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## 5 ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS, PROCEDURES AND MODERATION

### 5.1 Introduction

Taught courses at Harper Adams are modular and organised within an academic session, which extends to approximately 32 weeks for undergraduates and 50 weeks for postgraduate students. Most courses comprise modules from several different subject areas and modules are shared between courses leading to different named awards. Assessment regulations, and procedures for the assurance of quality and the maintenance of standards, including those concerned with the appointment, deployment and roles of external examiners, and the operation of the two-tiered Assessments Board structure, have been devised to accommodate this curriculum framework and are described in this section.

### 5.2 Assessment Scheme and Regulations

The assessment scheme and regulations for the Harper Adams modular scheme are set out in **Annex 5.1**, and those for the University Access Course are set out in **Annex 5.2** and in students' course handbooks. The assessment regulations may only be varied with the agreement of the Academic Standards Committee. These regulations apply to all awards made by Harper Adams, including those offered in conjunction with partner colleges, in the UK and overseas.

### 5.3 Moderation of assessment briefs and examination papers

#### 5.3.1 Moderation of assessment briefs

The moderation of assignment briefs and other in-course work is the responsibility of heads of departments. Standard assignment forms together with assignment moderation criteria (**Annex 5.3**) are to be used to facilitate this moderation, to inform the Senior Tutor and course team of the nature of each assessment, and to act as a briefing and feedback sheet for the students.

#### **Good practice guide: moderation of assessment programme**

Whilst course assessment packages (format, contribution and timing) are considered as part of the course approvals process, tutors may, in the light of experience propose changes to module assessment within the approvals period. Continuous monitoring of changes to the nature and timing of the total assessment package for each group of students is the responsibility of the course team under the leadership of the Course Manager. Before each academic session, therefore, the team shall review the in-course work to ensure that a diversity of assessment methods is used, and to ensure, as far as is possible within a modular scheme, that the timetable of assessments does not put an unfair or uneven load upon the students.

#### 5.3.2 Moderation of examination papers

The sequence and timing of events for the preparation and moderation of examination papers is set out in **Figure 5.1**. Each academic session, upon receipt of the list of modules on the **timetable planning schedule**, the Examinations Office shall send out to the module leader an examination preparation sheet for each examination. Agreed moderation criteria for examination papers are included with the **examination preparation sheet** as a prompt to staff when setting and moderating their questions (**Annex 5.4**). The module leader shall complete the appropriate sections on the sheet and submit it, together with the draft paper, to the appropriate head of department who is responsible for arranging moderation. After

the various stages set out in **Figure 5.1** the draft papers shall be submitted by the Chair of the Subject Assessment Board to the Examinations Office (**section 5.7**) for dispatch to the appropriate subject external examiners for approval. Any changes recommended by the external examiner, if accepted by the Chair of the Subject Assessment Board and the module leader, shall be incorporated in the final version of the paper. If the recommendations are not accepted then the chair of the subject board should justify this to the external examiner.

## **5.4 Assessment rules and procedures**

The conduct of written examinations, the policy and procedures for the assessment of prior achievement and arrangements for academic appeals and reassessment are set out in **Annex 5.5 to 5.9**. In addition to standard written examinations, students may be required to attend *viva voce* examinations with internal or external examiners. All students must be available to attend if necessary, and are responsible for checking notice boards for published lists of the time and venue of the *viva voce* for those required to attend. Failure to attend may result in the external examiner and the assessment boards being unable to confirm marks and hence the determination of the award or progression may be deferred.

## **5.5 Moderation of assessment results**

### **5.5.1 The moderation process**

Moderation of module results involves marking and sample double marking by internal examiners (**section 5.5.4**), review by subject external examiners (**section 5.6.3**) and consideration by the appropriate Subject Assessment Board (**section 5.7**) for final agreement. In adopting this moderation process, procedures are followed to inform external examiners of staff expectations and to ensure feedback to students on their performance.

### **5.5.2 Assessment criteria**

Academic staff are expected to use assessment criteria as a guide to students and as a means of improving consistency of marking. College wide criteria are promulgated to improve consistency of marking between modules. These include a 20 point, level specific, scale for all examinations (**Annex 5.10**) and level-specific generic criteria for in-course work (**Annex 5.11**), (although assignment briefing and feedback forms are expected to detail specific assessment and marking criteria), and criteria for the assessment of major projects (**Annex 5.12, 5.13, 5.19, 5.20, 5.22, 5.25, 5.26, 5.27**).

### **5.5.3 The role of internal examiners**

All academic staff involved in the teaching and assessment of a module are internal examiners. Internal examiners are responsible for ensuring that the students have been fairly assessed in accordance with the module assessment scheme and assessment criteria and for maintaining accurate records of marks and grades. Where two or more staff are involved in the assessment of a module, the module leader is responsible for moderating marks or grades, entering these results into the computerised student record system, checking them, and signing the module assessment sheet before submission to the subject assessment boards.

Prior to consideration of module results by the subject assessment board, the module leader should ensure that tutors have reviewed all aggregate marks which generate a weighted score of either 38% or 39%. This review should verify the reliability of a marginal failure grade, given the potentially serious consequence for student progression.

Where there is a case for revising marks, based upon a review of the assessment components, the moderated mark should be entered into the computerised record system, prior to the subject assessment board.

