non-attendance

[EAF 9.3.1; [ER 14](#)]

There should be a clear statement of penalties for non-attendance at an examination. It should be made clear that non-attendance at an examination for the FHS will result in failure of the whole FHS or in the case of an FHS assessed in Parts, the whole Part of the FHS. For the FPE and PGT programmes, it should be made clear non-attendance at an examination

for the FPE or for the PGT programme will result in failure of the assessment with any resit capped at the pass mark.

[Failure to attend an examination will result in the failure of the whole Second Public Examination/Part.]

OR

[Failure to attend an examination will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.]

4. Progression rules and classification conventions

4.1 Qualitative descriptors of classes (FHS) / Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Pass, Fail (FPE) / Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Merit, Pass, Fail (PGT)

Qualitative descriptors should be given for classes for FHS examinations; for Distinction, Pass and Fail for FPE; and for Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail for postgraduate taught courses. Qualitative descriptors for bands of marks may be given as an alternative.

4.2 Classification rules (FHS) / Final outcome rules (FPE/PGT)

There should be a clear explanation of the classification rules/rules for obtaining the final outcome. This should include the weight accorded to each element of assessment and how the marks aggregate to produce the classification or final outcome. For example, papers may have equal weight and an average taken, papers may be weighted and an average taken, and/or there may be preponderance rules. There may also be rules that specify that no paper may be below a certain threshold.

In the light of the rules followed, a statement about the way in which the board of examiners undertakes consideration of borderline outcomes might also be included.

When provided for in the relevant *Examination Regulations* (i.e. MSt, MPhil and MSc) you should include a statement on the restrictions on the award of distinction or merit for candidates who have resat an element of assessment. You may wish to include the text below:

[Candidates who have initially failed any element of the examination will not be eligible for the award of a Distinction or Merit.]

4.3 Progression rules

[to be taken from the special Examination Regulations for the course]

The subject-specific *Examination Regulations* should state the rules for progression, for example, from one 'Part' to another within the FHS or from year one to year two of a two year Master's course. This information should also be provided or referenced in the examination conventions and may include more detailed information on the rules for progression. It should also be clear what happens if the student fails to meet the progression requirement.

4.4 Use of vivas

[EAF 10]

There should be a statement on the use and purpose of vivas where these are permitted by regulation. This should indicate whether vivas are to be used for all candidates, for candidates with outcomes on the borderline between particular classifications, or for failing

candidates. Such vivas should be distinguished from any requirement for an oral element of a standard examination which is marked or part of a marked component.

5. Resits

[EAF 13]

The *Examination Regulations* state the circumstances when a resit is permitted either in the general regulations or the subject-specific regulations. In the examination conventions there should be a clear explanation of the circumstances in which students are entitled to resit an element of assessment and when resits would take place, with cross-references to the relevant *Examination Regulations*. Where resit marks will be capped, this should be clearly stated. This includes where resit marks are capped following failure of an assessment as a result of non-submission or non-attendance.

For PGT courses where an assessment, or assessments, for an examination have been failed at the first attempt, students are entitled to one further attempt unless otherwise specified by the special regulations for a course. Marks for any assessment that has been successfully completed at the first attempt may be carried forward, and therefore it will only be necessary for students to re-sit the failed assessment(s).

The following text is provided as an example for FPE and PGT courses which do not cap resits following academic failure:

[Where a candidate has failed an assessment unit as a result of poor academic performance the mark for the resit of the assessment unit will be awarded on the merits of the work.

Where a candidate has failed an assessment unit as a result of non-submitting an assessment item or as a result of non-attendance at a timed examination the mark for the resit of the assessment unit will be capped at a pass.

In this context, an 'assessment unit' can refer to a single timed examination, a submission, other exercise, or a combination of assessment items. Where the assessment unit consists of more than one assessment item, for example a submission and a timed examination, if the candidate passes the submission but fails the timed examination, they are only required to resit the failed assessment item (in this example the timed examination) not all the assessment items for the assessment unit.]

6. Mitigating circumstances notices to examiners

[EAF Annex C: ER 13]

There should be a statement explaining the procedure that will be adopted for the consideration of mitigating circumstances notices to examiners made under Part 13 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations.

The following text is provided as an example:

[Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence

provided in support. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. Further information on the procedure is provided in the *Policy and Guidance for examiners, Annex C* and information for students is provided at www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance.]

7. Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

List the name, position, and institution of the external examiner(s) as well as the names of all internal examiners (but not assessors). In conjunction with this, however, the conventions should underline the fact that candidates must not under any circumstances contact examiners directly. The following text is provided as an example:

[Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.]

Appendix [optional]

Provide details of any operational information for examiners if required. This would not normally be provided to students.

Annex B: Consequences of non-attendance or non-submission

In the table below, 'assessment unit' can refer to a single timed examination, a submission, other exercise, or a combination of assessment items, and 'Examination' refers to all the assessment for the FPE, FHS, Part of an FHS, MSc, MSt, MPhil etc.

'Technical fail' refers to a fail due to non-attendance at an examination or non-submission of an assessment which is not excused by the Proctors. 'Academic fail' refers to fails decided by examiners on the basis of poor academic performance.

Assessment failed at first attempt	Reason	Resit arrangements	Automatic fail of whole Examination	Resit mark capped? ⁵	Comments
FPE assessment unit	Academic fail	Assessment retaken at next opportunity	No	No	If 50% of assessment units or more failed, all assessment units must be retaken. Exact requirements are described in special subject regulations.
	Technical fail	Assessment retaken at next opportunity	No	Yes	
FHS assessment unit	Academic fail	Resit only permitted if student not given classified outcome	Dependent on classification conventions	No	Some classification conventions state that a candidate with less than 30 on any assessment unit automatically fails the FHS. Resit arrangements for FHS with Parts are specified in special subject regulations.
	Technical fail	Resit of all assessment (for either whole FHS or Part of the FHS depending on subject)	Yes (either whole FHS or Part of the FHS depending on subject)	No	
PGT assessment unit (one item of assessment)	Academic fail	Assessment retaken at next opportunity	No	Dependent on special subject regulations	Ineligible for a distinction or merit overall
	Technical fail	Assessment retaken at next opportunity	No	Yes	

⁵ [ER 14.3\(3\)](#) 'Where a candidate is deemed to have failed a paper under this Part and the Examination is one in which Honours are not awarded or for Honour Moderations, for any further attempt at that paper that is permitted by regulation the examiners shall award a mark no higher than the pass mark (as defined for the Examination) for the paper'.

PGT assessment unit (two or more items of assessment)	Academic fail	Failed assessment item(s) retaken at next opportunity; passed assessment item(s) carried forward	No	Dependent on special subject regulations	Ineligible for a distinction or merit overall
	Technical fail	Failed assessment item(s) retaken at next opportunity; passed assessment item(s) carried forward	No	Yes – assessment item and assessment unit capped at pass	Both assessment item and assessment unit mark are specified as being capped for the resit to allow for differences in presentation on the transcript of assessment units with multiple assessment items. Ineligible for a distinction or merit overall

Annex C: Procedure for the investigation of plagiarism

Definitions

1. The Proctors' *Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations* state that:

No candidate shall plagiarise by presenting someone else's work as their own, or by incorporating other people's work or ideas into their own work without full acknowledgement. Examples of this practice include: verbatim quotation, cutting and pasting from the internet, and paraphrasing without clear acknowledgement; collusion; misleading citation; failure to acknowledge assistance; and unacknowledged use of material written by professional agencies or other persons. Unless specifically permitted by the Special Subject Regulations for the examination concerned, no candidate shall commit autoplagiarism i.e. submit to the examiners any work which he or she has previously submitted partially or in full for examination at this University or elsewhere. Where earlier work by the candidate is citable, he or she shall reference it clearly.⁶

2. The expanded University definition of plagiarism is as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism can also include re-using your own work without citation. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.

3. Specific forms of plagiarism that are also covered by these procedures are:

- **Autoplagiarism or self-plagiarism** is the use of one's own work in summative assessment that has been used towards other summative assessment. Unless specifically allowed in special regulations work that has previously (or simultaneously) been submitted for examination at this University or elsewhere should not be submitted for assessment again (with the exception of reworked re-submissions of failed papers where allowed). Even where acknowledged, any passages which re-use your own assessed work will be disregarded by examiners, and therefore may lead to reduced marks or failure of the assessment.
- **Collusion** is collaboration with someone else on an assessment which is intended to be wholly your own work, or the act of assisting someone else to commit plagiarism.⁷
- **'Contract cheating'** is where a student submits work to a higher education provider for assessment, where they have used one or more of a range of services provided by a third party, and such input is not permitted. The contract with the student can include payment or other favours, but this is not always the case.
 - 'Services' may include essays or other types of assignments, conducting research, impersonation in exams and other forms of unfair assistance for completing assessed work.

