

2. SUBJECT ASSESSMENT PANELS (FOR USE POST-TDAP)

Purpose and scope

- 2.1 This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations explains what subject assessment panels (SAPs) are; what decisions they make; how they operate; and who is involved..
- 2.2 The section applies to all current and past permanent or visiting students of the College.

NOTE: The College does not currently confer awards. These regulations are approved as part of an in-prospect framework to aid the College's application for – and, if successful, implementation of – Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP).

These regulations are published in the staff version for information and to help align College processes and procedures with possible future requirements. Before they are implemented, the College will review individual sections to ensure they are up to date and comply with the laws and regulatory guidance in place at the time implementation of TDAP begins.

Definitions

- 2.3 'Module' means a self-contained, formally structured piece of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- 2.4 'Transcript' means a document, but not a formal certificate, that records the results a student achieves in the final assessment of a module.

Introduction

Overview

- 2.5 SAPs are the second tier in the College's three-tier Board of Examiners system. The first tier is the Assessment and Progression Panels (these are internal only), and the third tier is the Board of Examiners.
- 2.6 SAPs operate for groups of modules (called 'subjects').
- 2.7 Faculties and Departments set the combinations of modules that form these subjects.
- 2.8 The size of subjects can range from all the modules offered in a Department to a specialist, subject-level grouping that may include only a few modules.
- 2.9 The SAP is the key forum for setting and maintaining academic standards, rather than the Board of Examiners.
- 2.10 For each module in the relevant subject, SAPs confirm the mark awarded to each individual student attempting assessment in that module during the previous semester or year (as appropriate), regardless of which qualification the student is seeking or with which Department that qualification is associated.
- 2.11 SAPs should consider, module by module, the marks presented.
- 2.12 SAPs do not need to consider marks at significant boundaries. College policy is that all marks ending in a 9 (nine) will be rounded up to the next integer (so thirty-nine (39) become forty (40) etc.).
- 2.13 Additionally, SAPs may moderate marks across the module.

- 2.14 Extenuating Circumstances Panels, through the mark sheet, will inform SAPs of cases of valid extenuating circumstances.
- 2.15 SAPs also make module decisions against each student. This is determined by the mark and by applying the College's current 'Examination and Assessment Regulations'.
- 2.16 The decision may be Pass, Second Attempt Assessment(s), Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s), Second Attempt Assessment(s) and Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s), Pending; Module Result Pending; or Repeat. It is this decision that the Chair of the SAP must ensure is published to students within three (3) working days of the SAP's meeting date.
- 2.17 The SAP considers modules in a sequence decided at the Chair's discretion. This does not have to be level by level. The same SAP may consider postgraduate and undergraduate modules.
- 2.18 The Examination and Assessment Regulations do not envisage or require discussion of individual students except about valid extenuating circumstances and when marks are close to significant boundaries. Such discussions will only relate to the student's performance in the assessment artefacts of the module and by referring to its approved learning outcomes and marking criteria; they will not consider student performance in other modules.
- 2.19 The mark sheet will also show the 'significance' of the student's attempt at the module, which means whether it is a repeat attempt etc.

Quorum

- 2.20 The quorum for the SAP meeting held to confirm marks and publish results is defined, for each individual module considered, as:
- (a) Chair (who is appointed on the Academic Board's authority);
 - (b) the module co-ordinator for the module or an appointed nominee, who must have been involved in assessing the module;
 - (c) the Head of Department/School or an appointed nominee;
 - (d) at least one (1) of the relevant module external examiners.
- 2.21 The subject external examiner is part of the SAP quorum. If, exceptionally they are unable to attend the SAP, they should submit their views as detailed above.
- 2.22 It would be good practice for more than the minimum number of staff required by the quorum to attend.
- 2.23 If the subject external examiner cannot attend the meeting, she or he must do two (2) things. First, as far as is possible, make their views known to the SAP before it meets. Second, after the Board has met, write to the Chair of the Board stating how far they were involved with the modules during the year and how far they were satisfied with the assessment processes.
- 2.24 If the quorum cannot be achieved, a decision of 'pending' should be recorded.

