

ASSESSMENT AND AWARDS

The [University Regulations for Study](#) set out the University principles and frameworks for assessment and making awards (see, in particular, sections 2, 3 and 6)

This chapter provides information to supplement the regulations (for taught programmes) in respect of requirements for:

1. Marking and internal moderation
2. The recognition of prior learning
3. The operation of examination committees

Useful links:

Information about the governance of research degrees and honorary degrees can be found at...

Research degrees: <https://sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/university-committees/rkec/research-degrees-committee>

Honorary awards: <https://sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/university-committees/rkec/honorary-conferments-committee>

1. MARKING AND MODERATION

Introduction

As noted in the [Regulations for Study \(section 3\)](#), the University is committed to ensuring assessment enables students to show they have met the learning outcomes for their programme, through a variety of assessment methods, in line with the [Assessment & Feedback Policy](#). Full details of assessment tasks, marking criteria, and arrangements for providing formative and summative feedback on assessed work must be provided in module and programme handbooks.

The University also has a range of measures in place to ensure fairness in assessment and to protect the standards of its awards; including: anonymous marking for summative assessments, and the requirement that robust and transparent internal moderation processes are applied to all assessed work (for all assessment modes) submitted for the award of University credit. These measures apply in all Schools/Departments and all delivery locations, including partner organisations, although the format of marking and moderation processes may vary, according to local circumstances, the mode of assessment, and professional body requirements.

Programme-level processes for internal moderation should be agreed (in line with the guidance in this chapter) through Subject Committees and approved by Faculty AESC/QLICs.

Arrangements for internal moderation of collaborative programmes leading to Oxford Brookes awards, which must involve at least one member of University staff (usually the Liaison Manager), should be agreed with the partner organisation and clearly set out in the Operations Manual. The procedures which will be followed should be clearly communicated to students in programme/module handbooks, along with information on how marks will be allocated for each assessment task.

Anonymous marking

Anonymous marking is the practice of concealing the identity of the student who submitted the assessment from the staff member marking their work, until a mark has been agreed by the internal examiners.

All summative assessment, including all summative assessment on programmes delivered through a collaborative partnership, must be marked anonymously, unless it is not possible for a specific form of assessment to be carried out anonymously. For all instances where anonymous marking is not possible, particular attention must be given to ensuring that assessment

processes are fair; and they should be clearly described in module handbooks. As a minimum, all students must be informed when an assessment will not be marked anonymously.

Examples of situations where the form of assessment may not allow for work to be marked anonymously include:

- where the marker has closely supervised the work being marked (e.g. projects, dissertations, portfolios);
- where assignment topics are individual or small group based (e.g. personal profiles, work placement activities, independent studies, groupwork activities);
- where assessment is based on observation (e.g., oral presentations, video assignments, poster presentations, music recitals, exhibitions, oral language examinations, laboratory skills assessments);
- where assessing a student's competence to practice in a professional setting.

There are also certain individual situations in which it may not be possible to mark a student's work anonymously, for example: where a student has been granted an extension to a coursework deadline; or has a disability that entitles them to a reasonable adjustment of the format and/or deadline for coursework submissions; or in disciplinary cases referred by an Academic Conduct Officer. These cases differ to the exceptions noted above however, as they are personal exceptions and not variations from the expectation for anonymous marking across the student cohort.

As far as possible, assessed work should be submitted electronically to facilitate anonymous marking. Where electronic submission is not possible, or not practised, then the standard University Coursework Submission Sheet should be used.

Once a mark has been agreed, the student's identity may be revealed to the marker. If a piece of work is double-marked, the student's identity may not be revealed to either marker until after the second marker has completed their assessment. This is to ensure that feedback on assessments can be personalised and tailored to that student. A mark should not be amended once a student's identity has been revealed.

Internal moderation

Internal moderation of assessed work is the process of ensuring that assessment criteria are applied consistently by examiners, that students are being treated fairly through the assessment process, and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to achieve. Moderation is the process of ensuring that the marks awarded for an assessment task across a module are within reasonable limits, in the context of the criteria against which students' work is being assessed.

Moderation may be limited to sampling and second marking a representative number of pieces of assessed work across the marking range from a cohort of students; or it may involve second marking the work of the whole cohort (double marking). Second marking is the process in which a second allocation of marks is given to a piece of work by a second internal examiner (who may, or may not, be able to see the marks and comments of the first marker). Dissertations should always be 'blind' second marked.

Timing

The moderation of coursework marks should be completed within an appropriate timescale in order to allow for the timely return of agreed marks and feedback to students, consistent with the terms of the Assessment and Feedback Policy.