Where a score of 38% or 39% is presented to the SAB, the module leader should confirm to the board that the above procedure, for reviewing the mark, has taken place.

Internal examiners have prime responsibility for determining standards against agreed criteria. This may involve, for example, scaling marks in consultation with the head of subject group, if it becomes clear that the format of the assessment was such as to give a false impression of student achievement for reporting and endorsement at the subject assessment board.

The moderation process is designed to audit these standards and develop a common understanding of what they should be. The appropriateness of these standards is established at subject assessment boards (**section 5.7**) which all internal examiners are required to attend.

#### **5.5.4 Internal double marking expectations**

Heads of departments should ensure that samples of assessed work are double marked and that a sample of marked and double marked assessments are available for scrutiny by subject external examiners.

In each session, the head of department ensures that a sample of all modules' coursework submissions and examination scripts are double marked. A standard checklist for module assessment and moderation is given at **Annex 5.14** which should be completed by each module leader and made available for scrutiny by the external examiner, with the accompanying documents as indicated on the checklist.

The sample for any assessment is at least six or six percent (whichever is the greater) of the scripts and significant discrepancies (a mean of over five percentage points) is reported to the Chair of the Subject Assessment Board, who will take appropriate action.

#### **5.5.5 External moderation expectations**

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that moderation of work and the retention of papers for external examiners does not militate against the prompt feedback essential for effective learning or contravene the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1998.

- a) All internal and external examiners are provided with guidelines on the Act as they relate to the assessment process (**Annex 5.15**).
- b) A sample of six or six percent (whichever is the greater) of coursework scripts and student feedback sheets (representing the range of performance within the group) are photocopied and retained by each module leader for inspection by external examiners. All the original scripts are returned to students as soon as practicable.
- c) All internal examiners will **either** write a concise report on the performance of the cohort of students on each examination question after marking scripts **or** ensure that scripts are annotated as part of the marking process, in order

to assist internal moderators and external examiners in making judgements on the validity of marks awarded by the internal examiner.

- d) All examination scripts are made available to external examiners and thereafter stored securely for a period of 6 years.

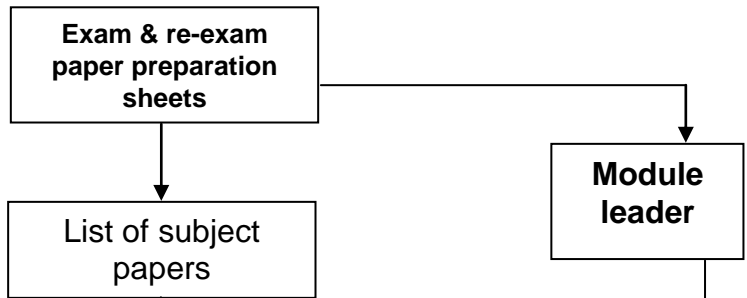
#### **5.5.6 Marking Major Projects**

Procedures for the assessment, double marking and reassessment of major projects are set out in detail on the major project assessment forms (**Annex 5.12, 5.13, 5.19 and Annex 5.20**).

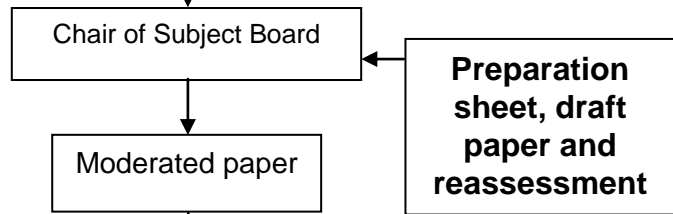
**Figure 5.1 Examination Paper Preparation System**

**Last Dates**

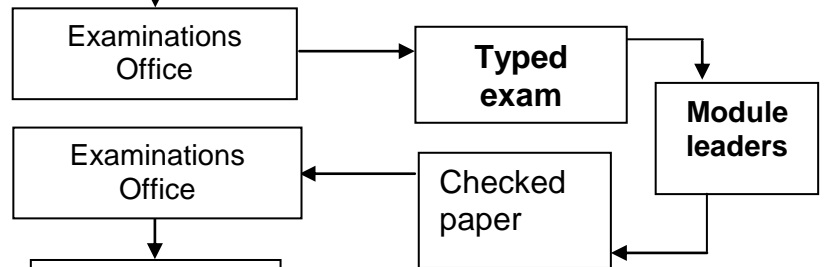
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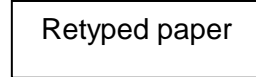
**Week 11**



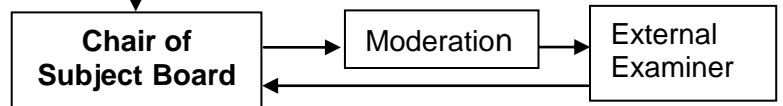
**Week 13**



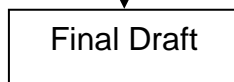
**Week 14**



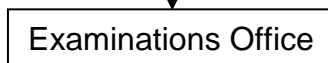
**Week 15**



**Week 22**



**Week 24**



## 5.6 External examiners: role, rights, responsibilities and appointment

### 5.6.1 Introduction

As subject modules are often shared by students on different courses, the Academic Board has adopted a two-tiered assessments board system involving subject, and taught awards board external examiners. Subject examiners are appointed on the basis of their subject expertise and are members of the appropriate subject assessment board (**sections 5.6.3 and 5.7**) Course external examiners are drawn from the subject external examiners to take an oversight view on individual programmes but are not required to attend the associated course assessment board (**section 5.6.4**). Taught award board external examiners are appointed to attend a number of course assessment boards, to provide an overview on the fairness of regulations and consistency of their application (**sections 5.6.5 and 5.8**) Harper Adams' philosophy on the function of external examiners in moderating standards is set out in this section together with information on the role, rights, responsibilities and appointment of subject course examiners.

