

Academic Policy

A09 Assessment Board Regulations

1. Purpose and Scope

Assessment Board regulations in relation to all Middlesex University degrees remain the responsibility of Middlesex University. This policy is intended to inform and assist SAE staff to ensure effective implementation of those regulations after the granting of Accredited Status to SAE Institute in 2010, and it replicates those Middlesex University regulations.

Where any inconsistency or lack of clarity exists between this policy and the approved regulations, processes and procedures of Middlesex University in relation to Assessment Boards as a result of changes made by the University, then the University provisions shall prevail.

2. Definitions

The term ‘Degree Centre’ is used to mean any SAE Campus which has been approved by agreed Middlesex University procedures to deliver degree awards of the University.

The term ‘Group Academic Coordinator’ is used to mean an academic staff member appointed within and by SAE Institute to have responsibility and oversight for the implementation of regulations and policies which apply to the academic programmes of a regional grouping of degree centres and SAE campuses.

3. Structure and operation of the Assessment Board and Panels

a) The composition of the Programme Assessment Board will normally be:

- the SAE Senior Academic Advisor (chair)
- the Chief External Examiner
- the Senior Academic Coordinator
- the Registry Administrator (secretary)
- the University Subject Specialist Link Tutor
- the Group or Campus Academic Coordinators representing Degree Centres with students coming forward for consideration by the Board (participation may be by telephone conferencing), as organised by the Senior Academic Coordinator.

b) The composition of an Assessment Panel will be:

- the Campus Academic Coordinator or Group Academic Coordinator (chair)
- other Campus Academic Coordinators in the Group (as appropriate)
- the regional External Examiner
- members of staff involved in teaching the programme(s)
- a secretary identified by the relevant Degree Centre.

- c) The Chair of the Assessment Board shall be a senior member of the Institute's staff, normally the Senior Academic Advisor.
- d) The Assessment Board shall be attended by the Chief External Examiner.
- e) Meetings of the Assessment Board shall be preceded by Assessment Panels for Degree Centre or group of Degree Centres putting students forward to that Board meeting. Assessment Panels shall be chaired by the Campus Academic Coordinator or National (Group) Academic Coordinator and attended by tutors with knowledge of the work of students to be considered, and the regional External Examiner.
- f) The Conferment List confirmed by the Institute's Assessment Board must be signed by the Chair of the Assessment Board and by the Chief External Examiner appointed to the Programme (wherever possible at the Board or within 7 days).
- g) The SAE Registry Administrator is responsible for passing the decisions of the Assessment Board (in the form of a Pass/Conferment List) to the Academic Registry (Collaborative Programmes Office) of Middlesex University for the issuing of certificates. Certificates will be issued within 5 months from receipt of accurate and complete conferment lists. The Institute shall keep a copy in case of subsequent queries. All Conferment Lists should be completed clearly and in accordance with the published Conferment of Finalists Guidelines (available from the Collaborative Programmes Office).
- h) Students must abide by the Institute policies on Academic Honesty and on Student Grievances.

4. Authority of Assessment Boards and Panels

- a) Assessment Boards and Panels derive their authority from the University Academic Board and are responsible for the assessment of students.
- b) Prior to Assessment Board meetings, for each candidate the grades for each item of assessment shall be considered and determined by an Assessment Panel which will not have the authority to compensate failures.
- c) The Assessment Board has the power to decide to whom the qualification in question should be awarded and with what class, if any.
- d) At a meeting of an Assessment Board every effort shall be made to reach a decision by consensus. If it proves necessary to vote on any matter it shall be determined by a simple majority; each member present shall have one vote and in the case of equality the Chair shall have an additional casting vote.
- e) No recommendation for the conferment of a qualification, (other than undergraduate qualifications based solely on modules at levels 3 and 4), may be awarded without the written consent of the approved External Examiner(s). On any matter which an External Examiner has declared a matter of principle, the decision of the External Examiner shall either be accepted as final by the Assessment Board or shall be referred to the Secretary of the University Academic Board. Any unresolved disagreement between External Examiners shall be referred to the Secretary of the Academic Board.