The internal moderation process should normally be completed prior to the upload of marks onto the system for examination committees. Unmoderated marks must not be uploaded to the student record system, unless permission has been granted by the Programme Lead.

Marks that have not been confirmed by an Examination Committee should not be issued to students, unless permission to do so has been granted by the Programme Lead. Assessed work that has been through the internal moderation process may be returned to students prior to the Examination Committee, on condition that the feedback sheet clearly informs them that the mark/grade given remains subject to confirmation.

Procedure

All completed assessments should be first marked independently by appropriately experienced members of the module teaching team. Evidence of marking and an indication of how the marks have been allocated should be shown on all assessments.

For non-written forms of assessment, e.g. oral examinations, presentations, or recitals, at least two internal examiners should normally be involved in first marking the assessment and agreeing the final mark for each piece of work. The external examiner should have access to the agreed comments of the assessors, which should be provided as feedback to the student.

If the internal moderation process for the module is based on double marking, all assessments should then be second marked.

For modules employing a sampling approach to moderation, the internal moderator for the module (a member of academic staff other than the first marker/s) should then second mark a sample of completed assessments. Samples should:

- be representative of every delivery location, and every mode of study;
- be drawn from, and reflect, the full range of marks, including borderline cases and fail grades;
- be of an appropriate size with respect to the size of the cohort (10%, whole cohort if it is less than 10);
- include all components of the assessment for the module.

If there is clear evidence from the sample selected that there are serious discrepancies in the marks being awarded, the Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead should arrange for all the assignments affected (either within a specified grade band, or the whole cohort) to be re-marked.

Internal moderation policies must be clear about the procedure to be followed in order to resolve any disagreement between first and second markers and assign a final mark for a piece of work.

Students should be provided with a single mark on their assessed work, as agreed by the internal examiners, and the feedback given on their performance in the assignment must be consistent with the final assigned mark.

Reporting

The Faculty (or School/Department) moderation policy should set out the requirements for reporting on the conduct and outcomes of the internal moderation process, including those applying to collaborative provision (which should be set out in individual Operations Manuals). Evidence that an internal moderation process has taken place must be available for scrutiny by external examiners (and other interested parties).

External moderation

The role of the external examiner is set out in the relevant section of the Quality & Standards Handbook. Where a sampling approach to internal moderation is adopted, the sample of work that is moderated may be the same sample sent to the external examiner. If the sample that is sent to the external examiner does not include any of the work that has been sampled through the internal moderation process (for example, where a random sample is selected from across the grade bands), they should be provided with additional information about the internal moderation process that has been followed.

2. ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The principles underpinning the recognition of prior learning (certificated or experiential) which has taken place outside the University, and how the credit assigned may be used at Oxford Brookes, are set out in the Regulations for Study (section 3.7).

Key points to remember are that:

- Applications for the recognition of prior learning may be made at any point of a programme.
- Credit can only be awarded in the multiples used on the programme against which it is being sought, i.e. in respect of whole modules or stages/levels of a programme.
- A robust process must take place to assess the equivalence of learning outcomes, and evidence of the assessment process must be available for scrutiny by external examiners.
- The responsibility for awarding credit for prior learning lies with the relevant examination committee, and appeals of APL decisions should be made through the normal academic appeals process.
- Students awarded exemption from aspects of a programme through APL or APEL should be provided with information about how their final award classification will be calculated if it will differ from the standard calculation.
- Credit awarded through APL or APEL is recorded on the transcript.

Certificated prior learning (formal qualifications)

Subject Coordinators/admissions tutors are responsible for assessing claims for admission with credit, and the results of the assessment should be recorded on the relevant form (available from the Registry), and submitted for approval. Advice on the assessment of APL may be sought from the examination committee Chair or ADESE, but the authority for verifying decisions and approving the award of credit for prior learning lies with the relevant examination committee.

Where admission with credit is sought in respect of one or more modules, the learning outcomes of the qualification being presented for recognition should be mapped against the learning outcomes of the module/s for which exemption is sought; or against the learning outcomes of the relevant stages of the programme to which entry is being requested, to show how the qualification equates to comparable levels of the University programme. If level learning outcomes are not stated for the programme, reference should be made to the appropriate level descriptors in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Awarding Bodies.

An overseas qualification may be judged acceptable for entry with credit, subject to reference to UK-NARIC, to the relevant overseas qualifications framework, and to the FHEQ. Entry with advanced standing may also be granted through an articulation agreement with a partner organisation, in which students successfully completing an identified programme at the partner are guaranteed entry at a later stage of a specified Brookes programme. This type of arrangement must be formally approved through the appropriate processes relating to collaborative provision, and is not dealt with via APL.

