University of Strathclyde Glasgow

PROCEDURE FOR MARKERS AND BOARDS OF EXAMINERS IN THE EVENT OF WIDESPREAD, SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS **2**

PROCEDURE **4**

INTRODUCTION 4

CONTEXT 4

DECISION MAKING 6

ADJUSTMENTS TO MODULES 8

CHANGES TO THE PROCEDURE FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ACADEMIC MITIGATION BY A BOARD OF EXAMINERS 8

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT WELLBEING 9

FLEXIBILITY FOR EXTENSION REQUESTS 9

PROTECTING ACADEMIC STANDARDS 9

GENERAL SUMMARY GUIDANCE 10

APPENDIX A – GUIDANCE FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS **11**

GENERAL PRINCIPLES 11

GUIDANCE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS RE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS 12

GENERAL GUIDANCE/FAQS FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS IN THE EVENT OF WIDESPREAD, SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION 13

Board of Examiners Meetings 13

Board of Examiners Quorum 13

Convenors Experiencing Challenges Attending a Board of Examiners Meeting 14

External Examiner Unable to Attend a Board of Examiners Meeting 14

External Examiner Resignation Due to Industrial Action 15

Ensuring Rigour of Marking 16

Managing Cases Where Only Partial Assessment Profiles Are Available 16

Minimum Level of Credit Required for a Student to Progress 17

Impact on the Award of Academic Compensation if Not All Marks Are Available 17

Handling Personal Circumstances 17

Information Recorded by Boards of Examiners 18

Managing Variations Within Student Cohorts 18
Challenges in Board of Examiner Judgements with Missing Results 19
Relaying Board of Examiner Decisions to Student Lifecycle Services 19
Reconvening Boards of Examiners Once More Marks are Available 19
GUIDANCE FOR FINAL HONOURS BOARDS 19
External Examiner Participation 19
Classifying Degrees With Missing Results 20
Student Graduation Without Confirmed Degree Classification 20
Perceptions of a Devaluation of the University's Degrees 20
GUIDANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE YEAR 1,2 & 3 PROGRESSION BOARDS 20
Progressing Students in Periods of Disruption 20
GUIDANCE FOR PGT BOARDS OF EXAMINERS 21
Awarding Merits or Distinctions 21
Motivational Merits and Distinctions 21
GUIDANCE FOR PGR EXAMINERS 21
Examining Committee (Viva Voce or Orals) Schedules 21
PGR Examining Committee Quorum 21
Examining Conveners/Internal Examiners of Examining Committees 22
APPENDIX B – ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS: EXAMPLE FROM DISRUPTION CAUSED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC 23

PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. This Procedure is designed to be utilised during periods of significant disruption that have a widespread impact across the University. Disruption affecting individual students is managed via personal circumstances. Disruption involving part of a cohort of students is managed locally by faculties, under the scrutiny of Executive Deans and Vice Deans, with actions reported to Faculty Academic Committees.

2. Widespread, significant disruption may arise from, but is not limited to, the following:

    a. UK and Scottish Government restrictions, such as occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic;
    b. Widespread illness throughout the University community, for example an outbreak of influenza;
    c. A critical incident, for example a terrorist attack that limits access to campus and/or facilities;
    d. Extreme weather conditions, limiting access to campus and/or facilities;
    e. Industrial action undertaken in relation to the University, and/or more widely, such as to transport links;
    f. Widespread energy restrictions or blackouts.

3. This Procedure details practice and guidance for markers, (those assessing work and/or acting as Internal Examiners), at Module and Programme level and for members, Conveners and Managers of Boards of Examiners. The University Guidance for Boards of Examiners in the Event of Widespread Disruption in Appendix A also provides useful information for those managing and taking part in Boards of Examiners and Examination Committee meetings.

4. This Procedure is intended for use where challenges have affected students at a cohort level, which trigger a major disruption to learning, teaching and/or assessment.

5. This Procedure applies to all taught programmes of study at undergraduate and postgraduate level. It also applies for resit assessment periods.

CONTEXT

6. During periods of widespread, significant disruption, the University Executive Team carefully monitors the impact of this, across Departments and Faculties and within the student community. Strathclyde commits to always placing its students at the forefront of decision-making and planning, and will always seek to deliver the best possible learning and student experience within any rapidly changing external environment, dealing with any constraints that emerge. At all times the health, safety and wellbeing of the whole University community is of paramount importance to the University.

7. During any period of widespread, significant disruption, the University will seek to ensure that no students are academically disadvantaged. In previous periods of widespread,

significant disruption, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21 and 2021/22 for example, the University took a supportive and flexible approach in managing situations where students were finding it challenging to engage with their studies due to personal circumstances arising through the pandemic.

8. In the event of any widespread, significant disruption, the University will develop guidance for staff and students, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic. These documents will focus on planning for learning and teaching and adjusting assessment requirements. The utilisation of such policies during a period of widespread, significant disruption, will be approved by Senate. A standing set of Guidelines to Support the Learning and Teaching of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students During Periods of Disruption offers guidance to staff to enable planning and to ensure enhanced support for students during such periods of disruption. Supplementary guidance may be produced by the University during particular periods of widespread, significant disruption, to further support the student experience.

9. Markers and Boards of Examiners play a crucial role in ensuring appropriate outcomes for students, whilst upholding academic standards. They are vital in ensuring that students' circumstances are considered, and any trends across modules are identified, to ensure that appropriate progress and outcome decisions are made, and that academic standards continue to be upheld.