5. Quoracy

- a) All members of the Board or Panel are required to give attendance at meetings of that Board priority over all other commitments. If for some exceptional reason a member of the Board is unable to attend a meeting, the Chair shall normally appoint a substitute.
- b) A meeting of the Board, at which decisions to ratify grades and/or decisions on recommendations for the award of qualifications are made, shall not normally be quorate unless the Chief External Examiner or a properly appointed substitute is present. In exceptional circumstances this requirement may be waived, but only if an absent external examiner has:
 - i) provided all the information, reports and other written matter normally expected to be available at the meeting, and
 - ii) given an explanation for absence which the Chair has accepted as being unavoidable.
- c) The quorum for the Assessment Board should be one third of the membership or four persons whichever is the larger. Attendance by substitutes who have not been involved in the relevant assessment process is not permitted in order to achieve quoracy. The Chair of the Board may declare a meeting of the Board inquorate should the Chair decide that the attendance is such as to jeopardise the soundness of the Board's decisions.
- d) All members of Assessment Boards and Panels should make known any personal relationships, or other potential conflicts of interest they have with any candidates whom the Board/Panel is assessing, other than those arising from their roles as tutors or administrators. Boards in receipt of this information should formally consider the question whether the member with the personal interest should absent themselves from all or part of the proceedings of the Board and the person concerned should abide by any decision on this matter taken by a properly constituted Assessment Board.

6. Delegation of Functions

An Assessment Board or Panel may delegate any of its functions to the Chair or designated group of members. Any group operating with delegated powers shall report its proceedings to the Board/Panel at the next available opportunity. No recommendation for the award of a University qualification shall be made without the agreement of the appropriate external examiner.

7. Record of Proceedings

- a) A record shall be made of the proceedings of the meetings of the Assessment Board and the decisions of Assessment Panels. It shall be circulated to the members of the Board or Panel. The confidentiality of individual students should be respected. This regulation shall not be so interpreted as to impede the work of an appeal panel.
- b) The record of the Assessment Board shall include the minutes of the meeting and as separate items:
 - i) the agreed grades for each candidate;
 - ii) the recommendations made in respect of each candidate;

- iii) the result of any vote; and
 - iv) a note that any claim for extenuating circumstances made by a candidate has been considered, whether or not the recommendation was affected.
- c) The record of an Assessment Panel shall include the minutes of the meeting and the following:
- i) the agreed decision on academic standing for each candidate;
 - ii) the result of any vote;
 - iii) a note that any claim for extenuating circumstances made by a candidate has been considered, whether or not the recommendation was affected.

8. General Discretion

- a) An Assessment Board may exceptionally exercise discretion in a student's favour, where it appears to the Board that strict interpretation of a particular assessment regulation would cause serious injustice to the student.
- b) Whenever the Board uses this discretionary power to modify the interpretation of an assessment regulation an appropriate entry must be made in the Board's minutes.

9. Interpretation of Assessment Regulations for Programmes of Study

Interpretation of assessment regulations shall be made by the SAE Senior Academic Advisor after consultation with the SAE Senior Academic Coordinator and/or the SAE Director of Academic Affairs as required.

10. Academic Judgement

Where academic judgement is concerned, interpretation of MU Academic Board policy or regulations shall only be made by the Assessment Board acting collectively or, in exceptional cases where the Board delegates its authority, by the Chair of the Board.

11. Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances will consist of the recording of one or more personal difficulties such as ill health submitted by a student and supported by acceptable evidence and will be considered and may be taken into account by the Assessment Boards and Panels in determining the classification of degrees and the progression of students. Extenuating circumstances will not normally include:

- a) proximity or number of examinations or other assessments
- b) pressure of work
- c) misreading of examination timetables
- d) poor time management
- e) scheduling of holidays or time abroad.