### 5.6.2 Moderating standards: the role of external examiners

Internal examiners have the primary responsibility for assessing students and maintaining standards. The role of external examiners is to audit and moderate these standards against those set in other institutions of higher education of good standing in the UK. In discharging this role, external examiners must be in a position to evaluate student work and the assessment and grading of it by internal examiners; to draw conclusions from this evaluation both on standards and on the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment processes; and to provide feedback to the College so that, through a process of socialisation and debate, appropriate adjustments in standards and procedures can be made in the future.

External examiners have no power of veto and shall normally contribute to decisions on the grading of modules, the granting of awards, and the progression or withdrawal of students through membership of, and advice to assessment boards. External examiners do, however, have the right to submit confidential reports to Chair of the Academic Board on any assessment matter on which they have serious concern and which might put at risk the standards of College awards, in addition to submitting an annual report, which is publicly available.

Although external examiners have the right to review the assessment of any part of the curriculum, they will normally be asked to moderate papers and scripts of those modules that contribute to the classification of awards: that is level 5, 6 and 7 (intermediate, honours and M level) modules. The course external examiner will review all modules contributing to the University Access Course.

### 5.6.3 Subject external examiner's role

The key roles of subject external examiners are to ensure that:

- i. the standard of attainment of Harper Adams students in the subject is similar to standards in the same subject in other UK higher education institutions of good standing;
- ii. students have been fairly assessed in accordance with the module descriptor and assessment scheme.

In order to fulfil this role, subject external examiners shall:

- review module descriptors including assessment strategies for those modules for which they are responsible;
- approve draft examination papers for all modules which contribute to the classification of the final award;
- sample mark examination scripts and in-course work and make judgements upon the standard of marking;
- attend the appropriate subject assessment board (**Section 5.8**) and participate in the moderation of module results by providing independent advice on the standard of modules;
- make judgements upon issues relating to assessment in the subject as specified in the external examiners' report form (**Annex 5.16**) and submit an annual report to the Chair of Academic Board within one month of the June assessments board meetings each year and within two weeks of the postgraduate assessment board in September;
- submit confidential reports to the Chair of Academic Board on any assessment matters on which they have serious concern and which might put at risk the standards of awards of the College.

Subject external examiners have the right to:

- access, on prior request, to papers and scripts of all forms of assessment which are used in the subject modules by agreement with the Chair of the Subject Board, including samples of coursework assignments;
- carry out *viva voce* examinations as an aid in confirming marks and the overall standard in modules (but not as a means for determining the classification of borderline students);
- additional visits to Harper Adams to see assessments in practice;
- meetings with individual students and/or student groups;

Subject external examiners have no right of attendance at course assessment boards (unless they are also course examiners).

#### 5.6.4 Course external examiner's role

The key roles of the course external examiner are to ensure that:

- i. each student has been fairly assessed in accordance with the approved programme and that assessment arrangements facilitate the development and evaluation of award outcomes;
- ii. student achievement reflects overall course outcomes to a standard comparable to that of other higher education institutions of good standing in the UK.

Additionally, those course examiners for awards run in conjunction with partner colleges also, typically, accept the roles and responsibilities associated with the taught awards board external examiner, but only in relation to the specific course assessment board arrangements (**Section 5.6.5**).

In order to fulfil this role, course external examiners shall:

- review programme specifications for the relevant awards;
- review approved assessment strategies for overall awards;
- make judgements upon issues relating to assessment and curriculum design the course as specified in the external examiners' report form (**Annex 5.16**) and submit an annual report to the Chair of Academic Board within one month of the June assessments board meeting each

year and within two weeks of the September Postgraduate Course Assessments Board;

- submit confidential reports to the Chair of Academic Board on any assessment matters on which they have serious concern and which put at risk the standards of awards of the College.

Course external examiners have the right to:

- sample assessed work to help them form their opinion of the curriculum, its delivery and assessment;
- interview individual students or groups at any time, and with notice, in order to form an impression of the curriculum, its delivery and assessment and student achievement;
- review course assessment board papers and submit comments for the Course Manager to present at the board meeting.

#### **5.6.5 Taught awards board examiner's role**

The key roles of the taught awards board external examiner are to ensure that:

- (i) awards are made consistently and fairly within institutional regulations
- (ii) institutional regulations are broadly comparable to those in force in other reputable UK Higher Education Institutions.