10. Faculties have arrangements in place for ensuring that students' personal circumstances are considered ahead of Boards of Examiners meeting. In cases of widespread, significant disruption it is important that Boards of Examiners are empowered to make decisions regarding student progression and outcomes within a sympathetic framework, considering personal circumstances and other circumstances outwith students' control, such as technical challenges and restricted access to Library resources, which may have adversely impacted on assessment activities. In such cases, Senate will indicate to Conveners of Boards of Examiners that such an approach should be taken.

11. Through this Procedure, the University seeks to facilitate decisions which are supportive and student-centred, within our wider commitment to support the student experience. Further, the University recognises the need to ensure consistency where possible and to establish a position of managed difference where variations need to apply, particularly in respect of awards where professional accreditation and recognition are core.

12. On behalf of the Board of Study, the Executive Dean and Vice Dean (Academic) of each faculty, working with Programme Teams, have oversight to ensure marking practices are quality-assured in line with University policy and procedures; to ensure equity in Board of Examiners processes and to maintain standards while allowing flexibility to support the particular circumstances of each discipline area at the programme level. Module and programme teams will consider all the information and wider circumstances in which assessments were undertaken and be supported by University guidance on how to reflect this in determining module and programme results. Collectively, this information will be central to the decision making of Boards of Examiners.

13. This Procedure is intended to create an overarching framework within which Faculty Boards of Study, through Boards of Examiners can, with the authority of University Senate, make progression decisions and approve awards. This formal Procedure has

been produced following instruction from the Executive Team to support the awarding of degrees without conventional formally timetabled on campus final assessment, under the auspices of Ordinance 3.3 and in line with our academic regulations.

14. Section 3.3 of the Ordinances of the University of Strathclyde outlines the Conditions of Award for the qualification for admission to a Degree of the University. Section 3.3.3 articulates the role of Boards of Study and Senate in approving and authorising awards without final examination in exceptional circumstances.

DECISION MAKING

15. This Procedure provides the flexibility for Boards of Examiners to draw on information from previous years, particularly in making award decisions. It provides a framework which is intended to provide consistency in student experience, while recognising the need for variation, in particular where professional accreditation and recognition are core. Module and programme teams will consider all the information and wider circumstances within which assessments were undertaken and be supported by University guidance on how to reflect this within decision-making on module and programme results. Collectively, this information will be central to the decision making of Boards of Examiners. This will support transparent decision making and communication with students.

16. In exceptional cases where Boards of Examiners and Boards of Study cannot reach consensus, Senate Business Committee, in consultation with the respective Faculty, will discuss and agree how particular cases may be resolved.

17. The process for passing such cases to the Senate Business Committee is that the Convener of the Board of Examiners writes to the Vice-Dean (Academic) of the Faculty concerned, to inform them that a decision could not be made by the Board of Examiners. The Convener will need to provide the Vice-Dean (Academic) with the following documentation:

    a. The student mark profile;
    b. Information on any personal circumstances submitted by the student, either via Pegasus or directly to the Programme Team;
    c. Confirmation of arrangements put in place at programme and module level in response to any widespread, significant disruption as deemed appropriate, particularly in relation to assessment arrangements;
    d. The decisions taken by the Board of Examiners in relation to the remainder of the cohort;
    e. An overview of the decisions taken in previous academic years for recent programme cohorts, highlighting any profiles that bear a resemblance to that of the student being considered, and incorporating detail on any wide-spread disruption experienced during respective academic sessions;
    f. A detailed record of Board of Examiners discussions regarding the student;
    g. A summary as to why the Board of Examiners was not able to reach a consensus for the student.

18. In conjunction with the Executive Dean, the Vice-Dean (Academic) will review the information and will convene the Board of Study, usually via correspondence, to discuss

whether it is necessary for Senate Business Committee to consider this case or whether the Board of Examiners should meet again to re-evaluate its position.

19. In cases where the Board of Study decides to escalate the matter to Senate Business Committee for a final decision, they should write a brief overview detailing why they support the decision to escalate to Senate Business Committee and set out any actions they have taken with the Board of Examiners before making this decision. They should also inform the student, in writing, of the delay to the decision being taken and confirm expected timescales in relation to a decision being communicated, in liaison with the Senate Business Committee Manager.

20. All documentation should be submitted to the Quality Enhancement & Assurance Team who will liaise with the Convener of Senate Business Committee on each case. Following consideration of a case by Senate Business Committee or the Convener, the Committee Manager will inform the Vice-Dean (Academic) of the outcome. The Vice-Dean (Academic) is subsequently responsible for liaising with the Programme Team and Student Lifecycle Services to ensure that the decision is communicated to the student.

21. The University recognises that each student is an individual with their own specific circumstances and that widespread, significant disruption will impact different communities of students in differing ways. The University's approach to supporting student progression and outcomes takes account of these differing factors and, in the event of widespread, significant disruption, guidance on managing student progression will build on the foundations of the supportive and sympathetic approach taken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

22. During periods of widespread, significant disruption, and subject to confirmation from the University's Senate of the following approach, Boards may have additional discretion in considering the following:

    a. The number of credits which can be compensated[1];
    b. The threshold for which compensation can be considered;
    c. The discretion to reduce the Credit Weighted Average (CWA) threshold for compensation to 40% for undergraduate students and 50% for postgraduate and level 5 students, where this is in the best interests of the student and in alignment with Faculty-specific guidance relevant to the subject;
    d. Where appropriate, the number of credits that can be carried forward for progression[2].