Where a student undertakes certified learning concurrently with, but not as a part of, their programme of study at the University, they may apply for that credit to be applied towards their programme, if relevant. Examination committees are responsible for assessing such claims, and – as with other APL applications – must make a judgement about the equivalence of the learning outcomes of the external qualification with the learning outcomes of the module for which exemption is being sought.

Experiential prior learning

The accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) is the recognition of uncertificated learning which has taken place outside formal educational settings, such as in the workplace. Where an applicant's learning can be assessed with sufficient accuracy – usually through a portfolio of evidence, with a statement about the relevant learning that has been gained from the work (or other) experience presented, and how it relates to the programme against which credit is being sought - it may be used to award credit towards a programme of study.

As with APL, claims for APEL must be assessed for equivalence with the learning outcomes of the programme or module against which the credit is claimed. The Open Award framework may also be used to facilitate individual claims for APEL.

Faculties must have clear procedures in place for assessing APEL claims, and clear information must be available to staff and students about:

- who is responsible for collecting and presenting the evidence of learning,
- what format the evidence should take,
- what advice and support will be provided by the University for claimants in preparing the portfolio,
- by whom and how the claim will be assessed,
- which examination committee will consider the claim for approval,
- how the APEL will be recorded on the transcript, and
- how award classifications will be calculated.

Credit for prior learning can only be awarded in respect of whole modules or programme stages - potential claimants should therefore be advised against presenting an application for APEL unless they are able to demonstrate sufficient learning through experience (and not experience alone) to equate to the learning outcomes for at least one module. The cost of processing claims for APEL can also be high because of the complexity and the time involved - for both University staff and claimants - in putting together the portfolio of evidence, advising and supporting applicants, and assessing the claims. Applicants should be advised of this prior to embarking on the process.

3. EXAMINATION COMMITTEES

Purpose

As noted in the Regulations for Study (section 2.5), examination committees are a key element of the University's framework for safeguarding the academic standards of its awards. The purpose of examination committees is – on behalf of the Academic Board - to assess students in accordance with the regulations applying to the programme/s under consideration (including any professional requirements), and make recommendations for progression, or the conferment of academic awards on students who have demonstrated they have met the requirements of the award.

Examination Committees are responsible for:

- confirming module marks;
- confirming progression and awards;
- approving recommendations for the award of credit for prior learning (APL) against the requirements of the programme/s;
- confirming the award of any University prizes associated with the programme/s;
- approving allowances to be made for any exceptional circumstances claims that have been accepted for students on the programme/s;
- considering the implications for progression and award where penalties have been imposed in relation to academic conduct investigations;
- deciding on the action to be taken where it has been found that the marking on a module contributing to the programme/s is unreliable or invalid.

There must be an Examination Committee for every approved programme of study leading to an Oxford Brookes award – as appropriate, a single examination committee may be responsible for a group of related programmes of study. Templates for the terms of reference for examination committees can be downloaded from <https://sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/university-committees/home/committee-servicing-guidance-and-templates>. The terms of reference for examination committees overseeing programmes delivered through collaborative arrangement must be set out in the Operations Manual governing the partnership.

Membership

The minimum membership of an Examination Committee is:

- Chair;
- Secretary;
- at least one serving external examiner;
- at least two other members of staff responsible for examining on the programme/s being considered; however, the module leaders of all modules being considered by the Examination Committee should be present, if possible;
- for collaborative provision, the appointed University Liaison Manager must be present.

Unlike other University committees, examination committees do not have any student representation, and no student may attend an examination committee, or other examiners', meeting other than as a candidate for assessment. However, internal or external examiners for the programme/s under consideration, who are currently students on a different programme, are not considered as students in this context.

For home provision, the role of the Chair of the examination committee is usually taken by the appropriate Programme Lead or Subject Coordinator; but, for collaborative provision, a suitably senior and experienced member of University staff should be appointed to the role (this may be the Liaison Manager, if they are qualified for the role). The appointments of all examination committee chairs must be approved, on an annual basis, by the relevant Faculty Academic Enhancement & Standards/Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee, acting through delegated authority from the Academic Board.

The role of Secretary for an examination committee is normally taken by the appropriate Programme Administrator, as agreed with the Faculty Academic Administration Manager. For programmes delivered through collaborative partnerships, the managing Faculty and the partner organisation should agree who will provide administrative support for examination committees, and the responsibilities of the parties involved should be set out in the Operations Manual.

Together, the examination committee Chair and Secretary are responsible for managing proceedings, and ensuring due process is followed. All staff appointed as Chairs and Secretaries must keep themselves up to date with any ongoing changes to the regulations, procedures, or accreditation requirements that apply to the programmes covered by their examination committee.