⁶ Statutes and Regulations, Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations, Proctors' Regulations 1, cl. 4 - <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/288-072.shtml>

⁷ Maguire C (2003) Guidance for BVC providers: a common approach to plagiarism and collusion London: Bar Council

- 'Third parties' include web-based companies or auction sites (essay mills), sharing websites (including essay banks), or an individual such as a lecturer, colleague, friend or relative.
- 'Input' means that the third party makes a contribution to the work of the student, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whose work the assessment represents.⁸

Prevention of plagiarism

4. Education Committee has agreed a strategy for preventing and dealing with plagiarism on the part of students, including responsibilities of faculties and departments, details of which can be found on the [Academic Support website](#).
5. An extensive set of web pages, including video resources on academic skills such as note-taking, referencing and time management can be found at www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills, and the Oxford Students website guidance on plagiarism can be found at www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism.

Purpose of the procedure

6. These procedures aim to deal with any concerns identified by examiners, or others, about the standard of scholarly referencing and attribution in submitted work. They are designed to operate proportionately, investigating and resolving concerns at the lowest appropriate level, and in a timely manner.
7. A flowchart illustrating the stages of the procedure is provided at the end of this annex and a table showing an indicative scale of penalties that might be applied and factors to be considered when assessing penalties are provided in paragraphs 36 to 42.
8. This guidance does not cover cases of poor academic practice and plagiarism in research degrees, as research degree students are advanced students for whom different procedures are appropriate. Cases of suspected plagiarism in research degrees should continue to be referred directly to the student's Director of Graduate Studies who shall determine if the case should be referred to the Proctor's Office.

Roles in the procedure

9. Boards of Examiners have a key role in ensuring that examiners are aware of how issues of potential poor academic practice or plagiarism might be present in examined work, local policies on the use of Turnitin, and what they need to do if they have concerns during the marking process. Chairs of examiners are responsible for receiving concerns and undertaking an academic analysis of the work and assessing the level and nature of concerns. If they refer the matters to the Proctors they will need to provide a detailed report of their analysis and of the sources for potentially plagiarised materials.
10. The Proctors are responsible for considering the information provided by the chair and determining whether the information discloses an apparent case of plagiarism, conducting an investigation and then determining an appropriate outcome, including referral on to the Student Disciplinary Panel in serious cases or where the outcomes for the student are severe.

⁸ Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education: How to Address Contract Cheating, the Use of Third-party Services and Essay Mills (October 2017) www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=f66af681_8

Level 1: Chairs of Examiners

Reporting concerns to chair of examiners

11. If a marker, or a Turnitin report generated in the course of the examination process, raises concerns about the proper attribution of a passage or the authorship of a piece of submitted work, the matter should be reported with urgency to the chair of examiners.

Chair decides whether poor academic practice or case requires reference to Proctors

12. The chair will compile and retain any evidence and decide whether or not the case is one which may be dealt with by the Board (poor academic practice) or whether it is one that requires reference to the Proctors for investigation and possible disciplinary action. This should be done as soon as possible after the report is received and should not be delayed until a meeting of the Board of Examiners. The chair may consult the Proctors for advice in cases where they are uncertain whether it warrants a referral.
13. If the concern has been identified by a high Turnitin score, the chair should follow the guidance on interpreting Turnitin reports⁹ to establish the report's accuracy.
14. If the concern has been identified by a marker, the Chair should examine the source the marker has referred to; or in the case of suspected collusion or copying between students, examine all pieces of work giving rise to this concern.
15. When considering the characteristics of the passages which have given rise to concerns the following table should be used to help determine whether the case should be dealt with by the Board as poor academic practice or referred to the Proctors for investigation:

Poor academic practice
Material under review must be a small proportion of the whole (as a guide will not exceed 10%)
Material is widely available factual information or technical description that could not be paraphrased easily
Passage(s) draws on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion. Likely to indicate poor English/poor understanding rather than an attempt to deceive.
Some attempt made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography).
Passage is 'grey literature', i.e. a web source with no clear owner
Student not known to have previously received a marks deduction for poor academic practice or been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism (<i>only relevant for Honour Schools examined in Parts, or Master's courses with multiple submission deadlines</i>).

Reference to Proctors
Extent of the material under review is a more substantial proportion of the whole (as a guide this will normally exceed 10%).
Material contains passages of analysis or research data that is clearly the intellectual property of the original author.
Passage(s) exhibits heavy reliance on one source which may indicate plagiarism of ideas/arguments.
Evidence that student has copied the development of an argument (which may not be verbatim quotation – it could involve paraphrasing a line of argument or sequence of points).
Evidence of copying or collusion between students.
Student has previously received a marks deduction for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism in the same or earlier programme of study.
The submission clearly infringes rules on resubmitting material (auto-plagiarism) for examination.

⁹ [Link to be inserted when revised guidance is complete]

Cases of poor academic practice

16. Where the Chair finds that the matter can be dealt with by the Board, assessors will mark the work on its academic merits. The Board will then deduct marks for derivative or poorly referenced work according to a pre-determined scale set out in the marking conventions.

- Boards are free to operate marks deductions of between 1 and 10% (maximum) of the marks available for that particular piece of work.
- In practice, it will often be difficult to operate very fine-grained distinctions and it is acceptable for examination boards to exercise their judgement within a small range of 'bands' e.g. on a 100 point scale a Board might judge cases to fall in one of three bands for which 3, 6, or 10 marks are deducted.

17. Where the consequence of the marks deduction would result in failure of the assessment and of the programme (i.e. failure at the second attempt) then this failing mark should be treated as would normally be the case, as the mark has been received due to the poor quality of the work submitted. The student would, however, be able to submit an academic appeal if they believe that the Board did not act within its own procedures.

Feedback to students

18. For their academic development, students should be informed that marks have been deducted for poor academic practice and an explanation should be given of where and how in their work this was evidenced.

19. This feedback should be provided via the chair of examiners to the Senior Tutor in the case of undergraduates, or the Course Director in the case of graduates. Students should also be reminded of the disciplinary regulations concerning plagiarism, and instructed to take (or re-take) the Plagiarism Awareness online course.

Referring cases to the Proctors

20. Where the Chair decides the case exceeds the criteria for dealing with at level 1 as poor academic practice, the case needs to be referred to the Proctors. When referring a case the following documentation must be prepared by the Chair, and submitted securely and separately for each case submitted to the Proctors Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk):

- a summary of the case for the Proctors including the relevant sources with an analysis of the extent, and seriousness of the plagiarism
- analysed Turnitin reports (including text-only version which links to sources rather than generic websites) and copies of any sources which are not readily available;
- a marked up copy of the assignment or assignments, to show the principal passages of concern;
- a clean copy of the assignment or assignments;
- copy of the declaration of authorship as signed by the student;
- course handbook and examination conventions;
- instructions for the assignment;
- any evidence of previous discussions of plagiarism with the candidate.
- in cases of students suspected of colluding or copying from each other, the Chair should examine the work of all the students involved, so that the nature of the apparent collusion can be established.

21. If a full case file is not provided to the Proctors (or reasons provided for any missing documentation) then it will be returned to the Chair for any additional materials to be collated before the case is considered.

Level 2: Proctors and Academic Conduct Appeals Panel

22. Examination Boards will refer cases to the Proctors if the chair has made a decision that a case exceeds the criteria for dealing with at Level 1 as poor academic practice.

Step 1

23. When all relevant materials have been submitted to the Proctors, the case will be given initial consideration by one of the Proctors who will determine whether:

- neither plagiarism nor poor academic practice has occurred and the work should be referred back for marking;
- the work should be referred back to the examiners to deal with at Level 1 as poor academic practice; or
- there is an apparent case of plagiarism and an investigation should be undertaken

Step 2

24. The Proctors' Office will normally notify the student of the referral to the Proctors within five working days, except when the student is currently undertaking examinations. In such cases, steps will normally be taken to delay notification until after any exams are completed so as not to have a negative impact on the student.

Step 3

25. As part of the investigation by the Proctors, the student will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations that they have committed a breach, and to provide evidence of relevant mitigating factors, at an interview with one of the Proctors. This will usually take place by correspondence, though the Proctor may require the student(s) to attend a meeting (either in person or remotely).

26. Except for the interview by correspondence, interviews with the Proctor will be conducted with a note taker in attendance. The student will be given the opportunity to review summary notes of the key topics raised at the interview and submit any further information for inclusion.

Step 4

27. The Proctor will normally try to conclude their investigation within one month of referral by the chair of examiners. They will consider all evidence submitted to them, the interview conducted with the student and any evidence of mitigating factors. They will determine whether or not the allegation of plagiarism has been substantiated and, if so, the appropriate penalty or referral.