In order to fulfil this role, taught awards board external examiners shall:

- review the assessment regulations, especially those concerned with progression, compensation, condonement and award classification;
- contribute to several course assessment board (**section 5.8**) meetings at which Harper Adams' awards are to be decided, through attendance, at the end of each academic session and the reassessment period;
- make judgements upon issues relating to assessment regulations and assessment and decision making as specified in the external examiners' report form (annex 5.16) and submit an annual report to the Chair of Academic Board within two weeks of the September reassessment board meetings;
- submit confidential reports to the Chair of the Academic Board on any assessment matters on which they have serious concern and which put at risk the standards of awards of the college.

Taught awards board examiners have the right to:

- request an opportunity to discuss assessment issues with those course external examiners, for which they are members of the relevant course assessment board
- full membership of designated course assessments boards but no power of veto and no power to alter marks.

#### **5.6.6 Number and deployment of external examiners**

No more than one subject external examiner should be associated with the assessment of each module (including modules shared in common between courses). The number of modules in each subject area will determine the number of subject examiners. For each award one (or, where this is a requirement of the professional body concerned, two) subject examiners will act as course examiner for one or more awards. A small team (of two or three) taught award board external examiners will be appointed to attend and comment upon course assessment board arrangements. A list of external examiners and the subjects and awards with which

they are associated shall be maintained and presented to Academic Standards Committee by the Head of Educational Development & Quality Enhancement annually.

#### **5.6.7 Appointment of external examiners: the process**

The process for appointment of external examiners shall be as follows.

##### **Action by the chairs of subject board**

Nominations for subject external examiners shall be made to the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement (HEDQE) by the chair of the subject board concerned after consultation with the appropriate course manager in those cases in which that nominee may also be asked to act as a course examiner.

Once general approval of a nominee has been obtained, the Chair of the Subject Board – or their nominee - shall make an informal approach to the nominee to determine if he or she is prepared to act as examiner.

The nomination of taught awards board external examiners is the responsibility of the HEDQE.

##### **Action by Head of Educational Development & Quality Enhancement**

The HEDQE shall request from the nominee the information required for the completion of the external examiner proposal forms (**Annex 5.17**). Members of the Academic Standards Committee will be invited to review the proposal form in considering whether to approve or decline a nomination, for Academic Board ratification.

##### **Action by Chair of Academic Board**

The Chair of Academic Board shall write a formal letter to the successful nominee setting out terms and duration of appointment.

##### **Action by the Chair of the Subject Board and Course Manager**

The Chair of the Subject Board, in consultation with the manager of the course concerned if the subject examiner is also a course examiner, shall invite the newly appointed examiner to visit the institution for briefing (**section 5.6.9**) and shall thereafter be the main point of contact between the examiner and the College.

The HEDQE shall take responsibility for briefing and liaison with taught awards board external examiners.

#### **5.6.8 Criteria for appointment as external examiner**

To ensure appropriate expertise, experience and independence, subject and course external examiner appointees should **normally** have

- academic, professional or industrial qualifications **or experience** appropriate to, and at a level matching the subject and course(s) to be examined;
- appropriate academic and/or professional standing, expertise and experience to maintain standards in higher education;
- recent experience of examining in higher education, and preferably of acting as an external examiner, or comparable recent experience which provides evidence of competence in assessing students in the subject;
- no more than two other current external examining appointments involving substantial examining;
- no involvement over the last five years as a member of staff, governor or student at Harper Adams or partner college (as appropriate);

- no personal involvement as a sponsor or industrial assessor of students;
- no involvement as a consultant to the course team.

The criteria for appointment of taught awards board external examiners is as above, with the exception of the need for qualifications or experience to match the courses under consideration.

To ensure an appropriate balance of experience in relation to the examiners' role and the mission of Harper Adams, the team of external examiners should normally involve representatives of relevant industries or professions and a range of academic perspectives.

To ensure independence of judgement, the team of external examiners should not **normally** involve:

- more than one examiner from the same institution within a subject assessment board;
- reciprocal arrangements with another institution within an assessment board;
- replacement of an external examiner by one from the same institution;
- reappointment of an examiner to the same or to a different course or subject board, within a five year period.

In any subject area where there are only limited centres of expertise, the Academic Standards Committee will consider the need for a sufficient depth of specialist knowledge whilst militating against the potential problems of insularity and cosiness that may occur, if any of these criteria cannot be strictly applied, when making recommendations to Academic Board.

### 5.6.9 Term of appointment

The term of appointment of External Examiners shall normally be **four** years (five years for new courses) but appointees should remain in post until after the last assessments with which they are to be involved in order to deal with any subsequent review of decisions. Newly appointed examiners should take up their appointments by September or October and, before the retirement of their predecessors. Inexperienced external examiners should, wherever possible, take up their posts in the June before the retirement of the existing examiner. Where there is more than one course examiner, appointment should be staggered to ensure continuity.

### 5.6.10 Briefing of new external examiners

Newly appointed examiners shall be invited by the appropriate subject board chair (HEDQE in the case of taught awards board external examiners) to visit the institution as soon as possible after their appointment to be briefed by the chair, the course manager (if appropriate), the HEDQE and the Assistant Registrar (Examinations) on:

- the role of external examiners as agreed by Harper Adams Academic Board;
- the rights and responsibilities of external examiners;
- the operation and timing of the subject and course assessments boards;
- in the case of course examiners, the aims, objectives, curriculum and assessment regulations as defined in the course handbook;
- the assessment scheme for each academic session as determined by the course team in those cases where the subject examiner is also a course examiner;

- the assessment moderation and exam paper preparation system and the dates of subject and assessment boards;
- reporting procedures;
- action taken in response to previous external examiners reports;
- arrangements for the payment of fees and expenses (**Annex 5.18**).

