

Code of Practice: Assessment Boards

Academic Governance Approval

Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

Academic Sponsor

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1. Aims, Scope and Regulations

1.1 Introduction

This Code of Practice is designed to assist with the management, conduct and decision-making processes of Module Boards, and Progression and Award Boards of the Royal Agricultural University.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes.

All modules and awards of the University are the responsibility of an assessment board organised by the University.

The University operates a two-tier assessment board structure comprising Module Boards, responsible for considering and approving module grades at the end of each Semester, and a Progression and Award Board responsible for determining progression to the next level of study and eligibility for an award of the University.

Each Module Board is accountable to the Progression and Award Board, and each Progression and Award Board is accountable to the Academic Board.

Assessment Boards must:

- Have the Terms of Reference approved by Academic Board;
- Include External Examiners approved by Academic Board;
- Be quorate;
- Produce assessment board minutes that are an accurate and comprehensive record of the approved results and decisions taken at these boards. Registry will produce, circulate and retain these minutes.

Dates for assessment boards are published in the academic calendar which is produced by Academic Services and approved by the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC).

This Code of Practice applies to the following awards from the Royal Agricultural University taught at its campuses in Cirencester and Swindon, as well as its Joint Institute for Advanced Agritechology at Qingdao Agricultural University (RAU at QAU) Joint Institute; franchised and validated provision taught at providers in the UK and international:

- Foundation degree
- Level 4 Certificates
- Level 5 Diplomas
- Level 6 Honours
- Level 7 Masters

For smaller partnerships it may be appropriate to hold a single, combined Module, Progression and Award Board.

1.2 Regulations

The following Office for Students Conditions of Registration are relevant to this Code of Practice:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| B4 | <p>The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards. The provider must ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) students are assessed effectively; b) each assessment is valid and reliable; c) academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; d) academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; e) relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously. |
| B5 | <p>The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher. The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) and standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; b) awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards. |

2. Assessment Board Terms of Reference and Membership

2.1 Module Boards

Module Boards take place at the end of each semester and review student marks from each module.

Module Board Terms of Reference

The Module Board is designed to confirm individual student marks and overall achievement in each module, providing clear details of outcomes and decisions. The Module Board will make recommendations for interventions to support students whose academic performance provides cause for concern. Module Boards ensure that:

- All assessments are properly conducted;
- All assessments undertaken for modules are scrutinised and marked;
- Students whose performance provide cause for concern are identified;
- The mark or decision to pass/not to pass is made in respect of each student for assessment, referral or deferral for each module;
- Students receive the award of credit where assessed performance meets the minimum threshold required for a pass in each module in accordance with the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes;
- Any matters arising from the analysis of assessment data for modules presented at the board, including discussions of module delivery and quality enhancements, are recorded and actioned;
- Professional accreditation or recognition is duly considered and confirmed.

Membership of Module Boards

Membership of Module Boards includes:

- Deans of Subject (Chair) or authorised nominee to act as Chair;
- Director of Academic Services;
- Head of Registry;
- Head of Quality;
- Module Leader(s) for all modules presented;
- Programme Leaders;
- External Examiners;
- Representatives from collaborative partners as appropriate.

Officer to Module Boards

A member of the Registry Exam Admin Team will act as Officer to the Module Board.

Quoracy of Module Boards

Quoracy will be 50% of the membership.

2.2 Progression and Award Board Terms of Reference

The Progression and Award Board is designed to review individual student marks and overall achievement in each module and programme of study, and to make recommendations on progression and awards for each individual student. Progression and Award Boards ensure that:

- All assessments are properly conducted;
- All assessments undertaken for modules and programmes are scrutinised and marked;
- External Examiners have been able to view and scrutinise student work;
- External Examiners confirm that standards set were appropriate and student outcomes were comparable to those of other degree awarding bodies;
- External Examiners confirm that processes for assessment, examination and the determination of marks measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against intended outcomes of the programmes;
- Student marks for a module, year and level of study are confirmed;
- Resits or deferrals are correctly offered to a student;
- Dominant quality is applied to students where appropriate;
- Named awards are conferred within the jurisdiction of the board;
- Professional accreditation or recognition is duly considered and confirmed;
- Progression, final awards or appropriate courses of action are confirmed;
- Any matters arising from the analysis of assessment data for modules/programmes presented at the board, including discussions of delivery and quality enhancements, are recorded and actioned.