Frequency of meetings

- 2.25 SAPs will normally meet once each academic year to confirm marks and publish results. Master's courses will normally have two (2) meetings each academic year,

- one (1) to confirm the taught module marks and the second after the project module.
- 2.26 SAPs for modules that either contribute to programmes with multiple intakes each year or to collaborative programmes may meet more than twice each academic year.
- 2.27 SAPs may also meet to consider Second Attempt Assessment(s) results, though the SAP may delegate this role to a specially identified 'sub-group' of individuals. This delegation is on the SAP's authority and must be recorded in the minutes of the main SAP meeting.
- 2.28 There should also be other meetings of the SAPs.
- 2.29 A small sub-committee of the SAP must meet to review statistical information that allows comparison of the cohort with previous cohorts, other modules in the 'cognate group', and between cohorts of students on the same module but from different pathways or programmes. Departments typically convene this meeting after the referral period but before the next academic year begins.
- 2.30 A small sub-committee of the SAP, convened by the Associate Dean (Academic), must meet before each semester to approve the assessment artefact(s) intended for use in that semester before students start any assessment in the module.

External examiners

- 2.31 The College refers to external examiners involved with SAPs as 'subject external examiners'.
- 2.32 It is important that each module has a subject external examiner assigned to it and that she or he is aware of their duties. If this has not occurred, the SAP Chair must not allow consideration of students' performance in a module.
- 2.33 Subject external examiners form part of the quorum for a meeting of the SAP held to confirm marks and publish results as described above.
- 2.34 The document "External Examiners Regulations and Procedures" published by Academic Registry defines the role and responsibilities of subject external examiners.
- 2.35 The subject external examiners' role is summarised as follows. They:
- (a) have the key role regarding academic standards;
 - (b) have a responsibility to ensure that the SAP, on the College's behalf, has assessed students fairly;
 - (c) have a responsibility to ensure that SAP decisions appropriately match demonstrated learning outcomes and marking criteria for the module;
 - (d) have a responsibility to ensure that the SAP, on the College's behalf, has maintained standards at a module level that are comparable with such assessments elsewhere in the UK;
 - (e) have the power to see any assessment to help them give this confirmation;
 - (f) must receive at the start of each teaching period and regarding each module for which they have responsibility, the module's assessment strategy and its relationship to the module's learning outcomes, together with a statement of how the elements of assessment will meet the strategy;

- (g) must receive, by the end of the assessment period or as soon as possible afterwards, a sample of assessment whose content is to be the subject of agreement between the subject external examiner and the Department/School;
- (h) attend SAP meetings held to confirm marks and publish results. If unable to attend, they should submit their views as detailed above;
- (i) must, if satisfied, give their approval to any proposed modification of sets of marks following moderation before a SAP can confirm the marks;
- (j) must complete the College subject external examiner report form and submit it to the Academic Registrar within four (4) weeks of the SAP meeting date;
- (k) must, if satisfied, sign the mark sheet to show general satisfaction with the effectiveness and adequacy of the relationship between the assessment strategy and the module's learning outcomes, although their signature does not necessarily mean they agree with every confirmed mark;
- (l) must report to the President or Provost if they are unable to sign the mark sheet because they do not have such general satisfaction;
- (m) may wish to approve, or comment on, assessments in advance of their being given to students – how this is done is to be agreed between the Department/School and the subject external examiner, and must involve all assessment, i.e. coursework as well as examination;
- (n) may indicate in their report that they believe the SAP, on the College's behalf, is not maintaining standards at an appropriate level and comment on what they would wish to see changed;
- (o) may report in confidence to the President or Provost any serious concern they have on assessment matters that put at risk the standards of the College's awards;
- (p) may meet and have discussions with students at any time to form an impression of the module and its delivery.