In addition, the external examiners should be introduced to the Chair of the Academic Board, and to relevant senior staff and, in the case of a course examiner, to the course team and students. In the case of inexperienced examiners appointed before the retirement of their predecessor, the former shall be invited to 'shadow' the latter during a visit to College and a meeting of the assessment board(s). Inexperienced external examiners are also offered the opportunity of professional development, at Harper Adams' expense, to supplement these normal briefing procedures.

#### **5.6.11 Premature termination of external examiners' appointment**

Circumstances that shall lead to the premature termination of an external examiner's appointment shall include:

- a newly arisen or discovered conflict of interest;
- failure or inability to attend boards or carry out moderation;
- behaviour inappropriate to the position of external examiner;
- a loss of academic standing;
- failure to submit appropriate reports.

In such circumstances the chair of the subject board concerned, together with the course manager in the case of a course external examiner, shall prepare a paper citing the circumstances and evidence for consideration by the Chair of the Academic Board, the Chair of Academic Standards Committee and the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement who shall collectively decide upon appropriate action.

#### **5.6.12 Professional advisors: role, criteria and term of appointment and deployment**

A professional advisor shall additionally, to the external examiner appointments, support foundation degree awards. The advisor will have the following responsibilities:

- Review work associated with the Professional Scholarship Programme elements (**Section 4.7**) to provide feedback on the relevance of such work
- Meet with students at various stages of the course, on two occasions a year, to form an impression of the way in which students have been prepared for employment
- Provide a reference point for informing the course team on workplace needs in designing and reviewing courses and modules
- Submit an annual report to the Chair of Academic Board by the end of each academic year. This report (of no more than two sides of A4) should provide an evaluation of the technical and generic skills required in the workplace, the extent to which students possess these, and the corresponding lessons for organisation of the curriculum and the placement period (**Annex 5.23**).

The professional advisor should have industrial qualifications or experience appropriate to the programmes and award outcomes and appropriate professional standing, expertise and experience to offer advice in support of maintaining standards in higher education. The term of appointment shall normally be for four years. Course committees will nominate advisors, following third party

recommendation and inform the Academic Standards Committee. Payment of fees and expenses shall be commensurate with those of external examiners.

## **5.7 Constitution, terms of reference, organisation and procedures of subject assessment boards**

### **5.7.1 Constitution of subject assessments boards**

Each cognate subject area, normally based on departments, shall have an associated subject assessments board that is empowered to act on behalf of the Academic Board, following procedures laid down by the Board or by Academic Standards Committee acting on its behalf. Each subject assessments board will correspond to one or two academic subject groups and the membership shall be as follows:

Head(s) of Academic Department (of whom one will act as Chair)  
Administrative officer (recorder and student record systems operator)  
Leaders of each module under consideration  
Subject external examiners

Additionally, there will be a REEDNet Assessment Board to deal with the results of candidates studying with a partner college, though the REEDNet programme, where there are no existing arrangements. The REEDNet Assessment Board will comprise the following members:

REEDNet Centre Manager (Chair)  
REEDNet administrative officer (recorder and student record systems operator)  
Module leaders of each module under consideration, with participation either in person, or through telephone or video conferencing facilities  
Subject external examiners for each module whatever the level, **or** a professional advisor who reviews work across a programme, to advise on its relevance to current professional practice and alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. (Whilst these external members have a right of attendance, their input may take the form of a written report, prepared in advance of the meeting)  
Independent Chair of Course Assessment Board or nominee

### **5.7.2 Terms of reference of subject assessments boards**

The subject assessments boards are empowered to:

- (a) moderate and agree results for each module to ensure that standards are comparable to those of cognate subjects both within the college and in other higher education institutions;
- (b) ensure that students have been fairly assessed in accordance with the module assessment scheme;
- (c) confirm or scale the marks of all students taking the module;
- (d) approve the nature of the reassessment proposed for each module;
- (e) review individual subject modules introduced between review and revalidation events; for ratification by the accreditation and validation sub-committee;
- (f) receive and approve responses to subject external examiner's reports;

- (g) appoint members to represent the subject board at each course assessment board;
- (h) make recommendations on assessment issues to course assessment boards, Academic Standards Committee or Academic Board.
- (i) convene sub-groups, to be known as Employer Engagement Assessment Boards, on a regular basis, to deal with the results of students who have participated in employer-engagement programmes,

### **5.7.2.1 Organisation of Employer Engagement and REEDNet Assessment Boards**

#### **Membership**

The membership of Employer Engagement Assessment Boards (with the membership of the REEDNet Assessment Board listed above in section 5.7.1) will comprise the following minimum membership, as below:

- i. Subject Assessment Board Chair or nominee
- ii. Two Subject Assessment Board members involved in delivery of programmes for which results are under review
- iii. A Subject Assessment Board member not involved in the delivery of programmes for which results are under review
- iv. Business Development Manager
- v. Either a sponsoring employer representative, who is involved in assessment, **or** a professional advisor who reviews marked work to advise on its relevance to current professional practice and alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- vi. Independent Chair of Course Assessment Board or nominee

Oversight of arrangements by associated Subject External Examiners and Taught Awards Board Examiners would normally be through scrutiny of board papers and minutes, rather than through attendance, for reporting purposes.