Membership of Progression and Award Boards

Membership of Progression and Award Boards includes:

- Deans of Subject (Chair) or authorised nominee to act as Chair;
- Director of Academic Services;
- Head of Registry;
- Head of Quality;
- Programme Leaders for all programmes presented;
- External Examiners for all programmes presented;
- Representatives from collaborative partners as appropriate.

Officer to Progression and Award Boards

A member of the Registry Exam Admin Team will act as Officer to the Progression and Award Board.

Quoracy of Progression and Award Boards

Quoracy will be 50% of the membership.

2.3 Conflicts of Interest

No student nor member of staff who is enrolled on a module or registered for an award under consideration may attend an assessment board. Any other potential conflicts of interest must be declared at the start of the meeting.

2.4 External Examiners

External Examiners are expected to attend and participate in Module Boards and Progression and Award Boards, and to submit end of year reports to Academic Quality. The University has established procedures relating to the nomination, selection and approval of External Examiner appointments. Roles and responsibilities are set out in the External Examiner Guidance available on the University website. This guidance is updated annually together with the External Examiner Report template.

2.5 Confidentiality

All discussions at assessment boards are confidential to its members and to a panel of members convened to review appeals decisions on behalf of Academic Board.

3. Module Board Guidance

3.1 Pre-Module Board Activity

Module Leaders must ensure that the moderation of assessment marks has been completed for module assessments in accordance with RAU regulations and should cover all assessment components of a module and should span the full range of marks awarded. Module Leaders are responsible for making a sample of marked work available to the Moderator (usually via Gateway) *in time for the marks to be* moderated before they are released to students and before final marks for all assessments are accurately entered in the University's student record system (Quercus) by the deadline published in the academic calendar (available on Gateway). Programme Leaders have overall responsibility for ensuring that all marks have been moderated and are present in Quercus, and that reasons for absent marks are recorded.

Marks in Quercus will be 'locked' after the marks entry deadline to allow Registry to run final reports detailing module performance and students at risk of failure.

Registry will circulate the agenda, main report and any associated papers a minimum of two working days ahead of the Board to allow sufficient time for academic staff and External Examiners to review material, report any errors or omissions, and prepare their comments.

3.2 During the Module Board

Module Boards will normally be conducted remotely via an online platform (e.g., MS Teams). Registry will screen share the relevant report(s) and Module Leaders will be invited to provide a brief commentary on their module's performance, including an explanation of any missing marks.

Modules will be presented where possible in order of academic cluster, and relevant External Examiners will be invited to comment on their areas at the end of each cluster.

To ensure that proceedings are fair and impartial, student names will be omitted from Module Board reports.

Individual student circumstances will not be discussed during the Module Board.

The Board will confirm prior approval of Chair's Action for specific circumstances, e.g., academic misconduct cases pending panel outcome.

3.3 After the Module Board

Quercus Adjustments

Registry will make any approved changes to marks in Quercus, e.g., Compensated Passes.

Notification of Results

Registry will send results communications to all students two days after the Board meeting. Students will be notified via their student email accounts that their results are available to

view on the Student Portal accessed via Gateway. If a student does not pass the module they will be advised on their options and of the appeal process.

At Risk Students

Full details of at-risk students will be circulated by Registry to relevant academic staff after the Module Board. The list will also be shared with Student Services.

4. Progression and Award Board Guidance

4.1 Pre-Progression and Award Board Activity

Module Leaders must ensure that the moderation of assessment marks has been completed for module assessments in accordance with RAU regulations and should cover all assessment components of a module and should span the full range of marks awarded. Module Leaders are responsible for making a sample of marked work available to the Moderator (usually via Gateway) *in time for the marks to be* moderated before they are released to students and before final marks for all assessments are accurately entered in the University's student record system (Quercus) by the deadline published in the academic calendar (available on Gateway). Programme Leaders have overall responsibility for ensuring that all marks have been moderated and are present in Quercus, and that reasons for absent marks are recorded.

Registry will run year and award calculators in Quercus and produce reports for the Board.

Registry will circulate the agenda, reports and any associated papers a minimum of two working days ahead of the Board to allow sufficient time for academic staff and External Examiners to review material, report any errors or omissions, and prepare their comments.

4.2 During the Progression and Award Board

Progression and Award Boards will normally be conducted remotely via an online platform (e.g., MS Teams). Registry will screen share the relevant report(s) and Programme Leaders will be invited to provide commentary on their students' performance.

