

Guidance for writing Minutes for Boards of Examiners

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out guidance for the minuting of Boards of Examiners. It should be read in conjunction with the [Policy and Procedures for Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes](#) in the Quality Handbook.
- 1.2 All Board of Examiners are required to keep formal minutes of their proceedings. The purpose of the minutes of Boards of Examiners is to record decisions, summarise any discussion relevant to those decisions (where this is required to give a context or rationale for the decision, or to establish precedents), and to capture for further consideration any areas of discussion or requirements for future action. Any issues raised about specific modules should be recorded so that these can be followed up.
- 1.3 The minutes of Board of Examiners are the permanent record of assessment decision making processes and are part of the University's governance record, and may on occasions be required by external bodies. They could, for example, be required as part of the evidence for PSRB accreditation; they might also be required as part of a student appeal and thus could potentially be transmitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator).
- 1.4 Minutes should be a typed document in their own right. They are more than an aide memoire or 'notes of a meeting' or an annotation of an assessment grid, such as might be provided for an informal working group. They should record accurately the substance of the business of the meeting, and not simply list results and outcomes. Minute writers should be aware of potential audiences, and the use to which minutes might be put.
- 1.5 The minutes of the Boards of Examiners are confidential. All due care must be taken to ensure the security of these minutes/records. Minutes of Boards of examiners should be regarded as restricted documents.
- 1.6 The minutes should clearly state which programme(s) and where appropriate, the programme year(s) were considered by the Board of Examiners.

2. Recording attendance

- 2.1 The names and titles of everyone present should be recorded in the minutes. The external examiner's role should be identified in brackets after their name. If staff are present from collaborative partners or other Schools/Faculties this should also be clearly identified. If any members are participating via telephone or Skype, this should be recorded in the minutes.
- 2.2 The University does not require that apologies are recorded. A note should however be made if an external examiner, or any other required participant, is unable to attend the meeting and has made arrangements to contribute *in absentia* - for example by telephone, or has submitted any comments for the Board in writing. In such cases the minutes must clearly record the views of the external examiner on the appropriateness of marking standards.
- 2.3 The meeting should record that the meeting was quorate (please see the Policy and Procedures for Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes for details on quoracy

3. Declaration of personal interest

- 3.1 There should always be an opportunity at the beginning of every Board of Examiners for any participant (whether member of academic staff or person in attendance) to declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with any candidate on any module or programme under consideration.). The Chair should invite members to declare any such interests and this should be recorded in the minutes. A 'null return' should also be recorded where applicable.
- 3.2 The Chair has the right to ask the member to withdraw from the meeting at any point should this become necessary. If the Chair exercises this option, this should be recorded in the minutes.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 The business of Boards of Examiners is confidential, and at the beginning of the meeting the Chair should make clear that members must not speak to students about their detailed performance and should not provide students with results before the official date for the release of marks. It should also be made clear that decisions are reached by the Board of Examiners as a whole, and staff should not enter into discussions with students about the details of those decisions. The confidentiality of the meeting should be recorded in the minutes.

5. Structure, style and content of minutes

- 5.1 Minutes normally follow the same headings as the agenda. The standard items of business for Boards of Examiners are set out in the Code of Practice for Boards of Examiners – Membership, Responsibilities and Operation
- 5.2 A typical minute should normally have three sections

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- 5.2.1 This should normally be recorded using the following terminology:

Received:	if a paper has been circulated or tabled) normally list the paper title, author and date – but for some items for Boards of Examiners this might be more general – for example: Received: The marks profile for final year modules UOSM3004 and UOSM3005
Reported:	if there is no paper but the item considered is introduced orally

The main body of the minute

- 5.2.2 This should set out the reasoning behind a decision or conclusion reached following consideration by the Board. If there is any debate about specific issues (marking standards for a particular module, a decision to scale marks for a module for example) and a specific decision or recommendation is reached as a result, the decision and the reasons for the decision should be clearly recorded.
- 5.2.3 As the minutes are a formal record it is not usually helpful to record particular comments verbatim or in an informal style. They should normally be written in full sentences rather than note form (although bullet points can often be used effectively to summarise discussion). They should normally be written in the past tense.
- 5.2.4 Ideally contributions should not be attributed to named individuals ('It was suggested that' rather than 'Professor Jones suggested that'). However this is a matter of context – eg. it may be helpful to record specifically if a comment is made by a particular external examiner. All decisions should be recorded as decisions of the Board rather than referring to individuals. Where it is necessary to refer to individual students (for example, in relation to the award of prizes), they should be identified only by IDnumber.

The decision

5.2.5 This should normally be recorded using the following terminology:

Recommended:	where the Board does not have the power to make a decision and where it is offering advice to another body to make a decision.
Resolved:	where the Board has made a decision on a matter within its terms of reference to determine.
Noted:	where the Board is taking a formal note of a situation but no further action is required.

5.2.6 Copies of the Assessment Grid may be appended to the minutes as a way to record the outcomes relating to individual candidates.

5.2.7 Where action is agreed, indicate, by title, who is responsible for following up.

5.2.8 Minutes should record all instances where an item is deferred for resolution by 'Chair's action' outside the meeting. The action taken should then be noted in the minutes at the next meeting of the Board of Examiners.

5.2.9 The minutes should record explicitly that the external examiner(s) have signed the Assessment Grid to confirm that he/she is satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process.

6. Confirmation and approval of the minutes

- 6.1 The draft set of minutes should be cleared with the Chair before they are circulated to other members. The version cleared by the Chair is known as the 'unconfirmed' minutes. Minutes remain 'unconfirmed' until formally approved and signed by the Chair at the next meeting of the Board of Examiners. (Actions should be taken on the basis of the unconfirmed minutes). When distributing the minutes a reminder of their confidential nature should be included.
- 6.2 A copy of the unconfirmed minutes, clearly marked as such, should be stored by SAA, to be replaced with the confirmed and signed version following the next Board of Examiners.
- 6.3 Under the terms of the [1998 Data Protection Act](#) extracts of the minutes of Boards of Examiners which refer to a student by name (or any other identifier from which the student could be identified e.g. registration number) must be released to that student on request. In such disclosures, references to third parties by name, number or other identifier would have to be removed from the minutes before they are made available to a data subject.

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