#### **Terms of reference**

The terms of reference for Employer Engagement and REEDNet Assessment Boards are as listed under a.-e. and h. in section 5.7.2 above, in addition to the following:

- i. receive and approve responses to sponsoring employer or professional advisor reports;
- ii. Confer taught awards of no more than 80 credits, in line with the arrangements laid out in section 5.8 below and associated annexes, including the assessment regulations specified in annex 5.1.

### **5.7.3 Procedures of subject assessment boards**

The focus of the role of the subject assessment boards is the subject and module. The subject assessments boards alone are responsible for establishing the standards of assessed work in a subject, and in this the role of the subject external examiner is crucial. Standards are established by:

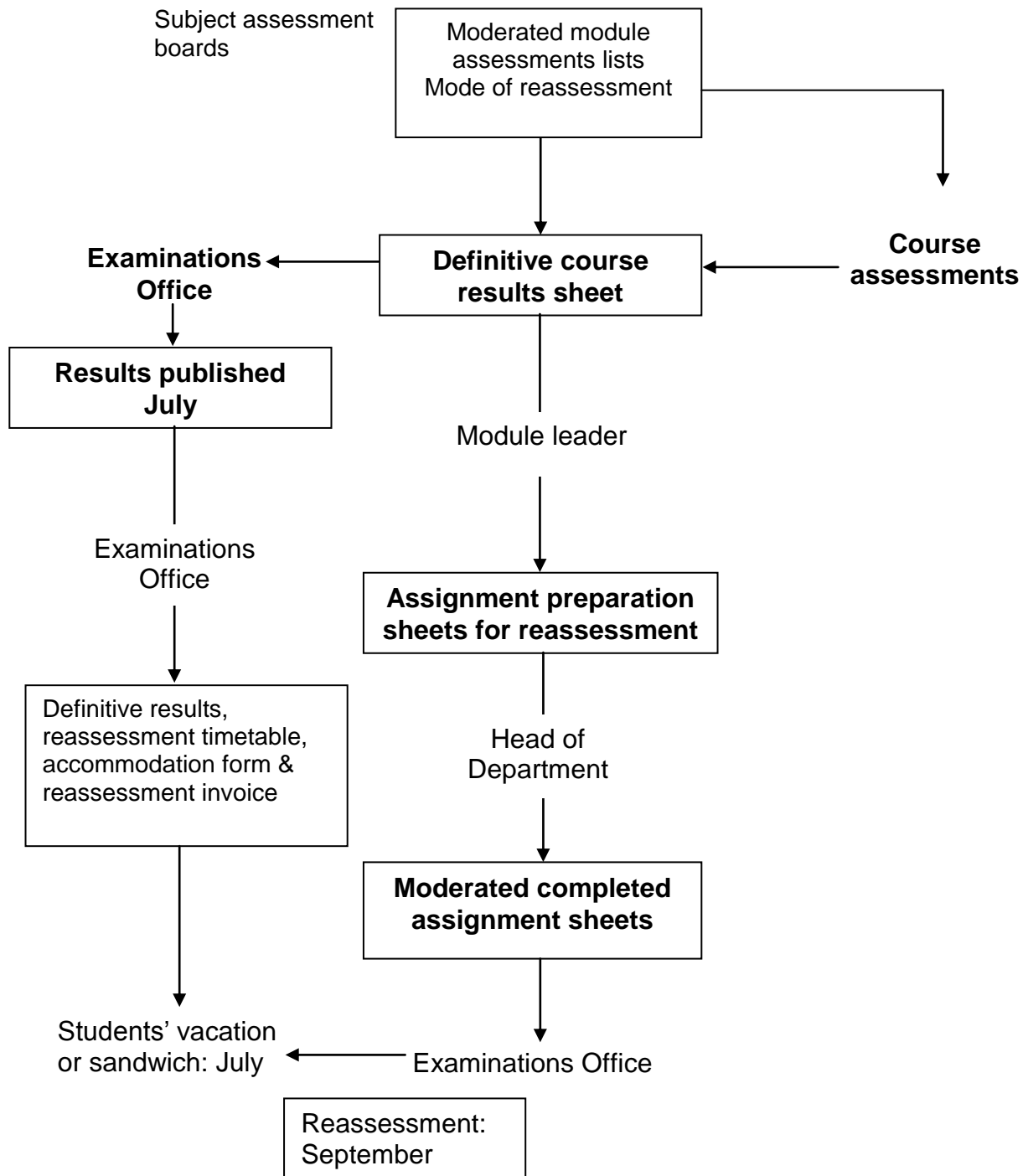
- comparing the analysis of module marks and grades with those of previous occasions and identify any modules which are atypical;
- considering the implications of the results of sample double marking by internal and external examiners;

- considering the views of external examiners who have reviewed the assessment methods and carried out *viva voce* examinations of individual students;
- reviewing the profile of marks and grades of modules in other subject assessment boards, for that assessment stage.

Subject assessment boards will be presented with students' marks and grades in each module studied for consideration. Where the module leader, Head of Department and internal second marker have, as a consequence of the moderation process, decided to recommend that marks should be modified in some way, they will additionally present the board with a comparison of un-moderated marks and an explanation of the rationale for the modification.