28. The Proctor will have five options available to them, finding that:

- neither plagiarism nor poor academic practice has occurred, and the work should be referred back for marking
- the matter should be referred back to the examiners to be dealt with as poor academic practice
- minor or significant plagiarism has occurred and that a penalty should be applied from the following options:
 - reduction in marks for the piece of work
 - submission awarded 0% - resubmission required in order to conclude examination but mark not capped
 - submission awarded 0% - resubmission required in order to conclude examination and mark capped

- there is a case to answer that minor or significant plagiarism has occurred, but the potential impact on the student from the likely penalty is so serious (for example, that they would fail their course) that the matter should be referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel
- there is a case to answer that major or gross plagiarism has occurred and that the matter should be referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel

29. In any instance where plagiarism has been identified the student will also be directed to available support and training. The decision will be communicated to the student. At this stage the student will have a right of appeal unless the case has been referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel.

Step 5

30. Where the Proctor has applied a penalty the student will be able to appeal the decision by submitting a written appeal to casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk within 10 working days of the date of the Proctor's written decision on one or more of the following grounds:

- That the procedures were not followed properly, where the failure to follow the procedures was not trivial or insignificant
- That the Proctor reached an unreasonable decision (the student must identify which aspects of the Proctor's decision they consider to be objectively unreasonable and explain why)
- That the student has new material evidence that they were unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process
- That there was bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure
- That the penalty imposed was disproportionate, or not permitted under the procedures

31. Appeals against a Proctor's decision will be considered by a member of the Academic Conduct Appeals Panel (ACAP) with no previous connection to the case. If the Panel member considers that any additional subject expertise is needed to assist with reviewing the appeal then the Proctors' Office will make the necessary arrangements.

32. The Panel member will normally consider cases within 10 working days of an appeal being received. This will normally be a paper-based exercise.

33. The appeal will take the form of a reconsideration of the case and the Panel member will have the same potential outcomes available to them as to the Proctor who originally considered the case (including a more severe penalty within their range of powers, with the exception of direct referral to Student Disciplinary Panel). Where the effect of the penalty imposed by the Panel member may result in failure of the whole award, the case will be referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel in fairness to the student.

Level 3: Student Disciplinary Panel

34. The Student Disciplinary Panel (SDP) will deal with the most serious cases of plagiarism and will operate in accordance with its Statute and Regulations.¹⁰

35. Within its powers the Student Disciplinary Panel has available to it the following outcomes that are most likely to be considered in relation to plagiarism:

- reducing the mark awarded to any piece of work;
- awarding no mark to or disregarding any piece of work;
- substituting an alternative mark for any piece of work;
- reducing by one or more classes any degree classification;
- permitting a student to re-sit an examination or resubmit a piece of work on such conditions as it thinks fit;
- awarding a pass degree instead of an honours degree;
- failing the student in the whole examination or part of the examination concerned
- expelling the student member;
- recommending to Council that the student member be deprived of the degree to which the plagiarism relates

¹⁰ www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/352-051a.shtml#_Toc28142346
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/234-062.shtml

Indicative scale of penalties

36. This scale gives an indication of the type of penalty that might be applied in different levels of seriousness of plagiarism. It is indicative only and not intended to restrict chairs of examiners, the Proctors, or the Student Disciplinary Panel in the exercise of their judgement (within the bounds of their powers set by the Statutes, Regulations and University policy).

37. Decision-makers may also wish to take into account the weighting of the assessment within the award e.g. a short assignment that represents 30% of a paper may be more proportionately dealt with at Level 2 even if the plagiarism within the assignment would fit the definition of major plagiarism.

Level	Category	Examples	Lowest decision making body	Possible penalties
1	Poor academic practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor or inconsistent use of referencing conventions but all sources acknowledged in some way even if weakly (see also paragraph 14) 	Board of Examiners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deduction of marks up to 10% of the marks available
2	Minor plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collusion where there is no evidence of intent to deceive and where the shared material is minor in extent or importance Plagiarism which is minor in extent or importance, given the context of the piece of assessed work and how central the plagiarised passages are to the purpose of the assessment 	Proctors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in marks for the piece of work Submission awarded 0% (resubmission without marks cap)
	Significant plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collusion where there is no or only weak evidence of intent to deceive, but the shared material is significant in extent or importance Plagiarism which is significant in extent or importance, given the context of the piece of assessed work and how central the plagiarised passages are to the purpose of the assessment Plagiarism which involves some re-use of contextual data without acknowledgement. 	Proctors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission awarded 0% (resubmission without marks cap) Submission awarded 0% (resubmission mark capped at pass)

Level	Category	Examples	Lowest decision making body	Possible penalties
3	Major plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor or significant plagiarism in more than one paper taken at the same time • A second incident of minor or significant plagiarism • Plagiarism which is major in extent or importance, given the context of the piece of assessed work and how central the plagiarised passages are to the purpose of the assessment. • Plagiarism which involves substantial re-use of contextual data without acknowledgement. 	Student Disciplinary Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in marks for the piece of work • Submission awarded 0% (resubmission without resubmission cap) • Submission awarded 0% (resubmission mark capped at pass) • Reduction of degree classification (for original examination or re-examination)
	Gross plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any form of 'contract cheating' • A second incident of major (or gross) plagiarism • Major or gross plagiarism in more than one paper taken at the same time • Plagiarism which involves mis-representation of key data as the candidates own work (e.g. where it is relied upon in drawing research conclusions) • Collusion where there is strong evidence of intent to deceive • Plagiarism which is very substantial in extent or importance, given the context of the piece of work and how central the plagiarised passages are to the purpose of the assessment 	Student Disciplinary Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission awarded 0% (resubmission mark capped at pass) • Reduction of degree classification (for original examination or re-examination) • Failure of the whole examination (re-examination mark for one or more papers capped at pass) • Expulsion • Recommendation that the degree is removed

Factors to be considered when assessing penalties

Intent

38. The University's *Code of Discipline*¹¹ requires that breaches be undertaken 'intentionally or recklessly'. A reckless breach with regard to plagiarism may occur where a student's lack of care in producing an assessment including plagiarised material was unreasonable in light of the guidance made available to them regarding how to avoid plagiarism and of the referencing conventions of their subject. Intent is not required for the act to be considered plagiarism.
39. Evidence of a deliberate intent to deceive may be considered as an aggravating factor when determining the appropriate penalty from the range available. Lack of intent should not be considered a mitigating factor as students are expected to follow the guidance available to them.

Consequences of penalties

40. In determining an appropriate penalty, the relevant body should impose a penalty commensurate with the offence. Decision-making bodies should ensure that their penalty decisions do not have adverse unintended consequences as a result of the structure of the examination or the course. The consequence of penalties on a student's personal or financial circumstances should not normally be considered in relation to the determination of an appropriate penalty.

Mitigating circumstances

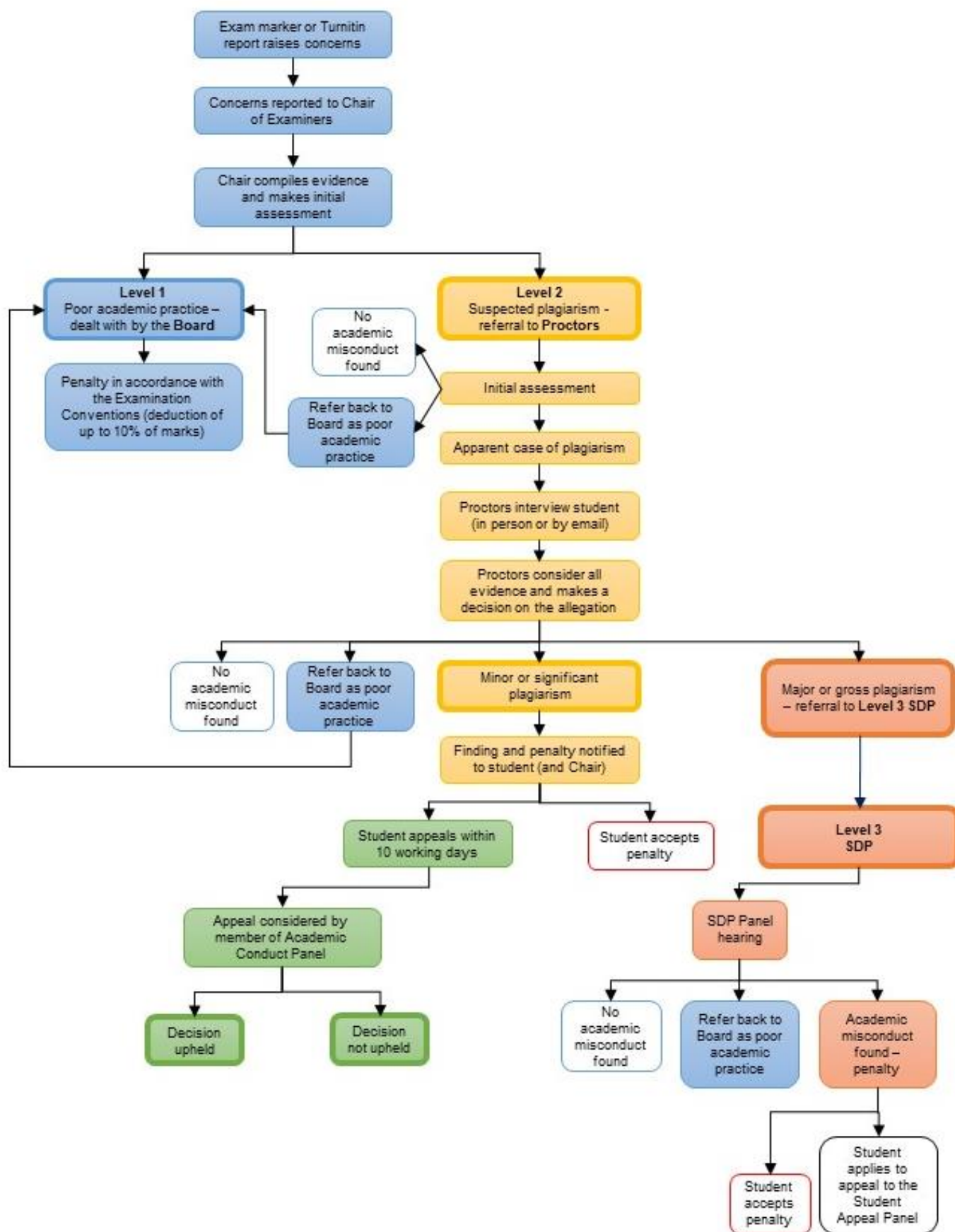
41. The University does not accept a student's medical or personal circumstances as an excuse or reason for committing plagiarism (other than in the exceptional case where a student's capacity for rational judgement has been impaired). However, the bodies responsible for imposing penalties may consider whether the penalty should be mitigated in the light of personal or medical circumstances out of the student's control where these are judged to have contributed to the commission of the offence.