Moderation of marks

- 2.36 After reviewing the full range of information, the SAP would normally consider moderation in the following circumstances if:
- (a) the pass threshold had been incorrectly applied;
 - (b) the marks fell outside the expected distribution;
 - (c) the Head of Department confirmed that a course-management or assessment-conduct issue had disadvantaged students.
- 2.37 If there is moderation of marks (which can go ahead only if agreed by the subject external examiner), the moderation should normally be for all marks in a particular assessment artefact. Moderation may be downwards as well as upwards.
- 2.38 Moderation may also take the form of discounting an assessment artefact and extrapolating a module mark from the remaining assessment artefacts, which will be re-weighted accordingly.

- 2.39 The minutes of the meeting should record any agreed moderation and the reasons it was applied; the subject external examiner's agreement; and the extent of her/his involvement in the decision-making process.

Definition of pass criteria

- 2.40 The College uses the following definitions:
- (a) Assessment element – an aggregated mark of a type of assessment contributing to the overall module mark for a student, for example, coursework or examination. The mark in any assessment component will be calculated from marks earned in the assessment.
 - (b) Assessment component – an individual piece of assessed work, for example a coursework assignment or an exam paper.
 - (c) Overall mark – the module mark calculated for a student from the assessment component marks, normally by means of a weighting (e.g., 0.3 for coursework and 0.7 for examination).
- 2.41 The pass criteria is a 40% overall mark or grade equivalent.
- 2.42 Variations are possible, such as 'thresholds' in assessment components, but the Head of Department must request these through the Academic Registrar for approval by Academic Policy Committee.
- 2.43 If a module is assessed entirely by artefacts marked as Pass/Fail and not given a mark, approval must be sought by the module leader from Academic Policy Committee. This would normally occur through the course approval process for modules on new courses or through the module management approval process for modules on existing courses.
- 2.44 Additional conditions (not in terms of marks or grades) may be set as part of the module details at the approval stage. If such conditions exist, the module description must clearly state them, and Departments must inform students about them before they register for the module.
- 2.45 If a student is presenting Second Attempt Assessment(s), the SAP may pass the student only if the student has passed all assessment artefact(s) set as Second Attempt Assessment(s). Below, the College give details of the requirements for Second Attempt Assessment(s).

Input required

- 2.46 The SAP should receive a mark sheet for each module. Any moderation will be indicated. The mark sheet must identify each student's overall marks, and may include artefact and component marks on supplementary sheets. The mark sheet identify the student's status on the module (e.g., studying the module for the first time, offering Second Attempt Assessment(s), repeating the module). The mark sheet must indicate which students have had an assessment penalty applied (e.g., for late submission of work).
- 2.47 If the Academic Policy Committee has agreed to a request for thresholds in assessment components, the mark sheet must indicate the thresholds.
- 2.48 The mark sheet informs the SAP if a student has successfully claimed that extenuating circumstances affected particular assessment artefacts.

Extenuating circumstances

- 2.49 The SAP may make one (1) of four (4) possible decisions regarding valid extenuating circumstances, as follows:
- (a) 'Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s)': If a student has missed an examination-type assessment, the SAP will usually record a decision of 'Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s)'. The SAP will offer the student the opportunity to complete a Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) in the affected assessment artefact(s) during the Second Attempt Assessment Period.
 - (b) 'Waived assessment penalty': If a student has missed the due date for a coursework-type assessment, the SAP will waive the assessment penalty. The SAP will ensure the assessment artefact attracts the full mark it justifies on its merits alone if it has been submitted within twenty (20) working days of the due submission date.
 - (c) 'Extrapolated overall mark for module': In the SAP's academic judgment, the student has demonstrated in at least two (2) other completed and unaffected assessment artefacts contributing to the final mark of the module, that they have met the module's learning outcomes. The SAP may then extrapolate an overall mark for the module from the completed and unaffected assessment artefacts. If the extrapolated mark results in a Pass for the module, the College does not expect the student to be offered a Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) as well. However, please remember that a student has the absolute right to a Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s).
- 2.50 Chairs should ensure SAP members understand that, under the College's Extenuating Circumstances policy and with the exceptions listed above, a student with a valid extenuating circumstance has an absolute right, if they wish to use it, to another attempt at a missed examination.
- 2.51 Extenuating circumstances cannot be submitted for Second Attempt Assessment(s) or deferred work.