11.1. General Principles

- a) No student shall be put in a position of unfair advantage over other candidates; the aim should be to enable all students to be assessed on equal terms.
- b) All work submitted by students for assessment shall be graded on its merits without consideration of any extenuating circumstances known to the marker. Extenuating circumstances will not be used by Assessment Boards or Panels to alter the grades of students.
- c) Students must submit extenuating circumstances to the Campus Academic Coordinator, with documentary evidence, by the specified deadline.
- d) Extenuating circumstances will be considered by Assessment Panels and Boards in the following circumstances:
 - i) in considering whether a student may progress to the next stage of the programme
 - ii) in determining the classification for a qualification where the student is borderline or there are conflicting classifications in the profiles of grades
 - iii) consideration for an aegrotat award.
- e) Normally extenuating circumstances shall not be taken into account where the circumstances have already been allowed for (for example, by special assessment arrangements). Special assessment arrangements should be agreed at enrolment in cases of known disability and in any case agreed with the student before an examination period begins.
- f) Extenuating circumstances brought to the attention of the Chair of the Assessment Board or Panel after the Board or Panel has met should normally be considered only if the student was unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling, to disclose them before the meeting.

11.2. Procedures

- a) The student's extenuating circumstances will be summarised by the Campus Academic Coordinator at the time of the affected assessment, noting what documentary evidence had been supplied, and the summary made available to the Assessment Board or Panel on the result grids. Access to the original evidence is restricted to the Chair, Secretary and the External Examiner, for the purposes of assessment, unless the student declares otherwise.
- b) Only extenuating circumstances submitted directly by the student to the Campus Academic Coordinator will be recorded and considered by the Assessment Board or Panel. Tutors and other staff should advise students accordingly.
- c) The Assessment Board or Panel will consider the full history of summarised extenuating circumstances. The extenuating circumstances may be taken into account in accordance with the relevant regulations, and it should be noted where this is used in determining the classification of the qualification awarded.

11.3. Guidelines and Criteria for Action

In considering extenuating circumstances the Assessment Board will wish to:

- a) note whether acceptable evidence has been supplied;
- b) consider whether the student has performed unexpectedly badly in a given module or modules; whether there is a significant difference between the student's performance in the year in which they experienced difficulties and their previous or later performance; and whether it correlates with the evidence provided;
- c) consider whether, where extenuating circumstances are judged to be very severe and it is not possible for the student to undertake further assessment, an aegrotat degree (which is without classification) be awarded. A student, or authorised representative, must signify acceptance of an aegrotat award within three weeks of notification, and if so accepted waives any right to reassessment.

12. Responsibilities of External Examiners

- a) To attend any meeting of an Assessment Board/Panel of which they are a member.
- b) To comment, when consulted, on the content and form of all assessments.
- c) To scrutinise all work which has been recommended for first class/distinction grades of the 20 point scale or recommended for failure by the internal examiners, and a representative sample of work placed by the internal examiners in each classification (where applicable).
- d) To advise on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the internal assessment processes, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the relevant assessment regulations and procedures in respect of module assessments, the desirability of any recalibration or (exceptionally) remarking of assessed work, and the appropriateness of the standards against which the assessment process has taken place.
- e) To adjudicate in cases referred to them because of disagreement between internal examiners
- f) To assist in the development of a body of case law based on the discretion exercised by examiners under the approved assessment regulations of the Institute.
- g) To submit annual reports as required, and in the form prescribed by the University.
- h) To inform the Head of the Centre for Learning & Quality Enhancement separately from the normal annual report of any matter which in their view militates against the maintenance of appropriate academic standards and quality.

13. Rights of External Examiners

- a) To see any assessment material relating to the modules concerned; particularly, but not exclusively, to see any scripts, coursework, project reports, design, artefact or similar material relating to the assessment with which they are specifically associated, and, where appropriate, industrial training, school experience or similar reports. To meet the students being assessed only where appropriate.