Student's experience

42. The level of a student (first-year undergraduate, finalist, postgraduate, etc) is not in itself a relevant factor in determining the seriousness of the offence or the penalty to be imposed. However, the decision making body may, in appropriate circumstances, give due consideration to a student's experience of UK higher education (or equivalent).

¹¹ <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/352-051.shtml>

Process flowchart



Annex D: Competence standards

1. Competence standards can be defined as the ‘academic, medical or other standard[s] applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability’¹² in their course, or as ‘a particular level of competence or ability that a student must demonstrate to be accepted on to, progress within and successfully complete a course or programme of study.’¹³ A competence standard must not itself be unlawfully discriminatory¹⁴, therefore it must not be applied only to a disabled student and must be:
 - Genuinely relevant to the course;
 - Applied equally to all students, whether with or without a disability; and
 - A proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
2. The *proportionate means* component requires that:
 - There is a pressing need that supports the standard’s purpose;
 - The application of the standard will achieve that aim; and
 - There is no other way of achieving the aim that is less detrimental to disabled people.
3. The Equality Challenge Unit states that ‘Higher education institutions (HEIs) have responsibility for developing non-discriminatory competence standards, and designing a study programme to address these competence standards. HEIs also have the responsibility to ensure that assessment methods address the competence standards. Adjustments to ways that competence standards are assessed may be required so that disabled students are not put at a disadvantage in demonstrating their achievement.’¹⁵
4. Competence standards cannot be used to justify ‘direct discrimination’ against a disabled person. For example, a blanket refusal to allow a student to participate in any assessed experimental work merely because they are physically disabled would clearly be direct discrimination. Equally, it is important to ensure that competence standards are not indirectly discriminating against disabled students. The Equality Challenge Unit gives the example of requiring all students to write examinations by hand, which would put a student with arthritis at a disadvantage.
5. Not all competences or assessment criteria which students might be expected to fulfil on a particular course can necessarily be considered ‘competence standards’. For example, a language course may require that students spend a year abroad, but this requirement in itself is not a competence standard, and so is subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments. The competence standards are the knowledge and skills which the students are expected to acquire during the year abroad.¹⁶

¹² [Higher education provider’s guidance](#), Equality and Human Rights Commission

¹³ [Understanding the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments](#), Equality Challenge Unit (Advance HE)

¹⁴ Unlawful discrimination includes direct discrimination, which is never justifiable, and indirect discrimination or discrimination arising from a disability which cannot be justified in accordance with the numbered requirements set out in paragraph 2.

¹⁵ [Understanding the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments](#), Equality Challenge Unit (Advance HE)

¹⁶ Ibid.

6. *Examples of competence standards.* These will vary considerably between disciplines. Some courses need to comply with external standards set by the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body, which will feed into their competence standards. Some examples are included in the guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit on the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments.¹⁷ Competence standards include admissions criteria – such as having studied a modern foreign language – where these are valid requirements for the course. Ability to communicate well in the English language might also be a competence standard.
7. In the sciences, students may be required to undertake laboratory practicals or complete manual clinical tasks in order to achieve the learning outcomes for an award. A time limit may be imposed on the assessment of a fundamental skill where this is genuinely relevant and necessary, e.g. a clinical measurement or task. The Equality Challenge Unit gives the example of a chemistry degree which is primarily theoretical, in which ‘being able to manipulate test tubes or visually identify chemicals might not be a competence standard, and may be reasonably adjusted through provision of a practical assistant. However, in a pharmacy degree, training a student to achieve the practical competencies to become a pharmacist, the same tasks might constitute competence standards.’¹⁸ In some examinations, for example those assessing knowledge of and application of quantitative techniques, the format of the assessment may be restricted by the nature of the test. A timed, invigilated assessment may therefore be most appropriate when candidates are being tested on their crystallised knowledge and ability to select and apply relevant techniques and skills. Where candidates are expected to demonstrate competence in a variety of modes of assessment, it would be reasonable to state that, for example, submission of a research project or extended piece of writing formed one of the competence standards for the course.
8. Assessment methods should assess competence standards, and it needs to be considered whether a proposed reasonable adjustment compromises the competence standard in any way. For example, in an assessment testing students’ knowledge of the spelling and grammar of a foreign language, the Equality Challenge Unit suggests that it is unlikely that a student would be able to use a computer spelling and grammar checker in the relevant language as a reasonable adjustment, as this would compromise the competence standard.¹⁹
9. *Identifying competence standards.* Each course’s educational aims and the programme outcomes students are expected to achieve should be set out in the relevant course handbook. These provide the framework within which competence standards are applied in order to determine whether students have achieved the requirements for an award. Supervisory bodies should consider which aspects of the programme aims and learning outcomes may justifiably be considered competence standards, i.e. strictly relevant and necessary for course completion. This will involve identifying the particular knowledge, skill or ability which is being tested, and the appropriate standard required in order to obtain the award. A competence standard which does not meet the requirements of being genuinely relevant to the course, applied equally to all students, and a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim may be unlawfully discriminatory.
10. *Distinguishing competence standards and methods of assessment.* While competence standards are exempt from the obligation to make reasonable adjustments, the method

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

by which students demonstrate their attainment of a learning outcome is not itself a competence standard (although there may be rare occasions where the competence standard and the method of assessment are inextricably linked, e.g. a musical performance). Thus, requiring all candidates to complete a written exam within three hours would lead to indirect discrimination²⁰ and discrimination arising from disability²¹ against people with fatigue conditions, physical impairments, or learning disabilities unless it could be shown that the three-hour time limit met all the requirements of criteria (1) to (3) in paragraph 2 above. This would be unlikely in most courses given the variety of methods of assessment already accepted within the University, as well as the difficulty of demonstrating that an ability to write within a single particular time limit was an integral and irreplaceable component of the standards applied in order to determine whether the student has the required level of competence or ability. Failure to make adjustments to the mode of assessment for disabled students could therefore give rise to claims of discrimination, including a failure to make reasonable adjustments. By contrast, an ability to demonstrate synoptic knowledge of material studied over the course of one or two years is likely to be regarded as an acceptable competence standard. However, a method of assessing this knowledge which required high levels of stamina in order to complete a number of papers within a limited time scale would not be justifiable.

11. The identification of a course's competence standards is key to avoiding unlawful discrimination and enabling the University to meet its anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments (See Annex F: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements). Therefore, supervisory bodies must clarify the competence standards of their courses²². The Equality Challenge Unit 'recommends a collaborative approach to developing and reviewing competence standards. This will require input from those with particular knowledge of disability as well as from academic staff with subject-specific knowledge', and provides some guidance on this.²³

²⁰ 'Indirect discrimination' occurs when a policy, criterion or practice applied equally to all students has the effect of putting disabled students at a substantial disadvantage and is unlawful unless it can be justified as a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

²¹ 'Discrimination arising from disability' occurs where a person is treated less favourably as a result of their disability and the treatment cannot be justified.