Anonymous marking

- 2.52 The College operates a policy of anonymous marking for all assessments including coursework, unless it is impracticable.
- 2.53 If assessment is subject to anonymous marking, the assessment artefact must remain anonymous until the point it is entered on the Student Record System (the 'SRS').
- 2.54 SAPs do not have to consider students anonymously.
- 2.55 To comply with the Data Protection Act, published provisional decisions of SAPs should show marks by student number. Please see section below for more details of how to publish marks.

Decisions possible

- 2.56 The possible decisions are as follows:
- (a) 'Pass'

The SAP must pass students who meet pass criteria, including any approved 'thresholds' that apply to the programme on which they are registered. The SAP assigns the credit specified in the approved module description to students who have passed the module.

(b) 'Second Attempt Assessment(s)'

SAPs must give students who do not meet pass criteria the opportunity of Second Attempt Assessment(s) depending on their status. A student who has not submitted the final artefact is not eligible for a Second Attempt Assessment but will instead be given a decision of Repeat.

The SAP is responsible for approving the form that a Second Attempt Assessment(s) will take for a module.

Second Attempt Assessment(s) may take the form either of another assessment artefact of the type failed, or of another type of assessment artefact. Alternatively, Second Attempt Assessment(s) may take the form of a single assessment artefact taken by all students who have failed the module regardless of which, or how many, assessment artefacts they have failed in that module.

The SAP has discretion over the Second Attempt Assessment(s) requirements, but it should treat students in a similar position in a consistent way.

The SAP should set the time for completion or submission of Second Attempt Assessment(s) within the limits defined by the academic year dates, as published annually by the Academic Registry on the authority of the Academic Board.

The SAP has the additional responsibility of ensuring Departments properly record the approved form of Second Attempt Assessment(s) on the Student Record System and clearly communicate the details of the decision to students.

The Second Attempt Assessments will be marked with the artefact mark capped at the pass mark of the module. The overall module mark will be recalculated with the capped Second Attempt Assessment marks but the overall module mark will not be capped. The mark shown on the transcript will bear the note 'Passed after Second Assessment'. If the SAP has prescribed a single re-assessment task that allows the student to demonstrate achievement of the module's learning outcome, the capped Second Attempt Assessment mark will be used for all the failed assessment artefacts.

The SAP cannot consider Second Attempt Assessment(s) that have been submitted unless there has been a decision of 'Second Attempt Assessment(s)' at a previous meeting of the Academic Board, and, in the case of full-time and sandwich undergraduate students only, a Board of Examiners has confirmed the decision.

(c) 'Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s)'

If there is a valid extenuating circumstance recorded or determined against any missed examination, the SAP must normally make a decision of 'Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s)' against the student in that module.

The SAP may delegate authority to the Chair to confirm marks and grades arising from deferred decisions.

The SAP may also defer decisions for whole groups of students, for example, where the SAP awaits the subject external examiner's approval for moderation, or where a course-management issue has resulted in marks not being available to the SAP, or where the quorum defined above has not been achieved.

If a valid extenuating circumstance is recorded or accepted against any missed examination in the same module where a student has failed another artefact, the SAP must normally make a decision of 'Second Attempt Assessment and Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s)' against the student in that module.

The student will take the Second Attempt Assessment(s) under the provisions below.

The student will take Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) under the provisions below.