- b) Where assessment by coursework or continuous assessment forms part of the approved examination arrangements, to choose their own sample of scripts for assessment at final or key intermediate stages.
- c) To require and be involved in the oral (viva voce) examination of any student, including specially arranged oral examinations where these are not required by the regulations as part of the standard assessment procedures.
- d) To be fully involved in decisions:
 - i) reached by the Assessment Board following a request for review by a student, where it has been agreed to settle the request informally;
 - ii) made by the Assessment Board following the upholding of requests for review via the appeals process;
 - iii) reached by the assessment board following the recommendation of the Secretary to the Academic Board.

14. Procedures for When External Examiners Refuse to Consent to the Decisions of an Assessment Board

Where an external examiner refuses to sign the confirmation form to agree the grades or the award of qualifications of the Board, the chair of the Assessment Board must report every case, including a full explanation of the circumstances, as soon as practicable to the University Academic Registrar and the Head of the Centre for Learning and Teaching Enhancement. Such reports will be placed before the next meeting of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee of the University. The chairs of Assessment Boards must, at the same time as they make any such report, indicate the reason why the external examiner declined to sign the confirmation form, and naming the student or students whose disputed assessment outcome resulted in such refusal. The outcomes of students not named in a report must not be prejudiced or delayed.

15. Responsibilities of Internal Examiners

The responsibilities of internal examiners include the following:

- a) To attend all meetings of the Assessment Board or Panels of which they are a member and to give attendance at such meetings priority over all other commitments. If for some exceptional reason an internal examiner is unable to attend a meeting, they shall normally propose a substitute for appointment by the Chair of the Board.
- b) To submit assessment material, including scripts, coursework or project reports to the external examination assessor as required.
- c) To ensure that the mark sheet for the module(s) of assessed work for which they are responsible, as moderated (where applicable) by the external examiner and, where appropriate, the assessed work itself, is available to the Assessment Board/Panel by an agreed date.
- d) To hold themselves readily available for consultation during the first thirty minutes of the examination(s) for which they are responsible, or to arrange for a substitute to do so.

16. Assessment Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Institute through the SAE Senior Academic Advisor, the Senior Academic Coordinator, other Academic Coordinators, Module Leaders, assessment tutors and other relevant staff:

- a) To ensure that internal examiners are aware of the implications of assessment regulations for the modules of assessed work for which they are immediately responsible, and that these regulations are fairly applied;
- b) To ensure that adequate notice of the details of assessment arrangements is given to each student;
- c) To advise students who find themselves in difficulties about their rights or obligations under the assessment regulations, and to inform students, when necessary, about the range of options open to the Board in a particular case where the regulations allow discretion to the Board;
- d) To investigate any cases of alleged injustice in the assessment of students, and to ensure that such cases are dealt with fairly by internal examiners (excluding matters of academic judgement);
- e) To ensure that students notifying adverse academic personal or medical circumstances are not unfairly disadvantaged and that the Assessment Board and Panels are fully informed of any known circumstances which might affect the Board's decisions on assessment;
- f) To ensure that any special arrangements for the assessment of students with disabilities are provided as agreed;
- g) To decide, subject to confirmation by the Assessment Board, what calculators or other aids may be brought into the examination room;
- h) To ensure that a report is made to the Assessment Board of any incident of academic misconduct;
- i) To ensure that deadlines for the submission of projects, essays and other written work are fairly applied;
- j) To keep receipts of assessed work submitted and to make these available to the Assessment Board as required;
- k) To ensure that papers set for students being reassessed are appropriate for the programme of study as taught to them and that they have access to appropriate facilities to prepare themselves for the paper set for them;
- l) To arrange oral (viva voce) examinations as required by the Assessment Board;
- m) To ensure that students are given adequate advice and guidance on the full range of choices available to them under the assessment regulations;
- n) To be responsible for the investigation of claims of eligibility for aegrotat awards and to ensure that such claims, together with supporting evidence, are brought to the attention of the Assessment Board;
- o) To ensure for any given assessment, in any given module that composite grades for each student are generated from the component grades/marks in a consistent and transparent way.

17. Document Version Approval

Approval date: September 2010, following granting of Accredited Status by MU.

Revised: October 2011 (Approved, CEO).

Revised and Approved: April 2013, Director of Academic Affairs, SAE Global