²² The OIA has recommended that the University review its assessment criteria and processes with the aim of identifying appropriate competence standards for its courses.

²³ [Understanding the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments](#), Equality Challenge Unit (Advance HE)

Annex E: Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners

Examiners are able to consider mitigating circumstances, i.e. medical and other circumstances (including disability) that may have affected a candidate's performance in examinations and assessments. Examiners may then adjust a candidate's result if necessary.

Adjustments, required as a result of disability, to examinations and assessments as taken are covered in *Annex A: Major adjustments to courses and assessment requirements*.

Regulations

1. There are two applicable sections of the University's *Examination Regulations*.
 - **Part 13 Mitigating Circumstances: Notices to Examiners** relates to unforeseen circumstances which may have an impact on a candidate's performance.²⁴
 - **Part 12 Candidates with Special Examination Needs** relates to students with some form of disability.²⁵
2. Students can notify the examiners of mitigating circumstances due to the impact of any of the following on their performance:
 - sudden illness or accidental injury
 - more long-standing conditions which may or may not have resulted in alternative examination arrangements under Part 12 (see paragraph 3 below)
 - bereavement (usually the death of a close relative/significant other)
 - significant adverse personal/family circumstances, for which there is evidence of impact on their performance in examinations/assessments
 - other serious circumstances for which there is evidence of impact on performance (e.g. the impact of a crime).
3. Students who have in place alternative arrangements/major adjustments to assessment under Part 12, but who believe that those arrangements may not be sufficient to fully mitigate the impact of disability on their performance, either due to the nature of the disability, or as a result of a fluctuating condition, can use the mitigating circumstances notice to examiners procedure to make examiners aware of this.

Procedure for notifying examiners

4. Whether under Part 12 or Part 13, a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners should be submitted by the college on behalf of the student as soon as circumstances come to light. Candidates with alternative arrangements under Part 12 will not be considered under this mitigating circumstances process if they do not submit a separate mitigating circumstances notice. The Senior Tutor, or other nominated person, should guide the candidate in completing the candidate statement and in gathering appropriate evidence. The college may, but is not required to, include a college statement as part of the notice

²⁴ [Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 13 Mitigating circumstances: Notices to Examiners](#)

²⁵ [Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations: Part 12 Candidates with Special Examination Needs](#)

to examiners. Notices should be submitted through the Mitigating Circumstances SharePoint site (moving to eVision during 2019-20).²⁶

5. It is the candidate's responsibility to raise any issue that may have impacted on their performance with the designated college officer, to complete the candidate statement, and to provide appropriate evidence in support. Failure to do this in a timely fashion may jeopardise the examiners' ability to consider their case.
6. Colleges should remind candidates that their supporting evidence (e.g. a medical certificate) needs to provide explicit detail about the way(s) in which their circumstances affected/are likely to affect their examination performance, e.g. fatigue, poor concentration, panic attacks, etc.
7. In the case of notices submitted by candidates who also have in place alternative arrangements/major adjustments to assessment, colleges should provide a copy of the notification of approved adjustments, e.g. extra time, rest breaks, not taking exams in the morning, an amanuensis, etc. and the candidate should explain why the adjustments that have been made do not fully compensate for the effects of the illness or disability.
8. A University medical certificate is available for use as supporting evidence for mitigating circumstances notices to examiners. The template, and guidance for medical practitioners, is available at <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/medical-evidences-and-certificates>. Medical certificates supplied electronically will be accepted where the receiving officer is satisfied that the e-mail address from which the certificate is sent is a genuine UK NHS medical practitioner's or practice / hospital account (e.g. doctor.name@trust.nhs.uk or equivalent).
9. The mitigating circumstances notices to examiners process should not be used to make complaints about the conduct of examinations, and any such complaints should be referred to the Proctors for consideration (see section 15 of the *EAF*).

Timing of mitigating circumstances notices

10. Mitigating circumstances notices to the chair of examiners if they are received before noon of the day before the final meeting of examiners. Candidates and colleges should note that notices should be submitted as soon as the circumstances become clear and evidence is available (which may be well before the examination period, if the notice relates for example to a piece of work submitted earlier, or relates to the impact of a long-term condition for which it is felt alternative arrangements cannot fully mitigate). The deadline of noon the day before the final meeting of examiners is to allow for cases of acute illness or similar during the examination period itself, and submission of notices should not be delayed unnecessarily until this deadline if it is possible to submit them earlier.
11. Notices received after noon of the day before the final meeting of the examiners will be considered by the Proctors, and will only be passed on to examiners if received within **three months** of the publication of results **and** if one of the following criteria is met:
 - The candidate's condition is such as to prevent them from making an earlier submission;
 - The candidate's condition is not known or diagnosed until after the final meeting of the examiners;

²⁶ <https://sharepoint.nexus.ox.ac.uk/sites/eaas/eas>

- There has been a procedural error (beyond the candidate's control) that has prevented the candidate's information from being submitted.
12. If the Proctors decide not to pass on a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners, the regulations require them to give their reasons for their decision. A candidate or their college may appeal against a decision of this kind under the regulations governing appeals.²⁷

Consideration by a Mitigating Circumstances Panel

13. A subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') should meet to discuss the individual notices to examiners. Except for very small examination boards, the Panel should consist of a minimum of three members. In smaller departments, the entire exam board may need to act as the Panel. The Panel should band the seriousness of each notice to examiners on a scale of 1-3, with 1 meaning that the evidence indicates that the mitigating circumstances would have had a minor impact on the candidate's performance, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact.
14. The Mitigating Circumstances Panel should not consider examination scripts/submissions or marks, but should only consider the mitigating circumstances notices, i.e. it should consider the evidence regarding the mitigating circumstances rather than its impact on the actual work submitted. The role of the Panel is to evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence provided in support. The Board of Examiners will separately consider whether and how to adjust a candidate's results as a result of the mitigating circumstances, taking into account both the Panel's banding of the seriousness of the notice, and the scripts/submissions and marks.
15. When making its decision on the seriousness of each notice to examiners, the Panel should consider the following:

a) The circumstances and their relevance to examinations/assessment

- The types of circumstances which are likely to be covered in mitigating circumstances notices to examiners are covered in paragraph 2 above.
- In the case of health issues or bereavement, it may be helpful to consider whether the circumstances would have resulted in sick or compassionate leave in an employment context.
- The Panel should take into account that relatively minor illnesses, which might have resulted in one day's absence in an employment context, could be judged as being likely to have had a very serious impact on a candidate's performance (band 3) for an examination taking place on the day of the illness.
- The Panel should also take into account any evidence provided on how the impact of the circumstances has already been mitigated (e.g. if an extension has already been granted for a submission).
- As set out in paragraph 3 above, candidates who have had alternative arrangements/major adjustments to assessment but who believe that those arrangements may not be sufficient to fully mitigate the impact of disability on their

²⁷ [Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 18 Appeals Against Decisions of the Proctors and Examiners](#)

performance, may submit a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners. The Panel's banding decision for such candidates should take into account the strength of the evidence that the alternative arrangements/major adjustments to assessment have not fully mitigated the impact of the disability or illness. This might be the case if the candidate has a very serious disability/long-term health condition; if they have a fluctuating condition and were particularly affected during the examination/assessment period; or if an examination adjustment itself has had an adverse impact on the candidate's performance (examples might include the fatigue caused by taking examinations with extra time; the experience of lengthy extended supervision; and frequent interruptions due to the need to take rest breaks).

- The Panel should consider how the timing of the circumstances relates to the examination period/deadline for submission, including to the preparation period for the assessment, and whether it is reasonable to conclude that the circumstances described would be likely to have an impact on a candidate's performance.
- The Panel should also note whether all or a subset of papers appear likely to have been affected, based on the evidence provided regarding the timing (since it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers).

b) Strength of the evidence

- All evidence should clearly demonstrate that the student was affected at the time of the examinations/assessment and/or in the preparation period, and provide explicit detail about the ways in which the circumstances would have affected the candidate's performance.
- For health issues, medical evidence, normally from a college doctor, should be supplied. This will be stronger if it was generated at or near the time of the circumstances, and if it is based on the medical practitioner's examination of the student, rather than only reporting the student's views.
- Please note that in cases of acute illness (e.g. a relatively minor illness on the day of an examination), evidence from a college nurse should be accepted and considered to be appropriate.
- In cases where the notice to examiners indicates that a student completed only part of a paper, chairs of examiners should note that they can request the invigilator's log for the examination in question from the Examinations and Assessments team as supporting evidence (e.g. the log will note if a candidate left the examination room due to illness).
- Other appropriate evidence might include a statement from the Disability Advisory Service or Counselling Service, in the case of long-term conditions, or a statement from the police or a solicitor, in the case of a crime.
- In the case of bereavement, a copy of a death certificate might be supplied, although a statement from a doctor or from the Counselling Service could also be accepted as appropriate evidence.
- In the case of adverse personal/family circumstances, the Panel should note that it might be difficult for the student to provide appropriate evidence other than a statement from their college. A detailed statement from the college, which might

include what it has done to help the student, should be accepted as appropriate evidence in such cases.