23. In addition to the supportive measures above, in periods of widespread disruption, Boards will continue to exercise discretion that is conventionally available and informed

[1] This applies to undergraduate, up to and including Level 5, and postgraduate study. The University's Policy on Compensation Scheme states that *an undergraduate student who has achieved a credit weighted average of at least 45% but has failed one or more modules shall be awarded a* ***Pass by Compensation*** *in classes totalling up to 20 credits where the marks obtained are in the 30%-39% range.* For postgraduate students the policy states, *a postgraduate student who has achieved a credit weighted average of at least 55% but has failed one or more modules shall be awarded a 'Pass by Compensation' in modules totalling up to 20 credits where the marks obtained are in the 40-49% range.*

[2] Decisions to allow students to carry additional credits will be communicated such that students are clear of the risks and implications of proceeding pending the outcome of outstanding results or resits.

by the consideration of individual personal circumstances in the progression or award decisions for each student. Where appropriate, this includes the discretion to exclude modules from the calculation of a CWA, which inform progression and award decisions. The Board may also decide to discount a student's attempt, where it is appropriate and in the best interest of the student to do so[3]. Together, all of these measures reflect a sympathetic and supportive approach that is informed by the Faculty/Programme's Academic Mitigation Board.

24. In cases where widespread, significant disruption is known about ahead of a Formal Assessment Period, Departments will be asked to contact their students to ensure that, where appropriate, all personal circumstances records are up to date and logged in their Pegasus record.

25. With the student experience at the heart of the University's approach to learning and teaching and assessment activities, Strathclyde will ensure that mechanisms are put in place to further support students in their studies during periods of widespread, significant disruption, an example overview of which can be seen in the diagram in Appendix B.

ADJUSTMENTS TO MODULES

26. In periods of widespread, significant disruption, the University recognises that the mode of delivery of planned learning and teaching activities may need to be altered, which may include a shift in the balance of online and on-campus activity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, substantial guidance and training was provided to Programme Teams and Module Leaders on how to utilise learning technologies to deliver learning and teaching activities, alongside consideration of how to introduce alternative forms of assessment. In the event of any future widespread, significant disruption requiring a pivot to blended or fully online learning, updated guidance and training will be provided as required.

27. In the event of widespread, significant disruption, Programme Teams will make significant efforts to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment continue to ensure all our students are able to achieve the required learning outcomes and qualifications in line with original, planned timescales. All amendments to learning, teaching and assessment plans and procedures are fully reviewed prior to formal approval to assure academic quality and standards; including professional and accrediting body requirements. This process ensures that Programme Teams have detailed oversight of module activities and assessment which, when considered along with any personal circumstances, ensure appropriate evidence is available to support decision making by Boards of Examiners.

CHANGES TO THE PROCEDURE FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ACADEMIC MITIGATION BY A BOARD OF EXAMINERS

28. In periods of widespread, significant disruption, the University recognises the potential impact on students which, in some cases, may adversely impact mental health and general wellbeing.

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[3] An **attempt discount** allows a future attempt at the module, as a first attempt, without a fail appearing on the academic transcript for the discounted attempt. The exception to this case is where a student would otherwise receive a compensated pass. In this case the student will be awarded the compensated pass and will retain the option to have this removed and an Attempt Discount applied.

29. To support students experiencing specific individual challenges during periods of significant, widespread disruption, the University reviews its requirements for logging personal circumstances and for providing medical evidence, and updates the Personal Circumstances and Academic Mitigation web page with this information. In instances where changes are made to the personal circumstances requirements, additional guidance will be issued to staff and students.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT WELLBEING

30. The University has a focus on student and staff wellbeing, signposting support and encouraging students to make use of the specialist support services available. Together with appropriate use of the Procedure for the Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a Board of Examiners, a range of services are in place to support students to achieve their academic potential, supported by appropriate adjustments where required. The University's Disability & Wellbeing Services has a range of advisers with specialist expertise in disability, health, mental health, wellbeing and counselling. They offer a broad range of support to students with any disability, mental health and wellbeing related needs and the services are available to all students.

FLEXIBILITY FOR EXTENSION REQUESTS

31. During periods of widespread, significant disruption, Departments are required to put in place mechanisms for considering requests for extensions to assessment deadlines in a fair and sympathetic manner. Staff fully appreciate that there are various ways in which any such disruption may impact on students' time and their study environment, which in turn could affect their ability to meet set assessment deadlines.

32. In instances where students are experiencing challenges due to widespread, significant disruption that may impact on their ability to meet assessment deadlines, they will be advised to submit an extension request via Myplace in line with the Policy and Procedure on Extensions to Coursework Submission. At the direction of Senate or the Executive Team, Extension Approvers are expected to consider such individual requests sympathetically.

PROTECTING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

33. Every student journey at the University of Strathclyde is unique and we have a fundamental responsibility to make certain that we uphold our academic standards and the quality of our award, in turn ensuring the value of the degree that students are awarded upon graduating.

34. The University reports annually on its academic provision to the Scottish Funding Council and is reviewed on a cyclical basis by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Scotland. These processes are designed to scrutinise the University's academic provision for students and to verify that the degrees we are awarding are of an appropriate academic standard. The University also has well established internal review processes to confirm that learning and teaching standards are in line with those set out in external frameworks, benchmarks, and professional body requirements.