Students eligible for Dominant Quality will be highlighted in the report and award uplift confirmed by the Board.

Programmes will be presented where possible in order of academic cluster, and relevant External Examiners will be invited to comment on their areas at the end of each cluster.

Individual student circumstances will not be discussed during the Progression and Award Board.

The Board will confirm prior approval of Chair's Action for specific circumstances, e.g., academic misconduct cases pending panel outcome.

4.3 After the Progression and Award Board

Quercus Adjustments

Registry will make any approved changes to marks in Quercus, e.g., Dominant Quality uplifts.

Notification of Results

Registry will send results communications to all students two days after the Board meeting. Students will be notified via their student email accounts that their results are available to view on the Student Portal accessed via Gateway. In the event of failure, students will be advised of their options and of the appeal process.

Resitting and Failed Students

Full details of resitting and failed students will be circulated by Registry to relevant academic staff after the Progression and Award Board. The list will also be shared with Student Services.

5. Key Academic Regulations for Assessment Boards

5.1 Compensation

Compensation (para. 152-156 of Academic Regulations)

An assessment board has the power to recommend a pass in one module worth no more than 15 credits where the student has failed to achieve the pass mark, providing that:

- Modules at that level of the programme worth at least 120 credits have been undertaken;
- The mark for the module is 35% or above;
- The student's overall average mark for the year is 40% or higher;
- The failed module is not designated as ineligible for compensation in the Programme Specification or due to PSRB requirements.

In such cases a Compensated Pass will be recorded. The student will be awarded the credits for the module and be allowed to progress to the next level as if a pass score had originally been achieved. NB: the actual mark achieved will be used to calculate the overall award outcome.

Where a student has failed an assessment as a consequence of academic misconduct, they will not be eligible for compensation.

Modules undertaken as part of the research stage of an Honours or Taught Master's Programme (project stage) will not be eligible for compensation.

5.2 Progression

Progression (para. 157-163 of Academic Regulations)

Progression from one level of study to the next, or to the final award, will depend upon meeting the requirements set out in the Programme Specification.

A student registered on a Foundation Degree programme must complete their award before they can be admitted to a top-up award.

Undergraduate students may resit up to 50% of their total registered module credits in any academic year. This is over and above any referred credits relating to a work-based learning or placement module.

Postgraduate students may resit up to 50% of their total registered module credits in any academic year, with the Master's dissertation, agreed equivalent research-based project or combination of a research methods module and a Masters dissertation or agreed equivalent research -based project being considered independently of the taught module requirements.

If a student fails more than 50% of their total registered module credits in any academic year, they will not have an opportunity to resit the failed assessments. Instead, they must repeat the failed modules or withdraw from the course.

5.3 Dominant Quality

Dominant Quality for Undergraduate Awards (para. 143-145 of Academic Regulations)

Dominance is automatically considered for undergraduate awards where the overall final average mark is no more than 2% below the higher grade. The following criteria should also be met:

- a) A minimum of 75 credits of the final year at the higher level;
- b) No module result is more than two classes lower than the dominant class.

Dominant Quality for Postgraduate Awards (para. 150 of Academic Regulations)

Dominance is automatically considered for postgraduate awards where the overall final average mark is no more than 2% below the higher grade. The following criteria should also be met:

- a) A minimum of 100 credits, to include the research element, of a 180 credit Master's programme;
- b) No module result is more than two classes lower than the dominant class.

6. Appeals Against Board Decisions

Students may submit an academic appeal against decisions made by the University's Progression and Award Board following publication of end of year results, and progression/award decisions.

Criteria

Academic appeals will only be considered if they meet the following criteria:

- 1) Appeals must be received within 10 working days of the notification of results.
- 2) Any appeal must include relevant and timely supporting evidence. This evidence should support the claim(s) made in the appeal, and cover the timeframe of the assessment(s) the appeal against.
- 3) The appeal must meet at least one of the grounds for appeal listed below:
 - i) That there were irregularities in the conduct of the assessment or the Examination Board, including administrative error, which could raise reasonable doubt that the Examination Board would have reached the same outcome without these irregularities.
 - ii) That there were circumstances which had affected the student's performance which could not, for valid reason, be provided before the Examination Board took place.
 - iii) That one or more of the assessors was prejudiced against the student, or unreasonably biased in their judgement.

Any appeal which does not meet all three of the criteria above will be automatically dismissed.

Appeals against academic judgement will not be considered under any circumstances.