- The presence or absence of a college statement should not in itself be taken as indicating the seriousness of the notice to examiners, as there is no requirement for such statements to be included as part of the notice.
- Colleges should not comment on the academic performance of a student, and if they do, the Panel should not take this into account.
- Evidence in a college statement may be useful in explaining any issues with obtaining other evidence, or in providing evidence regarding what help has already been given to the student due to their mitigating circumstances.

16. It is at the discretion of the chair of the board whether all attendees at the Mitigating Circumstances Panel should see all the evidence supplied with a mitigating circumstances notice.

17. For courses where marks are released at multiple points throughout the academic year, and for multi-part examinations, it is permissible to hold more than one Mitigating Circumstances Panel meeting, prior to the relevant board of examiners meeting. All notices relating to the same papers should be discussed at the same meeting.

18. Since the Mitigating Circumstances Panel meeting will often take place several days prior to the final board of examiners meeting, there will be occasions where notices are received prior to the deadline of noon the day before the final meeting of examiners, but after the Mitigating Circumstances Panel meeting. On such occasions, it may be appropriate to hold a further Mitigating Circumstances Panel meeting immediately prior to the final examiners meeting, if it is not felt appropriate for the whole board to consider these notices.

Consideration by the board of examiners

19. The banding information agreed by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel should be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. The board of examiners should take into account both the banding information and the scripts/submissions and marks.

20. When deciding what action to take as a result of a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners, examiners may wish to consider one of the following. Examiners are not required to take the possible actions suggested below, but are always expected to consider very carefully the circumstances that affected the candidate's performance on the relevant examination/assessment dates and/or in the preparation period, and to determine whether those circumstances are likely to have affected the candidate's results to the extent that any adjustment should be made.

Actions	Guidance
A. Disregarding a paper or papers and finalising results on the basis of the remaining work	<p>This is most likely to be appropriate in cases of acute illness, where it is clear that performance in a particular paper affected by that illness is weaker than other papers. It is likely that it will normally be appropriate to allow only one paper to be disregarded while still allowing results to be finalised on the basis of the remaining material, although exceptionally it may be appropriate to disregard more than one paper. Where a paper is disregarded, its mark should be reported as 'no result expected' rather than as zero.</p>
B. Finalising the mark for a paper or papers taking into account all available material	<p>This could mean finalising a mark for a paper on the basis of the number of questions actually completed rather than the number of questions required, where there is evidence that a particular paper was affected. It is likely that this will be appropriate for papers where at least half of the questions have been completed.</p> <p>Examiners should not otherwise change the mark for an individual paper, but may, under C below, award a higher classification or permit the student to progress, where the student would otherwise have been just below the boundary for classification or progression. If such threshold requirements have been extended or reduced, and it is not considered appropriate for the mark for an individual paper to appear on the student's transcript, the examiners should report the mark as 'no result expected'.</p>
C. Reviewing the classification/overall outcome requirements (giving particular consideration to candidates who are just below boundaries for classification or progression)	<p>Where there is evidence that a candidate's performance has been affected over one or more papers and this leaves them just below a classification or progression boundary, examiners may consider whether they should be awarded the higher classification, or allowed to progress (e.g. permitted to progress to the FHS, or to the final Part of a multi-part honours school, despite not having met the usual threshold for doing so).</p> <p>This may include extending the threshold usually used for consideration of boundary cases, or reducing the requirements for progression or for classification in the higher band. This should not be considered if individual adjustments to papers have already been applied (such as those under A and B above), to avoid double compensation.</p> <p>Where a candidate has submitted evidence that they were significantly affected for an assessment or assessments but the examiners do not consider it appropriate to give the assessment a passing mark (or to disregard the assessment), and the resit attempt would ordinarily be capped, the examiners may recommend to the resit board that the resit attempt should not be capped.</p>

D. Passing the notice to the examiners of the final results/classification meeting	<p>For early parts of multi-part exams, and exams which release final marks throughout the course, the mitigating circumstances notice must be passed to the final exam board which will make the final classification decision, so that the board can consider whether the final classification should be affected. However, this should not preclude examiners for the earlier parts from also considering notices if this is felt appropriate, e.g. to determine eligibility for progression.</p> <p>If a candidate's circumstances are considered more than once (e.g. at the meeting for an earlier part and at the final meeting), this should be recorded, with the decisions made at the different stages made clear.</p> <p>A confidential record of previously submitted medical evidence will need to be kept, including any action taken, e.g. on a password-protected spreadsheet, for use in the final classification meeting.²⁸</p>
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21. It is likely that in most cases no further action will be required for notices in band 1. Students will be informed that their notice to examiners has been considered but that no adjustment has been made. Examiners should note that it is also possible for there to be clear evidence of moderate or even very serious impact on a student (bands 2 or 3) but also for there to be no appropriate action which the examiners can take, and therefore for no adjustment to be made. The banding information will reflect the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment and the strength of the evidence, and not whether an adjustment can or should be made.
22. Examiners should note that it is possible to review the banding information provided and decide to take action if, on consideration of both this information and the candidate's marks, it appears that the original band does not reflect the impact on the student. This is likely to be appropriate if the original banding information reflects minor impact, but performance in a particular paper is demonstrably weaker than others, and the evidence shows that this paper was affected by the mitigating circumstances described.
23. In circumstances where there has clearly been serious impact on a student but there is no action which the examiners can take, they may wish to consider whether to recommend that an application is made to Education Committee for appropriate dispensation. For example, examiners are not able to decide that an attempt should be set aside, but in some circumstances an exam board may be unable to pass the candidate at resit but be sympathetic to a candidate being given an exceptional third attempt at an assessment. In such cases, the exam board should not contact the candidate's college but should contact the Proctors' Office who will pass the information on and advise on the possibility of an application to Education Committee. This maintains the integrity of the examination. Examiners should also note the option, under C in the table above, of recommending to a resit board that the resit attempt should not be capped.

²⁸ Under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018, sensitive personal information must be kept securely and accessed only on a 'need-to-know' basis. Adequate security measures must be observed, e.g. the information must not be copied to laptops or memory sticks and taken off the premises (c.f. the University's Policy on Data Protection at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>).

24. When considering the impact of a disability upon a candidate's assessment, it is appropriate to bear in mind the relevant equality law. For candidates who submitted a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners having already been granted alternative arrangements/major adjustments for disability, examiners should be aware of *Annex A: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements*, particularly paragraphs 5-8 and 22-24. Universities are obliged under the Equality Act 2010 (and its predecessor the Disability Discrimination Act (1995, amended 2001, 2005)) to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. The only exception to this is in the application of a competence standard. However, there are limitations on what may fairly be judged to be a competence standard and in nearly all cases reasonable adjustments must be made to the way in which the standard is assessed (also see *Annex D: Competence standards* for further details).
25. If the candidate has missed any papers, the chair should ensure either that authorisation to consider the candidate for an estimated classification has been received from the Proctors, or that notification has been received that no such authorisation will be given (see section 11.7.4 of the *Exams and Assessment Framework*).

Record-keeping

26. A formal record should be kept using the proforma provided below confirming (a) the fact that information about mitigating circumstances has been considered by the examiners, (b) how that information has been considered (i.e. the information that has been taken into account, and the conclusions that have been drawn from that information), and (c) the outcome of the consideration with the reasons for the decisions reached. This should be available as part of the minutes of the examiners' proceedings. Exam boards should record this information on the pro forma available at the end of this annex.
27. The outcome should be entered onto eVision for publication to students with results via Student Self Service. Further guidance on recording the outcome on eVision is available at <https://examshandbook.admin.ox.ac.uk/home>.
28. This procedure should be part of the information published for candidates in the published examination conventions, and should be clearly communicated to them. It should allow appropriate involvement by the external examiner(s) who should be in a position to certify the fairness of the procedure followed.

Report on a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners

This report should be used to record actions taken for each candidate for whom the board of examiners has received a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners under Part 12 or 13 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/2019-20/rftcofunivexam/>). A separate report should be completed for each candidate. Guidance for examiners on how to deal with such notices is available in *Annex E: Consideration of Mitigating Circumstances by Examiners* of the Exams and Assessment Framework (<https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/examiners>).