35. In response to widespread, significant disruption, the University will carefully adapt and evolve its quality assurance processes to ensure that students are not academically disadvantaged by circumstances that are beyond their control, while maintaining appropriate quality and standards of its academic provision.

GENERAL SUMMARY GUIDANCE

36. Decisions taken by Boards of Examiners will be based on academic judgement and therefore not subject to appeal on these grounds, in line with the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

37. Further Guidance, both broad in scope and specific to level of study, is set out below in Appendix A: Guidance for Boards of Examiners.

38. An illustrative example of enhanced support put in place to support students during the widespread, significant disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic is provided in Appendix B.

APPENDIX A – GUIDANCE FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

39. This document contains guidance for all staff and external examiners involved in Boards of Examiners activities during periods of widespread, significant disruption.

40. As much information as possible must be provided to the Boards of Examiners on any circumstances that students have made them aware of (i.e. connectivity problems, lack of access to equipment/materials, etc.).

41. Progression and award decisions taken by the Board of Examiners will be informed by the review of assessment requirements undertaken by the Programme Leader, and communicated to students.

42. Where a decision is taken at a module-level to provide a grade based on incomplete information, the Board of Examiners should record this, indicating the information that was considered in reaching the grade.

43. Where a progression or award decision is taken by the Board of Examiners based on incomplete information, the Board must record this, indicating the information and considerations that determined the award made.

44. Boards of Examiners will consider the balance of assessment undertaken to date.

45. Boards of Examiners will be able to review student performance on the basis of existing information including:

    a. Examination marks to date;
    b. Coursework;
    c. Tutorials;
    d. Labs;
    e. Projects;
    f. Dissertations, including where the original activity is not fully completed.

46. Boards of Examiners will consider personal circumstances, including the special circumstances of students whose home environment may adversely impact on their ability to engage in assessment activities.

47. These Guidelines allow the University to make evidence-based decisions, which is consistent with our academic regulations and maintains the academic standards, rigour and value of our degrees. In doing this, the University will make decisions based on all the evidence available and in students' best interests, to confirm academic progression or in support of the conferment of awards, to facilitate transition to future employment and/or further study within the originally intended timescales.

GUIDANCE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS RE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

48. In the event of widespread, significant disruption to study, the University's position is that every effort will be made to ensure any teaching, assessment or examination activities proceed as normal, with students being able to progress to the next stage of their programme, or, being awarded their degrees, as appropriate. In such circumstances the normal position is that the majority of modules are unaffected, and all assessments and examinations proceed as normal.

49. This Guidance to Boards of Examiners is provided to minimise the adverse impact to students of disruption to study without compromising academic standards. It should be acknowledged that there may be some disruption where there is a significant and widespread impact on the delivery of modules, and on the ability of students to undertake scheduled assessments and examinations, either through missed lectures/tutorials, through illness/self-isolation or in response to government advice to universities.

50. In previous periods of widespread, significant disruption, Senate has approved the following approaches, focused on further student support mechanisms, namely:

    a. Adjustments to modules;
    b. Changes to the Procedure for the Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a Board of Examiners;
    c. Support for student wellbeing;
    d. Flexibility for extension requests;
    e. Formal assessment adjustments;
    f. Guidance for staff.

51. Where Boards of Examiners cannot meet in person during periods of widespread, significant disruption, Departments and Faculties will arrange for Boards of Examiners to take place online. Where graduation ceremonies are unable to take place in person, the University will facilitate graduations in absentia. Degree certificates will be made available electronically to students.

52. This contingency planning is in place to provide guidance on expectations, supporting consistency of practice and maintaining the academic standards of the University in instances where significant disruption occurs.

53. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption document. In the event of significant and widespread disruption to study and assessment, the following principles should be considered:
    a. Faculties and Departments are encouraged to adopt consistent guiding principles in dealing with students in assessing taught elements of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. In the aforementioned Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption document, the University has set out guiding principles for managing alternative assessments and examples of ways in which this can be achieved;
    b. Actions should be supportive of students and a reasonable and sensible approach to difficult circumstances arising from disruptions should apply;

c. Boards of Examiners may need to be accepting of some marks and assessment results being returned and available later than normal; in particular, in instances where assessment tasks and submissions have been amended, extended or rescheduled;
d. Any penalties and actions should be applied fairly for students and not adversely impact on progression or award where the work is of a pass standard;
e. Departments should make decisions based on the guidelines and on the basis of overall prior attainment of students to date;
f. Where required, priority will be given to supporting Final Year and Postgraduate students where assessments lead to award outcomes. This should be prioritised in decision making by Boards of Examiners';
g. Where possible and appropriate, it is anticipated that this Guidance will be applied consistently across and within Faculties; particularly where students are on joint programmes and where assessment is outwith their "home" Department.

54. The University's approach to disruption is to minimise the impact on students, without compromising academic standards. Supplementary guidance documentation may be produced for Boards of Examiners and Markers, depending on the circumstances. This Guidance should be read in the light of overarching principles where the academic judgement of the Board of Examiners will remain paramount, and the academic standards of the University will be maintained.

GENERAL GUIDANCE/FAQS FOR BOARDS OF EXAMINERS IN THE EVENT OF WIDESPREAD, SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION

Board of Examiners Meetings

55. In the event of widespread, significant disruption, Boards of Examiners meetings should take place in accordance with the current schedule. It may be that it is necessary to hold meetings with a core group of members via video link, or alternatively to hold meetings via correspondence. Even if the outcome of the meeting is that there is insufficient or incomplete information available for the Board to take any decisions, it is important Boards meet as scheduled as far as possible. Boards may find there is more information available than they expect, allowing them to finalise decisions for many students. Boards will be expected to take any decisions that can be made, as soon as they can.