The subject assessment board considers the results for all students (irrespective of course, programme or award) who have been assessed in modules in the subject. It is not the responsibility of the subject assessment board to consider the overall performance of individual students or extenuating circumstances relating to individual performance. It is, however, the responsibility of the module leader to report to the board the accuracy of Incomplete or zero grades and to ensure that non-submission or non-attendance of an individual student has been verified by a medical note or other valid, written evidence. Once the marks and grades have been confirmed by the subject board they shall be made definitive in the computerised student record system so that overall results for each student can be considered by the appropriate course assessments boards (**section 5.8**) and (**Figure 5.2**). All Incomplete grades should be ratified by the course assessments board in considering the mitigating circumstances of individual students (see section 11.2 of the assessment regulations [**Annexes 5.1** and **5.2**]).

**Figure 5.2 Results Moderation, Notification of Students & Reassessment**



The exam preparation system is as described in **Figure 5.1**.

Students on placement will normally be re-assessed before the next study part (ie part one students are reassessed in the immediate September and part two students are reassessed in the September immediately preceding their return to College based study, with the exception of RICS accredited courses, where reassessment takes place in the immediate September period.

#### 5.7.4 The role of the chairs of subject assessments boards

Chairs of subject assessment boards are appointed from amongst the heads of academic departments and are responsible for:

- nominating candidates for approval as subject external examiners;
- briefing new subject external examiners on their role together with the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement and Course Manager, where applicable;
- dispatching moderated examination papers and other assessment instruments to the external examiner and ensuring that responses are made to his or her moderation by the head of department concerned;
- making arrangements for the visits of external examiners in conjunction with the Assistant Registrar (Examinations) and, where appropriate, the relevant course manager;
- providing samples of marked scripts and in-course work as required for scrutiny by the external examiner (see **Annex 5.14**);
- conducting meetings of the board in a manner which ensures that the module marks are properly agreed and recorded;
- determining whether sufficient members are present to properly progress the agenda (all members and all module leaders should normally be in attendance – see **Section 2.2**);
- appointing a secretary to the board and ensuring that detailed and accurate records are kept of the proceedings, of the agreed results and of any recommendations;
- approving the draft minutes and ensuring that they comply with guidance given on the Data Protection Act (**Annex 5.15**);
- submitting a copy of the minutes to the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement, including any matters arising;
- nominating members of the board to represent it at course assessments board meetings;
- drafting a response to the subject external examiner's report for consideration during annual course and subject monitoring.

### 5.8 Constitution, terms of reference and procedures of the course assessment boards

#### 5.8.1 Constitution of the course assessment boards

Each course has an associated assessment board that is empowered to act on behalf of Academic Board, following procedures laid down by Academic Board or the Academic Standards Committee acting on behalf of Academic Board. The membership shall be as follows.

Head of Educational Development & Quality Enhancement or nominee (Chair)  
Registrar or nominee (Results recorder)  
Course Manager  
All members of the course team  
Chair or nominee of each appropriate subject board  
Placement Manager  
Taught awards board examiner  
The Vice Principal has right of attendance as observer.

For the 2010/11 academic session, a combined course assessment board will be convened to consider the awards of completing students. The membership will be as follows:

Head of Educational Development & Quality Enhancement or nominee (Chair)

Registrar or nominee (Results recorder)  
Course Manager  
Senior Tutor of completing cohort  
Taught awards board examiner

Additionally, courses that lead to awards of no more than 80 credits and that are organised to support employment, are dealt with under approved arrangements as set out in section 5.7.2.1, above.

### 5.8.2 Terms of reference of course assessments boards

The course assessments boards are empowered to:

- (a) make decisions on the progression and awards for all students registered for the named award(s) for which the board is responsible in accordance with the approved assessment scheme and regulations for the course;
- (b) agree results for course-wide components such as the industrial training period;
- (c) approve for publication the agreed recommendations on the results of assessment;
- (d) consider the advice to be given to students who have failed;
- (e) approve the timing of any reassessments, whether reassessment should be allowed without further attendance, and to specify the period of time to be allowed for the completion of reassessment;
- (f) receive and consider reports of appeals panels and to determine the appropriate course of action, having given due regard to the Appeals Panel's recommendation(s);
- (g) receive reports of the Academic Misconduct Panel previously established to determine whether a student (singly or in conjunction with others) has attempted any form of cheating or breach of regulations in order to gain an unfair advantage in terms of their assessments, and to implement the appropriate course of action with regard to each student against whom an allegation(s) has been substantiated.

### 5.8.3 Procedures of course assessment boards

The focus of the proceedings of the course assessment boards is the student. Progression and award classification decisions made by course assessments boards are normally determined by the mathematical rules contained within the assessment regulations. The board **cannot alter any module marks or grades** moderated by subject assessments boards unless an error in transcription or an omission is discovered but can decide to compensate or condone a failure in a module under the conditions prescribed in the assessment regulations (**Annex 5.1**).

Thus the overall performance of the student is indicated by:

- module marks or grades which have been confirmed by the appropriate subject assessments boards at each part or stage of the course;

- documented evidence of extenuating circumstances relating to the student (**section 5.8.4** and section 11 of the assessment regulations at **annex 5.1, 5.2**);
- performance in course-wide components.