Candidate Number:	
Section 1: Evaluation of seriousness of notice to examiners - to be completed at Mitigating Circumstances Panel meeting	
Examiners should take into consideration the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence. See paragraphs 13-18 of <i>Annex E: Consideration of Mitigating Circumstances by Examiners</i> of the Exams and assessment framework (https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/examiners).	
In the view of the examiners, how serious is the impact of the mitigating circumstances given in the notice likely to have been?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 = minor impact <input type="checkbox"/> 2 = moderate impact <input type="checkbox"/> 3 = very serious impact
Do some or all papers appear likely to have been affected, based on the evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/> All papers <input type="checkbox"/> Subset of papers
If a subset of papers, specify which. (Note: It is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers.)	
Reasons	
Section completed by	
Date	

Candidate Number:			
Section 2: Report of action taken - to be completed at results confirmation meeting			
Guidance for Boards of Examiners is available in paragraphs 19-28 of <i>Annex E: Consideration of Mitigating Circumstances by Examiners</i> of the Exams and assessment framework .			
Have the examiners considered the candidate's performance in the light of the material provided in the mitigating circumstances notice to examiners, and the evaluation of the seriousness of the notice by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel?			
How have the circumstances been considered?			
Summary of action taken (boards may decide to take one, some, or none of these actions.)			
Classification/overall outcome requirements reviewed, including progression requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments	
Notice passed to the final results/classification meeting (this must be done for early parts of multi-part exams, and exams which release final marks throughout the course)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments/ recommendation to future examiners	
Paper(s) disregarded and results finalised on the basis of the remaining work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify paper(s)	
Mark for paper(s) finalised taking into account all available material (e.g. mark finalised on the basis of the number of questions actually completed rather than the number of questions required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify paper(s)	
Other action (Please specify)			
Reasons for action (if notice has been considered but no adjustment made, please record this and state reason.)			
Section completed by			
Date			

Annex F: Major adjustments to course and assessment requirements

1. This annex provides information on major adjustments to course and assessment requirements, made on the grounds of disability or complex mitigating circumstances. Such changes require approval on behalf of Education Committee.
2. In this annex, further information is provided on the University's legal responsibilities with regards to disabled students, the types of adjustments approved for students, and the normal procedures to be followed in considering applications for such adjustments.

Legislation

3. Equality legislation²⁹ requires that universities must not discriminate against disabled students. Discrimination includes treating a disabled student less favourably and failing to make 'reasonable adjustments'. Universities are also subject to the public sector equality duty³⁰, the effect of which is to require universities to promote and embed disability equality proactively across institutional policies, procedures and practice³¹.
4. The University is therefore required to put 'reasonable adjustments' in place with regards to examinations and assessments for disabled students, to ensure that they are not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage' in comparison with their non-disabled peers. It should be noted that it is permitted for disabled students to receive favourable treatment compared to a non-disabled student, if this results in the removal or mitigation of a disadvantage.
5. Universities are not required to make adjustments which would compromise the academic 'competence standards' of the courses in question. For more information on competence standards, see Annex D: Competence standards.
6. Candidates with eligible long-term health conditions continue to be regarded as disabled even when they have been deemed well enough to resume study or assessment, and the duty to make reasonable adjustments continues to apply.

Key definitions

7. A **disability** is defined as a condition which has a long-term (has lasted for 12 months or is likely to do so), substantial (not minor or trivial) and adverse impact on an individual's capacity to undertake normal day-to-day activities. Disability covers a wide variety of

²⁹ The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995, amended 2001, 2005). In amending the DDA, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) introduced the concept of 'reasonable adjustments' to the provision of higher education. The 2005 revision to the DDA placed a 'positive statutory duty' on public bodies (including the University) to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons and to avoid disability-related discrimination (among other obligations). All these provisions were incorporated into the Equality Act, together with a broader public sector equality duty.

³⁰ The public sector equality duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between people with a 'protected characteristic' and those without. 'Protected characteristics' are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

³¹ The EHRC has published guidance for higher education providers which is available from <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/higher-education-providers-guidance>.

conditions, encompassing long-term illness (often from the point of diagnosis) as well as physical or psychological problems, e.g.

- Vision or hearing impairments;
- Physical impairments such as paraplegia, cerebral palsy, repetitive strain injury (RSI) and arthritis;
- Mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders;
- Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder. These conditions do not need to be shown to have a substantial adverse effect on 'normal day-to-day activities' as it is accepted that they will in all cases significantly affect students in higher education;
- Long-term health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, epilepsy, inflammatory bowel disease/Crohn's disease, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME, multiple sclerosis and cancer. A person with such a condition continues to be regarded as disabled despite fluctuations in the severity of their condition or, in the case of cancer, after recovery.

Case law has indicated that undertaking examinations is considered to be a day-to-day – rather than specialised – activity³².

8. **Reasonable adjustments** are central to the concept of disability equality. Where a disabled student suffers – or would suffer – a substantial disadvantage, the University is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to overcome that disadvantage. The intention is that the adjustments should 'level the playing field' for the disabled student. It is important that adjustments meet the needs of the individual disabled student rather than providing a generic response to a class or type of disability. Once implemented, adjustments do not provide automatic precedents for other students, but may be taken into account when considering what would be appropriate in a different case. The duty is anticipatory which means that the University should not wait until it is asked to consider what adjustments might be made, but should be ready – where feasible – with solutions to overcome disadvantages. The failure to make reasonable adjustments cannot be legally justified and if an adjustment is deemed to be reasonable then it must be made.
9. **Competence standards.** There is no obligation to make adjustments to competence standards. Competence standards can be defined as the 'academic, medical or other standard[s] applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability'³³ in their course or as 'a particular level of competence or ability that a student must demonstrate to be accepted on to, progress within and successfully complete a course or programme of study'³⁴. A competence standard must not itself be unlawfully discriminatory³⁵, therefore it must not be applied only to a disabled student and must be:

³²Paterson v The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis (2007) UKEAT 0635/06.

³³ Equality Act 2010, Schedule 13, 4(3). Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission for higher education providers is available at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/higher-education-providers-guidance>.

³⁴ Guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit on the interaction between competence standards and reasonable adjustments is available at www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/understanding-the-interaction-of-competence-standards-and-reasonable-adjustments

³⁵ Unlawful discrimination includes direct discrimination, which is never justifiable, and indirect discrimination or discrimination arising from a disability which cannot be justified in accordance with the numbered requirements set out in paragraph 5.

- Genuinely relevant to the course;
- Applied equally to all students, whether with or without a disability; and
- A proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

10. The proportionate means component requires that:

- There is a pressing need that supports the standard's purpose;
- The application of the standard will achieve that aim; and
- There is no other way of achieving the aim that is less detrimental to disabled people.

11. Further information on competence standards is provided in Annex D: Competence standards.

Reasonable adjustments to examination arrangements

12. Reasonable adjustments to examination arrangements are approved by the Proctors or by the Examinations and Assessments team under delegated authority from the Proctors. These include adjustments such as:

- Use of a computer or other assistive technology in written examinations
- Extra time for written examinations
- College sittings for examinations
- Rest breaks in examinations
- Use of ergonomic furniture
- Permission to take food, drink or medication into the examination room

13. Disabled students undertaking practicals or clinical assessments can be provided with an adapted laboratory environment, permitted the use of assistive technology, or allowed extra time to complete non-time critical elements of the task³⁶.

14. Advice on reasonable adjustments to examination arrangements should be sought from the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) and, if necessary the Proctors, well in advance of the examination. DAS will provide recommendations for support arrangements and adjustments to study conditions – normally these will be set out in the Student Support Plan.

Major course adjustments

15. Major course adjustments should be considered when a candidate's disability-related needs cannot be met by alternative examination arrangements, and more significant adjustments requiring dispensation from the regulations may be required. Such adjustments must be approved by or on behalf of Education Committee. The committee

³⁶ The latest edition of the General Medical Council's guidance to medical schools 'Gateways to the Professions. Advising medical schools: encouraging disabled students' (GMC, 2014) contains a comprehensive Appendix with numerous examples of the reasonable adjustments made for medical students in UK medical schools. (www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/gateways_guidance.asp)

has delegated authority from Council to approve the necessary dispensations. Examples of major course adjustments requiring approval include:

- A student being allowed to extend the overall period of time within which a course is normally taken, e.g. to spread assessment for a Final Honour School across three rather than two years.
 - A revised assessment schedule being approved for a student requiring extra time to complete submitted work.
 - An alternative method of assessment being permitted for one or more assessment items. This often entails finding alternatives to unseen written examinations, such as extended essays, take-home papers or an additional dissertation.
 - An alteration to the timing or duration of an assessment being permitted e.g. splitting an examination over more than one session.
 - A student being exceptionally permitted to omit one or more papers from the normal assessment requirement. This can be done on the basis that the examiners are content that they will have sufficient material on which to reach a classified outcome.
16. Such changes can be approved on the grounds of disability or complex mitigating circumstances. For instance, a student may have a number of health and/or personal issues (e.g. bereavement) which would not qualify as a disability, but would have a significant, long-term effect on their studies.