56. In cases of severe and extraordinary disruption, the Convener of the Board of Examiners, (or a senior internal examiner as designated by the Head of Department), may be given delegated approval from Senate to make decisions on behalf of the Board, which would be recorded and reported to Senate by the Faculty Vice-Dean (Academic) for the Faculty Board of Study. Conveners who find themselves in this position are encouraged to seek advice from Faculty Offices, Vice-Deans (Academic) from within or outwith their faculties, Deputy Associate Principals and the Director of Education Enhancement or nominee.

Board of Examiners Quorum

57. Boards of Study are responsible for the establishment of Boards of Examiners in accordance with the University's Regulations. The constitution and operational procedures for General Boards of Examiners are determined locally in accordance with University Regulation 1.10, with Quality Assurance Committee delegating authority to

Heads of Department for these local determinations. The rule of thumb for determining whether a meeting is quorate (e.g. Court, Senate, Boards of Study and University Committees of Senate) would normally be if a minimum of one third of the membership were present. Although there is no published convention for progression Boards of Examiners, there is an expectation that Boards should comprise a Convener, Minute Secretary and at least one internal examiner.

58. For Graduate Diplomas and other programmes requiring Graduate Entry and for Postgraduate Awards by Instruction, the Boards of Examiners shall consist of not less than four persons, including an External Examiner and academic staff responsible for the conduct of the programme. It shall normally meet under the Convenership of the Programme Lead or Head of Department (see General Academic Regulations for Graduate and Postgraduate Awards, Regulation 92).

59. There may be instances where it is necessary for a senior and experienced member of academic staff to make decisions on Board of Examiners outcomes.

60. Internal and External Examiners should assume a Board will meet as normal and that they should attend remotely or in person, unless otherwise informed by the Convener, the Secretary or the Head of Department.

Convenors Experiencing Challenges Attending a Board of Examiners Meeting

61. If a Convener does not feel able to convene a Board of Examiners meeting due to an absence from the University, they must alert their Head of Department as soon as possible, so that an alternative Convener can be identified.

External Examiner Unable to Attend a Board of Examiners Meeting

62. The Convener of the Board of Examiners should take an account of the overall engagement of the External Examiner throughout the year in conjunction with students' overall performance and profile; this will assist the Board in undertaking its duties, maintaining standards and making its decisions in line with expectations for progression and awards. This is outlined in Section 2 of the University's Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption (extracted below).

63. Factors the Convener will consider, include confirmation that the External Examiner has engaged in some or all of the following:

    a. Review of programme materials and assessment procedures;
    b. Comment on the content of assessments to ensure that they are appropriate to the learning outcomes of the module to be assessed;
    c. Comment on assessment criteria provided;
    d. Moderation and comment on any work at an earlier stage in the academic year;
    e. Worked with other members of the External Examiner team at any other stage in the academic year;
    f. Participation in meetings with students;
    g. Participation/involvement in oral examinations;
    h. Attendance at any other Boards of Examiner meetings at any other stage in the academic year;
    i. Already signed off marks, progression decisions and awards agreed by the Board of Examiners.

64. An active involvement is normally expected from the External Examiners in the business of the Board. The views and comments of External Examiners should be made known to the Boards of Examiners. Where an External Examiner is not able to attend a meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Head of Department or Programme Leader should seek the views and comments from the External Examiner in advance and in writing. The External Examiner(s) for the degree programme in question may sit on the Board or provide their input in alternative ways.

65. The precise role of the External Examiner is specified in section 7 of the Procedures and Guidelines for External Examiners of Taught Programmes and is stated below:

    a. External Examiners provide the University with an objective point of reference, and report annually on:

        i. whether the academic standards set by the University are being maintained and whether the University's students are achieving the required standard;
        ii. whether the assessment process measuring student achievement is rigorous, consistent and fair to the students and has been fairly conducted within the University's regulations, policies and guidelines;
        iii. the comparability of academic standards and student achievement with those in similar institutions with which they are familiar;
        iv. whether the aims and objectives of the programme(s) are appropriate in terms of academic and professional subject matter, with reference as applicable to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, subject benchmark statements, the qualifications framework and the requirements of professional and statutory bodies;
        v. whether the assessments enable learners to demonstrate the achievement of the intended Learning Outcomes and whether the curriculum remains current and supports students in the acquisition and development of key skills.

66. If an External Examiner is unable to undertake their duties and resigns from their post, due to widespread, significant disruption, it may be possible to reappoint said External Examiner to their post at a later date.

External Examiner Resignation Due to Industrial Action

67. If an External Examiner resigns their post due to industrial action, the resignation should be accepted with no expectation of a resumption of duties. A period of no less than three years must elapse before re-appointment can be considered. In cases where an External Examiner does resign, Departments should attempt to utilise alternative External Examiners to provide cover, where appropriate, or should initiate the nomination and approval process.

68. As outlined in paragraph 59 of the Procedure & Guidelines for External Examiners of Taught Programmes, payment of external examiner fees will only be processed once the annual report has been submitted. Therefore, if an External Examiner resigns their post before attending the Board of Examiners meeting and submitting their annual report, they will not be eligible to claim fees.