(d) 'Repeat'

The SAP may record this decision if the student has failed a Second Attempt Assessment(s) or a Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s). The decision may be overturned if the Board of Examiners opts to recommend that the College being the process for terminating the students registration under the relevant policy..

(e) 'Pending'

The SAP may record a decision of 'Pending' for whole groups of students, for example, if the SAP awaits the subject external examiner's approval for moderation, or if a course-management issue has resulted in marks not being available to the SAP, or if the quorum defined above has not been achieved.

(f) 'Module Result Pending'

The SAP may record a decision of Module Result Pending if the student has a valid Extenuating Circumstances for a piece of coursework and the coursework has not yet been received and marked.

Decisions after Second Attempt Assessment(s)

2.57 If the SAP or delegated sub-group is considering a student's performance in Second Attempt Assessment(s), the SAP may record a decision of 'Pass' or 'Repeat', depending on whether the assessment artefact(s) meet the pass criteria.

2.58 Second Attempt Assessments will be marked with the artefact mark capped at the pass mark of the module. The overall module mark will be recalculated with the capped Second Attempt Assessment marks but the overall module mark will not be capped. The mark shown on the transcript will bear the note 'Passed after Second Assessment'. If the SAP has prescribed a single re-assessment task that allows the student to demonstrate achievement of the module's learning outcomes, it will use the capped Second Attempt Assessment mark for all the failed assessment artefacts.

- 2.59 Students may not carry Second Attempt Assessments or Deferred First Attempt Assessments into the next academic year.

Disabilities

- 2.60 At departmental level it is good practice to keep a personal record of each student, which records details of any allowances/entitlements regarding their access needs including disability (e.g., any extra time allowed in examinations), along with confirmation that the allowances have been applied.
- 2.61 A copy of these records should be available to each SAP covering students from the Department, so the Chair can refer to them in the case of any individual student. Any discussion requires a brief minute for that student under that module.

Sequence of Board of Examiners meeting agenda items for each module

- 2.62 Is the Board of Examiners quorate for this module? If not quorate, the Department must convene a further meeting as soon as possible and, in any case, in time to give the board the necessary information in line with the approved College schedule.
- 2.63 Are there any exceptional circumstances regarding assessments in the module or any course-management issues that may have affected student performance? (For example, disruption of the exam by a fire drill, unavailability of key resources, an unfair assessment that disadvantaged students.) If so, has the Head of Department followed the procedure at paragraph above the Subject Assessment Panels section of the current Examination and Assessment Regulations? What allowance does the board propose to make for this?
- 2.64 The board must receive a mark sheet that gives the information detailed below.
- 2.65 Moderation: If, before the meeting, the subject external examiner has agreed proposed moderation, the mark sheet must make this plain. If the SAP decides to moderate marks but the subject external examiner cannot attend the meeting, the board must record 'decision pending' but should delegate authority to the Chair to agree moderation with the subject external examiner and subsequently to confirm the marks.
- 2.66 Confirmation of each student's mark, following the processes described above: If the SAP takes decisions about extenuating circumstances if the student has not yet achieved the pass criteria in the overall module mark, and if the outcome is anything except as detailed below, then the minutes must record these decisions.
- 2.67 Agreement of Second Attempt Assessment(s), Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) and repeat requirements and timings: These would typically be 'generic' to the module rather than decided individually. Any individual exceptions to the 'generic' Second Attempt Assessment(s) requirements should be agreed and recorded in the minutes by name or number of student.

Publishing the results

- 2.68 SAPs must publish a list of decisions (i.e., Pass, Second Attempt Assessment(s), Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s), Fail or Pending) within three (3) working days of the meeting. The College's current Examination and Assessment Regulations do not prescribe a way of doing this except to remind staff to comply with the Data Protection Act.