Application process for major course adjustments

17. Applications to Education Committee should be made as early as possible. Further guidance on how to apply for dispensations from Education Committee (via the Education Policy Support team) is available from the [Academic Support Website](#). Generally applications for undergraduate students should be sent from the college, and applications for graduate students should be sent from the department or faculty. It is normally expected that the college and department or faculty will have liaised regarding the proposed adjustments before it is sent to Education Committee. In most cases the college, department or faculty should also have discussed the application with DAS.
18. The application should set out in detail the adjustments being requested and should include the appropriate medical or other specialist evidence. The evidence should confirm the nature of the disability or complex mitigating circumstances, and the likely impact on a student's capacity to undertake all or parts of a course. The evidence should provide sufficient detail to enable those concerned to take a view on the reasonableness of the request, in particular the need for and effectiveness of the requested adjustments. The application should also generally include a statement from DAS.
19. Education Policy Support (EPS) officers will ask the relevant supervisory body/board of examiners to comment on the adjustments proposed. In giving its view, the supervisory body/board of examiners should refer explicitly to the competence standards for the award.
20. The aim of the process is to secure a way forward which is acceptable all round, although the final decision rests with Education Committee. The decision is taken on behalf of Education Committee (normally a policy officer in Education Policy Support or the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) acting on its behalf) in the light of all the information

provided, and all parties are informed. The college or department/faculty informs the student.

21. If a student is not content with the decision that is reached, they can appeal against it to two members of Education Committee (who have not previously been involved in the decision). Ultimately recourse would be to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education³⁷.
22. The requirement when considering applications for major adjustments is to identify what would be fair and reasonable for the student concerned in their individual circumstances, while maintaining the academic standards of the course. Approval for a particular application should not therefore be taken as providing an automatic precedent for another student. Each case is considered on its merits.
23. Fairness to other candidates is ensured by taking very seriously the requirement not to compromise the competence standards of the course. The identification of a course's competence standards is therefore key to avoiding unlawful discrimination and enabling the University to meet its anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments (see Annex B: Competence standards for further guidance). Supervisory bodies are urged to clarify the competence standards of their courses in order to be better prepared for applications for major adjustments to the mode of assessment³⁸. This will make it easier to determine the most appropriate assessment for a disabled candidate.

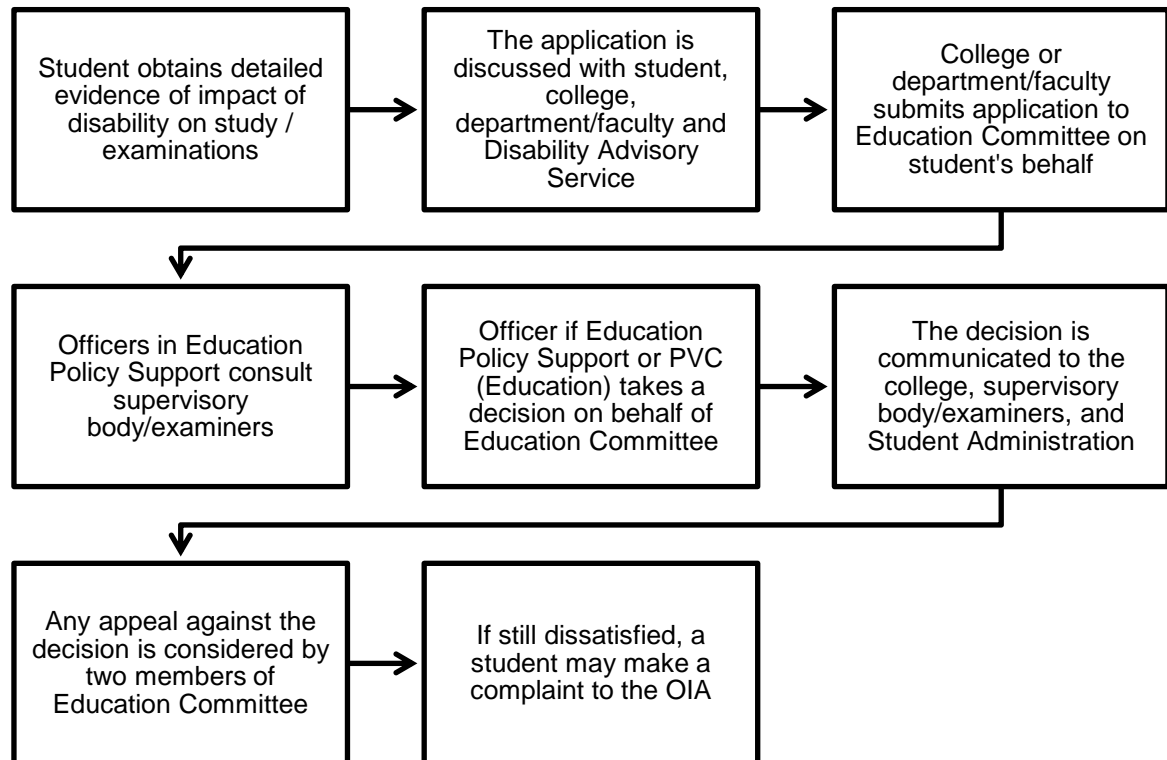
Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners (MCE) for candidates with major course adjustments

24. [Part 12 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations](#) allows candidates both to apply for special examination arrangements, and to ask for their condition to be taken into account as a mitigating circumstance which may affect their performance in examinations.
25. This means that even when alternative examination arrangements, including major adjustments which were approved on behalf of Education Committee, have been implemented to take account of a candidate's condition, the candidate, through their college, may submit a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners.
26. It is accepted that examiners cannot assess undemonstrated performance and that candidates should not receive double compensation. Nevertheless, when a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners is received from a student with major adjustments to examinations and assessment, examiners are asked to take a view as to whether the adjustments are likely to have fully compensated for a candidate's condition and allowed them to demonstrate their ability. See Annex C: Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners for further guidance on the procedures to be followed in the consideration of these notices.

³⁷ www.oiahe.org.uk

³⁸ The OIA has recommended that the University review its assessment criteria and processes with the aim of identifying appropriate competence standards for its courses.

Requesting major adjustments to course or assessment requirements



Summary of sections and annexes to be transferred to other locations from the P&G Examiners

Sections

The University's approach to assessment	Transfer to P&G UGLT & PGT
1.3 Role of Education Committee	Removed – streamlining
1.7 Essential information	Removed – streamlining
1.9 Areas requiring particular attention	Removed – streamlining. Issues requiring particular attention in any given year should be addressed by a circular.
Parts of section 6 Preparing the examination: Preparing papers, Production of question papers for timed examinations, Proof-reading of CRC, Security, special requirements, printing of examination papers	Operational guidance not policy – move to E&A website.
Parts of section 7 Examination entries, timetables and withdrawals: entering candidates, entry information, late entry to examinations and alteration of options, candidate numbers, draft timetables, published timetables, individual timetables for candidates, use of calculators in examinations, bilingual dictionaries,	Operational guidance – move to E&A website
Sections 8.3. to 8.7 on alternative exam arrangements	This section has been simplified pending the review of policy in this area and a planned new annex for 2020-21. Most is already available elsewhere.
9.2. Instructions for submissions	Operational guidance not policy – move to E&A website
Exam operations, parts of section 10: Presence of examiners, Timing, Seating and attendance of candidates, candidates who enter or leave the room, paper in an examination, announcements, candidates personal possessions, candidate dress, conclusion of an examination, packaging, delivery and collection of scripts	Operational guidance not policy – move to E&A website. Key policy provisions briefly retained. Subfusc requirement retained in policy but detail of how improperly dressed students are dealt with removed.
Parts of section 11: Transparency and confidentiality, GDPR, retention of records, records for the future, security, deposit and retention of scripts/submissions,	Operational guidance not policy – move to E&A website. Simplified policy provisions incorporating changes from HT TDP incorporated.
Parts of section 12: Results lists, results spreadsheet/file sheets, transcript of results	Operational guidance not policy – move to exams handbook
Parts of section 13 on formative feedback	Transfer to P&G UGLT & PGT – as relates to formative not summative assessment

Annexes

D	Rationale for Final Honour Schools without a second year examination	May be incorporated in P&G UGLT
E	Good practice guide to assessment design	May be incorporated in CTL work on assessment design
F	Form of report on examinations	Move to E&A website
H	Appointment of assessors	Incorporated into main EAF document as core policy
J	UK-wide criteria for appointing external examiners	Incorporated into main EAF document as core policy
K	Protocols for VOIP use in examiners' meetings	Move to E&A website
L	Production of camera ready copy of examination papers	Move to E&A website
M	Framework for the use of WebLearn to manage submission of assessment	Move to E&A website
N	Retention of records declaration form	Move to E&A website
P	Resources	Move to EAF landing page on website