69. In cases where there is not enough time to appoint another External Examiner before the Board of Examiners meeting, any available previous input from the External Examiner during the academic year should be conveyed to the members of the Boards of Examiners, if available, for example, sampling of assessments, comments on draft examination scripts, responses to updates on previous annual reports etc.

Ensuring Rigour of Marking

70. The University has procedures to ensure marking is carried out in line with rigorous academic standards and is based on clearly defined assessment criteria. In the majority of circumstances, the University expects programme teams to operate as usual in relation to assessment and moderation. However, during instances of extraordinary disruption it may be necessary to consider student profiles at Boards of Examiners where it has not been possible to implement in full the University's Policy on Moderation and Double Marking. Unless there are concerns about an individual student's performance, in which case moderation of marks will be required, the absence of moderation activities should not preclude an award or progress decision being made.

Managing Cases Where Only Partial Assessment Profiles Are Available

71. Where sufficient results are available to allow an academically robust decision on performance to be taken, Boards will be expected to do so. It is the case that Boards ultimately have the discretion to exercise academic judgement and to reach the decision that they deem best reflects the student's academic performance.

72. Students are normally permitted to carry no more than 20 credits into the next year; however, Regulation 7 of the General Academic Regulations for Undergraduate, Integrated Masters and Professional Graduate Degree Programme Level states that exceptionally, the relevant Board of Study acting on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners may allow a student to proceed to the next year with fewer credits than specified in Regulations 66-69, or in the higher progress requirements stated in that student's programme regulations, although only for good cause shown. In extraordinary periods of significant, widespread disruption, the Boards of Examiners may decide that students are allowed to progress to the next stage of their studies without having undertaken all credit-bearing assessments.

73. In accordance with Regulation 47, the award structure of UG programmes shall normally accord with the following:

Award	**Credit Requirement**	**Minimum level of requirement**
CertHE	120 credits	100 credits at Level 1
DipHE	240 credits	100 credits at Level 2
Ordinary Degree	360 credits	60 credits at Level 3
Honours Degree	480 credits	90 credits at both Level 3 and 4

Minimum Level of Credit Required for a Student to Progress

74. In accordance with Regulation 66 the minimum number of credits permitted for progression is outlined below:

Progression	**Credit Requirement**
First – Second Year	100*
Second – Third Year	220*
Third – Fourth Year	360+
Fourth – Fifth Year	480+

* Or 20 credits less than the number specified in the relevant Programme Regulations
\+ Or the total number of credits specified in the relevant Programme Regulations

75. As outlined in paragraph 30 above, in cases of extraordinary significant, widespread disruption, it may be appropriate to allow a student to proceed to the next year of study with less than the standard credit requirement. If this decision is undertaken on an individual basis by the Board of Examiners, this would require careful management with a programme of support and progress review put in place. In these cases, students would 'Proceed' and be viewed as at risk. The implications and degree of risk associated with proceeding in these circumstances should be carefully explained to students by programme teams, (i.e. of failing to meet the required standard for progression, the basis on which they are being allowed to progress, and what this does or does not mean for their final degree award). The wording of progress decisions requires to be such that students are clear of the risks and implications of proceeding pending the outcome of outstanding results or resits.

76. If students are permitted to proceed to the next year of study due to a University-wide decision on the matter, students will not be considered as proceeding at risk, as outlined in paragraph 76,and will simply progress to the next stage without the caveats detailed.

Impact on the Award of Academic Compensation if Not All Marks Are Available

77. There may be implications for the award of academic compensation when the final credit-weighted average mark (CWA) is not yet known due to missing marks.

78. Students may be required to re-sit a module for which, had the CWA been known and above the required threshold (45% for undergraduates and 55% for postgraduate taught programmes), a compensated pass could have been awarded for that module, as outlined in the Policy on Compensation Scheme. Where sufficient results are available to allow an academically robust decision on performance to be taken, Boards will be expected to do so.

Handling Personal Circumstances

79. Boards of Examiners should be provided, at the start of the meeting, with a detailed note of available information on the effects of any disruption on teaching schedules and the marking of examinations or assessment so that this can properly inform the Board's discussions. Boards of Examiners must take a sympathetic approach to considering student outcomes, progression and final awards and will take account of personal

circumstances that have been made known to them.

80. In circumstances concerning sensitive matters, personal circumstances may be made known to the Board by a designated member of staff, and not formally reported through the Pegasus system. While the detail of the circumstances will not be shared with the Board, the designated staff member can convey the impact such circumstances have had on behalf of the student.

Information Recorded by Boards of Examiners

81. Discussions and decisions should be carefully recorded (noting any additional information considered). Boards will need to be in a position to recall all of the detail of the decisions taken. Full and accurate minutes will also assist with transmission of information between the current and any reconvened or future meetings of the Board. In cases where meetings are taking place via video link, and secretariat support is not available, it may be appropriate for the Convener to record the meeting with the agreement of all others involved. This will be for the purposes of creating minutes following the meeting, rather than for storing a recording.

82. Minutes/recordings must include, where possible:

    a. Attendance and absence of originally nominated Board members;
    b. Any change in the role of members (e.g. appointment of an Acting Convener or substitute Internal or External Examiners);
    c. Information on the availability of results for individual students;
    d. Any information available on the effects of the disruption on performance;
    e. Instances where an examination was disrupted (rescheduled/false starts, etc.);
    f. Information on alternative assessments put in place for students, including extended deadlines;
    g. References to any guidance or regulations consulted or invoked;
    h. A full record of the reasons for any award or absence of award for a student, where a full set of assessment results for that student is not available;
    i. In Honours years, detailed records must be kept of any particular circumstances relevant to classification by a future Board.