The board may award a different classification from that determined by the marks awarded under the conditions prescribed in the assessment regulations (**Annex 5.1**). However it is essential for equity and legal reasons that the same array of marks normally yield the same overall result. The reasons for any decisions that are out of line with the assessment regulations, or for any decision on individual students that are out of rank order, must be clearly specified in the minutes of the board meeting.

#### **5.8.4 Evidence of extenuating circumstances relating to students' performance**

All significant extenuating circumstances relating to the performance of individual students must be documented (section 11 of assessment regulations at **annex 5.1, 5.2**). Course assessment boards must not rely on oral reports. Students are individually responsible for providing documented evidence of any extenuating circumstances, which may have affected their performance in one or more assessments. Students should also be advised to inform their senior tutor or another member of the course team of their personal extenuating circumstances so that the course team member can, if appropriate, provide written corroboration for the course assessment board.

In some cases the board may decide to hear evidence from an internal examiner who has particular knowledge of the circumstances relating to an individual student. Oral evidence of this type must be in support of documentary evidence and not a substitute for documentation.

All documented evidence from students and staff must be submitted to the Chair of the Course Assessments Board prior to start of the course assessments board meeting.

#### **5.8.5 The role of the chair of a course assessments board**

The chair of the course assessments board shall:

conduct the meeting of the board in a manner which ensures that decisions on progression, awards and award classifications for individual students are arrived at fairly and in accordance with the assessment scheme and regulations;

- determine whether sufficient members are present to properly progress the agenda (all members should normally be in attendance – see **Section 2.2**)
- advise the board on the interpretation and application of the assessment regulations;
- ensure that decisions are clear and that they have been agreed by the board;
- ensure that all extenuating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached on progression or an award;
- ensure that the course manager has appointed a secretary and that detailed and accurate records are kept of the board's proceedings and of the agreed outcomes.
- approve the draft minutes, ensuring that they comply with guidance given on the Data Protection Act (**Annex 5.15**);

- bring to the attention of the Academic Standards Committee any issues, which arise at assessments boards or in the reports of, or responses to external examiners reports that are worthy of consideration by the Committee.

### **5.9 The role of course managers in the assessment arrangements**

The course manager and senior tutors are, among other things, responsible for:

- briefing students on the examination rules and assessment regulations;
- monitoring the assessment programme for each cohort of students, in consultation with module leaders and heads of departments as appropriate, with particular reference to the timing and nature of assessed assignments;
- publishing the assessment programme to students and staff teaching the course;
- distributing individual major projects for assessment and for collating results;
- collating and presenting assessment results for the course at the course assessments board;
- ensuring the accuracy of all course assessment board decisions for each candidate in the student record system before ratification and publication of the results;
- submitting external examiners' reports and proposed responses to the course committee for discussion and agreement.

### **5.10 Responses to external examiners' reports**

Annual reports of external examiners shall be responded to through the course and subject monitoring processes of Harper Adams Academic Board as follows.

- a) On receipt of the report, the Chair of Academic Board shall send copies to the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement who shall circulate it to the chairs of subject boards, the Vice Principal, and the relevant course managers (and to the Principal, HE Manager and Course Managers in partner colleges). A copy shall be lodged in the Common Room and the original will be lodged in the Examination Office.
- b) Any issue of college wide significance that requires immediate action shall be reported by the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement to the Academic Standards Committee.
- c) The Chair of the appropriate subject board shall write a response to the subject related issues and submit the response for approval to the September meeting of the relevant subject assessment board. This approved response will then be submitted to the managers of any courses whose students make use of the module and to the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement.
- d) The course manager shall include the report and the course teams and subject board chairs' responses to it in the annual course report for debate at the annual course-monitoring meeting of the course committee.
- e) All external examiners' reports and all responses to them shall be submitted to Academic Standards Committee along with a commentary and recommended action on cross-college issues prepared by the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement.
- f) The Academic Standards Committee shall determine if the action recommended is appropriate and in line with wider institutional policy.

- g) Responses on College-wide issues shall be included in Academic Standards Committee's report to the Academic Board and will be sent to each external examiner together with the response to his or her own report before the end of the calendar year.

### **5.11 Assessment of staff members**

All assessments completed by staff, including APL submissions, should be double-marked and, in addition, should be reviewed by the assigned external examiner. This approach should ensure that individuals are not asked to make sole judgements on the work of their colleague(s). External examiner oversight adds an external, independent reassurance on the reliability of marks.

Colleagues will not have access to records in SITS for modules on which they are registered. It is accepted practice that the mail trays are not used to transfer draft copies of exam papers, but are delivered to or collected from the Exams Office, in person. In this way, all unseen assessments will be kept secure within the Examinations Office.

Colleagues whose achievements are under discussion in either subject or course assessment boards will be expected to declare their interest at the commencement of the meeting. The Chair will exercise their discretion on whether the individual is excused or asked not to contribute to specific discussions.

Given that interim results should be posted by identification number, rather than name, there should be no potentially embarrassing situations where 'students' can compare their achievements with those of 'staff'. Any assignment returns should be posted directly to staff mail trays, as opposed to the 'student' collection boxes in the administration office.