Subject Examination Boards
Terms of Reference 2014-15

1.25. A Subject Examination Board (SEB) shall be established for each programme of study or cognate group of programmes leading to an award of the University or of QMUL. The administrative support for SEBs shall be provided by the relevant academic school or institute.

1.26. Each Subject Examination Board shall report and make recommendations to a Degree Examination Board (DEB). Degree Examination Boards shall be established for each award or grouping of awards. The administrative support for DEBs shall be provided by the Academic Secretariat.

1.27. It is possible for certain examination boards to combine the functions of a Subject Examination Board and a Degree Examination Board where only one award is being considered (for example, Law) or due to the collaborative nature of a programme, and where this is approved by Senate, or its delegated authority.

1.28. Senate shall delegate authority to examination boards for the consideration of students’ achievement, progression and awards, and other related matters. Senate, or its delegated authority, shall approve the Assessment Handbook, which provides further detail and requirements in relation to the conduct of SEBs and DEBs.

Subject Examination Boards (SEBs)

1.29. Subject Examination Boards report to designated Degree Examination Boards. The terms of reference of Subject Examination Boards are:

i. to take an overview of the assessment processes that operate for the programmes and modules in the subject area, with a particular view to ensuring fairness and impartiality, including: setting examination papers, essay titles, and other assessment tasks, marking processes (including double marking), application of regulations, and the conduct of oral examinations (where used as part of the approved module assessment);
ii. to receive reports from invigilators and students on examinations, and to consider appropriate actions in the light of such reports;
iii. to agree the results of students in individual assessments and modules;
iv. to consider claims of extenuating circumstances and, where valid, to approve any proposed actions to be taken;
v. to make recommendations to the DEB for results to be set aside where there are accepted extenuating circumstances;
vi. to approve the progression of students;
vii. to approve the progression of students to alternative programmes, if applicable;
viii. to make recommendations to the DEB for the exclusion of students due to failure;
ix. to make recommendations to the DEB for award and classification;
x. to agree actions in the event of failure of a module (including qualified failure) by a student, including resit provisions that may include appropriate alternative assessment arrangements;
xii. to make recommendations to the DEB for students to retake or first take modules, where applicable;
xiii. to make recommendations to the DEB and to Senate (or its delegated authority) for the suspension of regulations for individuals or groups of students, where applicable;
xiv. to make recommendations to the DEB for the award titles of individual students, where applicable (pre-2008-09 cohorts only);
xv. to exercise discretion, where appropriate and within the permitted scope of any QMUL policy or regulation, in order to agree results or progression and make recommendations for awards and classifications;
xvi. to review statistics on academic performance and to comment upon the performance of cohorts in particular assessments;
xvii. any other duties delegated to the SEB by the DEB or Senate.
1.30. SEBs may establish sub-boards, where this has the support of the relevant external examiners and is approved by Senate, or its delegated authority. An SEB may operate preliminary meetings or internal boards to consider points of detail prior to the meeting of the SEB. Sub-boards shall always be established to scrutinise examination papers before external examiner approval, and to consider and make recommendations upon extenuating circumstances claims. Sub-boards may also be established for other purposes with the approval of Senate, or its delegated authority. The membership of sub-boards shall be agreed by the SEB.

1.31. The membership of a Subject Examination Board shall be as follows:

i. a Chair, appointed to the role by Senate, or its delegated authority;
ii. a Deputy Chair, appointed to the role by Senate, or its delegated authority;
iii. the programme coordinators or directors;
iv. the internal examiners for the modules under consideration;
v. the external and intercollegiate examiners;
vii. the DEB Chair, who may attend any examination board under the DEB's jurisdiction as a member;
vii. the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning), who may attend any examination board as a member.

1.32. The following may be in attendance:

i. the Secretary to the SEB;
ii. representatives from other SEBs, where students on joint programmes are under consideration;
iii. the Academic Registrar (or nominee);
v. the Principal, Faculty Vice-Principal & Executive Dean, and Faculty Dean for Taught Programmes;
v. assistant internal examiners;
vii. administrative staff associated with the SEB.

1.33. Attendance at the SEB shall be compulsory for all members except the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) and the DEB Chair, unless the absence is approved by the Head of School or Institute.

1.34. The quorum of an SEB shall require the presence of the external examiners. Exceptionally, where an external examiner is unable to attend, the meeting may go ahead in their absence provided that their comments are sought prior to the meeting and reported at the meeting, and that all recommendations and decisions are endorsed by them.

1.35. The quorum of an SEB shall comprise 50 per cent of the total membership, excluding the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) and the DEB Chair, and including internal, external, and intercollegiate examiners.

1.36. In the event that a meeting does not meet the quorum, a suspension of regulations may be sought to ratify the decisions of the meeting. Such suspensions should normally be sought in advance.

1.37. Where one or more sub-board is established it is permissible for the internal examiners to attend only the sub-board, provided that their views can be represented at the SEB, normally through the chair of the sub-board.

Chair of the Subject Examination Board

1.38. The Chair shall be an experienced member of academic staff, but not a serving Head of School or Institute, or a Faculty Dean for Taught Programmes, or an honorary member of academic staff. Programme directors shall not normally act as Chairs for SEBs where their programmes are under consideration. A Deputy Chair shall fulfil the duties of the Chair in the Chair’s absence. Chairs and Deputy Chairs shall be appointed by Senate, or its delegated authority.

1.39. The Chair shall be responsible for the conduct of the examination board, and for ensuring that the Academic Regulations are adhered to.

1.40. The Chair shall also be responsible for ensuring that security procedures for examination question papers within the School or Institute are rigorous. The Chair (or nominee) shall be responsible for approving all examination papers.
Extenuating Circumstances Sub-board

1.41. Each SEB shall establish a sub-board for the preliminary consideration of extenuating circumstances. The terms of reference for Extenuating Circumstances Sub-boards are:

i. to consider extenuating circumstances claims and supporting evidence submitted by students, and the overall profile of the students with such circumstances;

ii. to consider whether or not, in the sub-board’s judgement, the extenuating circumstances are valid and whether or not they had a negative impact upon a student’s performance or participation in assessment;

iii. to make recommendations to the Subject Examination Board about actions to be taken in the light of extenuating circumstances;

iv. to maintain a record of extenuating circumstances submitted and considered, and of the recommended actions.