- 2.69 So if a Department publishes decisions in a public place, it should use registration numbers only.
- 2.70 Students have a right to disclosure of marks under the Data Protection Act and should have received indicative marks already. But the College does not require publication of marks and Departments may choose whether or not to publish them. The College's Student Record System has standard reports that allow the publication of marks by name or number. Publication may be by notifying an individual student of their personal results by letter or through password-protected website access, or by a publicly displayed class list of marks that should refer to students by registration number not name.
- 2.71 Published marks may take the form of grades but a student has the right to receive their marks if they apply for disclosure under the Data Protection Act. Given the inconvenience and expense such requests cause Departments, it may be more sensible simply to release to each student their own marks. This remains a departmental decision, however.
- 2.72 Good practice requires Departments to notify students with Second Attempt Assessment(s) or Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) individually about what they have to do to pass and when they must do it.

Minutes

- 2.73 The Chair of the SAP is responsible for producing the minutes of the meeting, in line with College conventions. The Chair must appoint a secretary to help exercise this responsibility.
- 2.74 Minutes should consist of:
- (a) an attendance list (showing what items the member was in attendance for);
 - (b) apologies;
 - (c) confirmation of the previous minutes;
 - (d) any matters arising (for example, approval of Chair's action);
 - (e) for each module considered, a copy of the mark sheet produced for the meeting and of the same mark sheet updated by the SAP's decisions;
 - (f) for each module considered, a note of the application of any discretion regarding moderation of assessments, confirmation of student marks, use of powers regarding extenuating circumstances, a note as to whether the module falls outside the expected marks range (an average of between 50% and 70% for the module), the generic Second Attempt Assessment(s) requirements and timings, the generic Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s) requirements and timings, any individual departures from these generic requirements, and timings for Second Attempt Assessment(s) and Deferred First Attempt Assessment(s);
 - (g) for each module, a note to record where dispute has been raised about the application of disability allowances and how (if) it has been resolved;
 - (h) a note of delegation arrangements.
- 2.75 A template of minutes, in Word format, is available from the Academic Registry.

System support

- 2.76 The College's Student Record System (the 'SRS'), referred to as CADS, offers support to the SAP processes, mainly by producing detailed reports for each module. This also enables the publication of results and the notification of detailed outcomes to students via the Student Portal. The update of student records after each SAP meeting enables each Department to produce a comprehensive report for a Board of Examiners, regardless of a student's distribution of modules across Departments and Faculties.

Advice

- 2.77 Advice for students on the aegrotat or posthumous rules, and the associated lower-level College rules is available from the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulation (oscar@gsmlondon.ac.uk) or the GSM London Students' Union (gsmadvicecentre@gsmlondon.ac.uk). More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals or
- 2.78 Advice for staff on working with young or vulnerable applicants and their parents is available from their nominated Academic Policy Partner.
- 2.79 If any staff development needs are identified, they may be discussed with members of the Staff and Educational Development Team.

Fees

- 2.80 No additional fees or charges are associated with these regulations.
- 2.81 The College is not liable for financial or other consequences arising from action under these regulations.

Legal and regulatory context

- 2.82 This policy has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKQC), "Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards". The UKQC is the definitive reference point for all UK Higher Education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained and how the quality of learning opportunities is assured and enhanced.
- 2.83 The College may not be bound by the principles in the Code in paragraph 2.82 and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures. It uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

Enforcement, monitoring and review

- 2.84 If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.
- 2.85 Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.
- 2.86 The annual report must include statistical data on the number of awards made under this regulation; the outcomes, Departments and programmes from which they originate; the length of the process; and the equality characteristics (including sex, disability and ethnicity) of those proposed and awarded.
- 2.87 Every two (2) years, the College must review these regulations to ensure that:

- (a) they remain up to date and continue to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
- (b) areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
- (c) opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

Schedule (not part of the policies or regulations):

Responsible Officer: Head of Registry and Administration

Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board

Version: 1.0

Date: 24 February 2016 (In principle)

Monitoring and Review Body: Academic Regulations and Awards Committee

Effective From: Not application, for use post-TDAP

Next Scheduled Review: Not application, for use post-TDAP