An external examiner must be present (they may attend remotely) at all examination committees making recommendations for awards, including those convened to consider re-assessments, and no recommendation for the conferment of an award of the University may be made without the written consent (i.e. the signing of the awards list) of an approved external examiner.

Subsidiary examination committees

The constitution of the committee may include provision for the appointment of subsidiary examination committees. (for example, where a large number of modules contribute to a range of related awards, a subsidiary committee to confirm module marks may be established, which meets prior to the examination committee for the overall awards).

A subsidiary examination committee must include at least one approved external examiner, who must be informed that they have the right to attend the meeting of the main examination committee at which decisions regarding recommendations for awards are made. The rights and duties of such external examiners are the same as those of external examiners on the main committee except that the subsidiary examination committee makes recommendations to the main committee only.

The approved examination committee retains responsibility for judging each student's performance on the programme as a whole and deciding, in the light of the objectives of the

programme and its assessment regulations, whether any allowance may be made for failure in elements of the assessment.

Authority

The examination committee is authorised to assess students in accordance with the assessment regulations, including any professional standards, applying to the programme/s of study for which it is responsible, and to recommend the conferment of an award of the University upon a student who, in the judgement of the Committee, has fulfilled the objectives of the approved programme of study and achieved the academic and - where relevant, professional - standard required for the award. An Examination Committee is also responsible for the approval of recommendations for the award of credit for prior learning against the requirements of the programme/s for which it is responsible. It may not award academic credit or recommend awards unless it has evidence of the candidate's achievement of the requirements for the award (including for the award of credit for prior certificated or experiential learning).

The approved examination committee, or its formally constituted subsidiary examination committees, must be responsible for all assessments that contribute to the recommendation of an award within its jurisdiction. No other body has authority to recommend conferment of an award, nor to amend the decision of an approved and properly constituted examination committee acting within its terms of reference and in accordance with the regulations applying to the programme of study.

An examination committee may, however, accept a penalty relating to a student's marks or award imposed by an Academic Conduct Officer or Conduct Committee in accordance with the Academic Conduct procedure. Any remaining consequences of such a penalty for a student's progression and/or award shall then be determined by an examination committee in accordance with the assessment regulations applying to the programme of study.

An examination committee may also be required to review a decision as a result of disagreements with or between internal and external examiners. Any disagreement between internal and external examiners which cannot be resolved by an Examination Committee should be referred to the Chair of the Academic Board for resolution.

An Examination Committee has no power to redress a grievance relating to teaching, supervision or academic guidance, unless recommended to do so as a consequence of a complaint upheld under the Student Complaint procedure, or by the OIA.

Delegation of responsibility

An approved examination committee, including external examiners, is also responsible for the reassessment or deferred assessment of students on the programme/s it covers. The committee may, at the time when it first meets to decide on its recommendations, agree arrangements for delegating that responsibility to a sub-group of itself, which must include at least one external examiner. Such delegation will not be appropriate for all reassessments or deferred assessments; the committee must be satisfied that it is appropriate in the particular circumstances before agreeing to delegate responsibility. Advice may be sought on this from the Deputy Director of Academic & Student Administration (Registry).

Chair's Action may be taken to correct an administrative error made by an examination committee, but should not be used in other circumstances unless the scope of the delegation to the Chair has been agreed (and minuted) in advance by the committee as a whole.

Administration

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that comprehensive and accurate documentation is prepared for consideration by the Committee, and (in consultation with the Chair) for producing minutes of the meeting which provide a detailed and accurate record of the Committee's proceedings.

'Pre-examination committee' meetings may be held in order to ensure that documentation is accurate and complete prior to the main meeting, but they do not have any formal status - neither do any minutes that may be taken during the pre-meetings - and no decisions relating to the award of credit can be made by them.

Examination committee minutes are the formal record of the University's deliberations and decisions about student progression and awards, and should therefore provide a clear and accurate account of the decisions that have been made by the committee and the reasons behind those decisions. For clarity, students may be referred to by both their name and their student number. Any prizes awarded to students on the programme/s covered by the Examination committee should also be recorded in the minutes.

Examination committee minutes are confidential. The minutes are not part of the University's published information, but may be referred to in the case of a student complaint, or an appeal against an examination committee decision. Minutes and associated documentation should be stored by the Faculty in a secure, but accessible, location for a period of ten years, after which they should be archived. The retention of awards lists and Chair's Action forms is the responsibility of the Registry.

Information about Registry support for examination committees can be found at <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/staff/academic/student-central/examination-committees/>