83. Conveners of Boards of Examiners will need to ensure the Minute Secretary is properly briefed and equipped for the role.

Managing Variations Within Student Cohorts

84. It is not the case that different standards will be applied in relation to marking, grading, or deciding on degree classification. The overarching principle is that the University's academic quality standards and processes are maintained in reaching decisions and confirming final results and awards. The University's Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption underlines the consistency of practice across the institution in this regard. It may be that some students may be informed of their overall results for the year before others.

85. It is important to note that in cases where extraordinary and unprecedented disruption occurs, it may be necessary to assess students on the same module by different means. Academic judgement will be employed by Module Leaders and Programme Leaders to ensure that the appropriate learning outcomes are assessed by the alternative

assessment, and the Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption document should be consulted. Any changes must be carefully managed through communications with students.

Challenges in Board of Examiner Judgements with Missing Results

86. The minutes/recording of the Board should record the level of information available and the reasons for the Board's decision. Notification of the outcome, even where this is that no decision could be made, should be submitted as part of the online process for the upload of results and awards.

Relaying Board of Examiner Decisions to Student Lifecycle Services

87. It is imperative that Student Lifecyle Services is informed if a Board is deferred or re-scheduled (without decisions having been made) or re-convened (with some decisions having been made) as this has implications for internal business processes. The Convener is responsible for keeping Student Lifecycle Services abreast of developments in this regard.

Reconvening Boards of Examiners Once More Marks are Available

88. The Board will need to reconvene as soon as any additional marks become available after the end of any period of disruption, in order to confirm outcomes. Guidance on how to update the student record with the confirmed outcome will be provided by Student Lifecycle Services.

GUIDANCE FOR FINAL HONOURS BOARDS

External Examiner Participation

89. External Examiners provide a quality assurance function in the examination process, as stated in the Procedures and Guidelines for External Examiners of Taught Programmes and in section 7 above. If an External Examiner cannot participate in the Honours Board of Examiners meeting for any reason, their quality assurance function still needs to be carried out. This can be done by another External Examiner, or by achieving a level of externality to the Board of Examiners' decision by having internal sign-off on behalf of the relevant Department/ Faculty, via the Vice-Dean (Academic) who will subsequently make a report to Senate, via the Quality Assurance Committee or the Convener of this Committee.

90. Student Lifecycle Services should be notified of circumstances in which a Board proceeds without an External Examiner's participation, where this would otherwise have been expected.

91. Where available, the Convener of the Board of Examiners should take account of the overall engagement of the External Examiner throughout the year in conjunction with students' overall performance and profile; this will assist the Board in undertaking its duties, maintaining standards and making its decisions in line with expectations for progression and awards. This is outlined in Section 2 of the University's Formal Assessment Period: Guidance in the Event of Disruption. In usual circumstances, an active involvement is expected from the External Examiners in the business of the Board. The views and comments of External Examiners should be made known to the Boards of Examiners. Where an External Examiner is not able to attend a meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Head of Department or Programme Leader should seek the views and comments from the External Examiner in advance and in writing.

Classifying Degrees With Missing Results

92. In periods of widespread, significant disruption to learning and teaching activities and associated assessment, the University works to ensure that this is minimised where possible, and therefore it is expected that classification decisions will be made across the vast majority of programmes. In cases of severe, unexpected disruption, Senate will issue specific guidance regarding the classification of degrees if required.

Student Graduation Without Confirmed Degree Classification

93. It is not necessary for a student's degree classification to be known before they can graduate. Some students may be invited to graduate with an honours degree that is unclassified at the time of the ceremony. If a student does choose to graduate with an unclassified degree at the time of the graduation ceremony and subsequently wishes to appeal the degree classification once it has been confirmed, they must follow the appeals procedure as set out in the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

94. The final class of degree will then be confirmed to each student by Student Lifecycle Services as soon as the relevant assessment information becomes available, and Boards have confirmed the final outcome. If Boards do not have enough results available to them to classify a degree but do have sufficient information to be certain that a student has reached at least the minimum requirement to be awarded an honours degree or pass degree, this can be conferred.

95. Boards will be asked to confirm to Student Lifecycle Services the student's eligibility for either an Interim/Conditional Honours Unclassified or an Interim/Conditional Pass Degree. Once all the assessment information becomes available, Boards will classify the degree, or award the actual Honours degree. An interim/conditional award of a Pass degree will be revoked where the final outcome confirms that a student has achieved an Honours degree.

Perceptions of a Devaluation of the University's Degrees

96. This Procedure seeks to ensure that the University's degrees remain of a high standard and are not perceived as devalued. Students' academic performance is assessed by Boards in the light of two overriding principles which form the basis for assessment at all times: the maintenance of the University's academic standards and consistency of treatment of students. Clear guidance will be issued to staff about the assessment of work in the context of disruption, based firmly on the existing quality, academic standards and regulatory frameworks. Where decisions are made on the basis of incomplete results, the Board must be satisfied that, in its academic judgement, the classification assigned is correct and the decision beyond reasonable doubt.

97. It remains the case that it is not within the power of a Board of Examiners to recommend the award of any degree, diploma or certificate without substantial evidence of attainment to at least the lowest level required for the award of that qualification.

GUIDANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE YEAR 1,2 & 3 PROGRESSION BOARDS

Progressing Students in Periods of Disruption

98. In periods of widespread, significant disruption to learning and teaching activities and associated assessment, the University works to ensure that this is minimised where possible, and therefore it is expected that classification decisions will be made across the

vast majority of programmes. In cases of severe, unexpected disruption, Senate will issue specific guidance regarding the classification of degrees if required.

GUIDANCE FOR PGT BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

Awarding Merits or Distinctions

99. In periods of widespread, significant disruption to learning and teaching activities and associated assessment, the University works to ensure that this is minimised where possible, and therefore it is expected that classification decisions will be made across the vast majority of programmes. In cases of severe, unexpected disruption, Senate will issue specific guidance regarding the classification of degrees if required.

100. There may be circumstances where students are allowed to progress to the Master's dissertation stage on the basis of a profile that is missing marks, and when those marks are subsequently provided, they demonstrate that the student would not have progressed had they been available. In these circumstances, the decision to allow a student to progress will not be reversed if the decision to progress has already been communicated to the student. In such a situation, the programme team should ensure that the student is provided with enhanced support, usually via supervisory arrangements.

101. Boards will need to be prepared to address issues arising where a student does well in a Master's dissertation but is subsequently found to have performed below the required standard in Diploma coursework or examinations, the results of which were unavailable to the Board at an earlier stage. In such cases, the Board of Examiners is advised to consider the situation sympathetically.

Motivational Merits and Distinctions

102. Motivational merits and distinctions should be awarded during periods of widespread, significant disruption. The University's Policy on Motivational Merit & Distinction sets out the criteria for being awarded a motivational merit (60% or more credit weighted average) or motivational distinction (70% or more credit weighted average). The Policy specifies that motivational merits or distinctions can only be awarded if all modules have been passed at the first attempt.

103. Boards of Examiners will continue to award motivational merit and distinction where students meet the normal criteria.

GUIDANCE FOR PGR EXAMINERS

Examining Committee (Viva Voce or Orals) Schedules

104. Viva voce and oral exams should proceed as scheduled where possible during periods of widespread disruption. In instances where it is not possible for an exam of this type to take place on campus, efforts should be made for the examination to be held via video link so as not to cause undue delay for the student. Please see the University's Guidance on the Operation of Hybrid or Virtual Oral Examinations.

PGR Examining Committee Quorum

105. The University's Policy and Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Study (paragraphs 212-216) states that the Examining Committee normally comprises at least

two active researchers – an Internal Examiner who is not part of the supervisory team and an External Examiner (two External Examiners in the case of a Doctorate by Publication) – and a Convener, who is not part of the supervisory team. Alternative arrangements should be made to adjust the membership of Examining Committee at the earliest opportunity, where any of the examiners are affected by significant disruption and unable to attend in person or remotely.

106. Further general guidance is available for External Examiners of a Postgraduate Research Examining Committee.

Examining Conveners/Internal Examiners of Examining Committees

107. If a Convener or Internal Examiner does not feel able to act in their role, in the context of widespread, significant disruption, they must alert their Head of Department as soon as possible, so that an alternative Convener or Internal Examiner can be identified.

APPENDIX B – ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS: EXAMPLE FROM DISRUPTION CAUSED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<table>
<tr><th>Systems and Approaches to Support Module and Programme Activities</th><th>Systems to Target and Personalise Student Support</th></tr>
<tr><td>In preparation for the AY staff are provided with a range of guidance to enable them to develop a blend of learning activities:

• Guidance for supporting the learning & teaching of students during periods of disruption
• Guidance on Changes to Programmes and Module in the Event of Disruption
• Procedure for Markers & BoE in the Event of Disruption
• Guidance and FAQs for Boards of Examiners
• Guidance on the Use of Video Conferencing for Viva Voce Examinations
• Online Student Engagement Guidance
• Academic Continuity Guidance on Myplace</td><td>The University can put in place support for students in response to widespread significant disruption in a range of different areas:

• Extended online counselling support
• 1:1 disability needs assessment
• 1:1 mental health assessment
• Digital Inclusion Programme
• Covid-19 Hardship Fund
• Emergency Aid Fund
• Free software
• Covid 19 Testing Facilities
• Online wellbeing programmes</td></tr>
<tr><td>The University has policies and procedures around assessment marking criteria:

• Assessment & Feedback Policy
• Policy on Moderation & Double Marking
• Policy on Compensation Scheme
• Guidance on Marking Assessments in UG and PGR courses</td><td>The University can adjust key processes to support students:

• Extensions request system applied sympathetically
• Procedure for the Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a Board of Examiners adapted in response to widespread disruption
• Longer term circumstances discussed with Programme Leader and Disability & Wellbeing Services to determine impact on students' studies</td></tr>
<tr><td>All of the above policies and procedures are utilised by staff before marks are sent to the Board of Examiners for confirmation</td><td>Confidential Academic Mitigation Boards meet before Boards of Examiners meetings to consider personal circumstances logged on Pegasus and to subsequently make recommendations to Boards of Examiners</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Boards of Examiners
Membership includes independent external examiners
Boards will be provided with an updated Guidance and FAQs for Boards of Examiners in the Event of Disruption to Study (to be approved by Senate)
Boards of Examiners utilise the Policy on Honours Classification and Other Awards Ranking and Policy on Motivational Merit and Distinction to make outcome decisions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">All of the above activities lead to Awards Decisions and Progression Decisions</td></tr>
</table>