



# Union School of Theology Board of Examiners: Membership and Procedures

Approved by Union School of Theology Academic Board, January 2018

Amended as result of OU Administrative Audit, April 2018

Policy Ownership – UST Academic Board

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**This document is framed by the following documents: -**

[QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#)

[Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University](#)

[Open University Handbook for Validated Awards 2016-17](#)

[UST Handbook of Policies and Procedures including 'Extenuating Circumstances Policy,' and 'Recognition of Prior Learning Policy'](#)

UST [BA, G. Dip, M.Th](#) Programme Handbooks

## Principles

Union School of Theology's Examination processes are based on the Principles set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. They are designed to ensure the 'effective monitoring of comparability of threshold academic standards, including fair and transparent setting and marking of assessment tasks, the robust use of External Examiners.'<sup>1</sup> To this end External Examiners are appointed to provide impartial advice and recommendations as to whether assessment demonstrates that threshold academic standards are achieved and that academic standards relative to the threshold are calibrated in accordance with the degree-awarding body's regulations.<sup>2</sup> UST chooses External Examiners for their ability to provide carefully considered advice on the academic standards of its awards, programmes and modules to which they have been assigned, and to offer advice on good practice and opportunities to enhance the quality of those programmes/modules. They also offer an informed view of how standards compare with the same or similar awards at other higher education providers. UST uses feedback from its External Examiners as a crucial part of its

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<sup>1</sup> *Quality Code for Higher Education*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Quality Code*, p. 45.

reflective practice towards the enhancement of teaching practice and the learning experience of students. This includes inviting External Examiners to comment on draft coursework assignments and examination questions to inform practice as it occurs, rather than simply offering retrospective comment on past experience.<sup>3</sup>

UST's External Examiners for programmes validated by the Open University are appointed by, and report to, the Open University. The terms under which they engage with UST and the programmes to which they are appointed are those determined by the Open University - see [Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University](#).

The UST Academic Board will agree the membership of its Boards of Examiners at the start of each academic year.

UST will set the dates for formal meetings of Boards of Examiners at the start of the academic year after agreement with the External Examiners. The UST Board of Examiners will apply fairly and consistently regulations for progression within, and transfer between, programmes and for the award of credits and qualifications.<sup>4</sup>

UST will make available to students the annual reports from External Examiners in full, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly, and separately, to the head of the degree-awarding body.<sup>5</sup>

All comments and recommendations contained in External Examiners reports will be given full and serious consideration by UST at both organisational and subject/programme level. Any actions taken as a result will be formally recorded and circulated to those concerned. Student representatives will be given the opportunity to be fully involved in this process. UST will give External Examiners a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations, an outline any actions to be taken, or the reasons for not taking action.<sup>6</sup>

## Board of Examiners Structure and Operation

The work of UST's Board of Examiners is governed by the [Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University](#) for students studying on Open University validated courses. It will be convened, constituted, and act under regulations approved by the Open University and include all members appointed by the Open University as External Examiners for the programme.

The Chair of a Board of Examiners is responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with OU and UST Regulations concerning assessment, and also in accordance with

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<sup>3</sup> *Quality Code*, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> *Quality Code*, B6, Indicator 16

<sup>5</sup> *Quality Code*, B7, Indicator 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Quality Code*, B7, Indicator 15, 16.

any special Regulations affecting the particular programme of study on which the Board is adjudicating.

Except provisional marks disclosed in the normal course of assignment feedback, only component marks, coursework and/or examination marks, as finally approved by the Board of Examiners, will be disclosed to students.

Boards of Examiners will meet formally at an appropriate time following a student assessment period.

The UST Extenuating Circumstances Committee operates as a sub-committee of the Board of Examiners and provides a report on cases and decisions concerning extenuating circumstances at each Board of Examiners. This enables External Examiners to ensure that the relevant procedures have been applied by the committee, and that they are informed of decisions that may affect a module result or a progression or award decision. The Board of Examiners will be informed of applicable regulations or procedures relating to these cases.

### **Board of Examiners Membership**

- An independent person (Chair)
- External Examiners
- Programme teaching team

In attendance

- Academic Registrar
- Representative from validator

### **Requirements for the conduct of assessment by Boards of Examiners**

The Programme leader for the UST programme being examined will be responsible for –

- Arranging External Examiners scrutiny of assessment setting;
- Arranging for External Examiners' sampling of assessments;
- Provision of marking schemes and the internally moderated list of marks for the cohort being assessed;
- Making arrangements for the attendance of External Examiners at boards of examiners and other visits they wish to make;
- The involvement of External Examiners in resit examinations, appeals, or cases of academic malpractice;
- Providing a report on cases of Extenuating Circumstances and actions taken;
- Setting the dates with the agreement of the External examiners for the approval of draft papers and assignment titles; arrangements and dates for dealing with any reassessments.

For the purposes of conducting the assessment of all those modules which have been assigned to a given Board of Examiners at the point of validation, all members of that Board must have access to all modular marks, including component marks. Those responsible for the conduct of a Board of Examiners (normally the Provost, Academic Dean, Academic Registrar) should ensure that:

- all work associated with the process of assessment prior to the meeting, and the conduct of the meeting itself, is in accordance with the OU and UST Regulations;
- in advance of the Board of Examiners, all module leaders must check the reports and confirm they are satisfied that the results to be presented to the board are accurate;
- a quorum (chair, External Examiner and at least a third of other members) is present and the agenda is consistent with that set out below;
- External Examiners are cognisant of their powers, rights and responsibilities as equal members of the Board and that, while they may propose the moderation of the marks of an entire module cohort, they may not adjust the marks of individual students on the basis of only a sample of work from that cohort;
- the presentation of module marks to the Board makes clear the pattern and weighting of assessment;
- all Board members have access to all module marks, including component marks, so that all members participate in the determination of recommended results;
- component marks presented to the Board will be the actual marks attained; only the overall module mark will be capped (40%) in cases of re-sit or re-take;
- the permission of the Board is given for any Chair's Action which may be necessary subsequent to the meeting, although such action would normally involve consultation with an External Examiner;
- The Chair and External Examiners sign the confirmed marks coversheet at the end of the meeting.

### **Presentation of marks**

To ensure that any meeting of a Board of Examiners is not disrupted by network or other technical issues please observe the following:

- the marks will be presented as PDF files and presented to the Board of Examiners via a local drive or storage device, not via the network.
- hard copies of all the marks to be presented to the Board of Examiners must be made available to the Chair and External Examiners.

### **Guidance where members of the board are not all in the same location**

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, in cases where board members are not all in the same location, with the board conducted via video conference or equivalent, the Chair must ensure the following;

- In advance of the Board of Examiners, the reports must be circulated to all module leaders in order that the accuracy of the data may be checked thoroughly in advance of the meeting;
- Board members at all locations must have identical copies of the Board of Examiners reports;
- Extra care must be taken to confirm the terms of reference and the method by which results will be confirmed;

## Recording Decisions

The proceedings of a Board of Examiners shall be minuted by a member of staff of UST.

Recommendations regarding conferment or classification of awards will be recorded by the Secretary as they are agreed. The list will be read over and confirmed by the board before being signed off by the External Examiners and before the meeting is closed.

No recommendation for the conferment of a validated award may be made without the written consent of the External Examiners.

The confidentiality of all marks will be secured, and mark sheets collected in at the end of the Board of Examiners' meeting.

Note: It is necessary to minute any discussions relating to the results of individual students, components or modules; for example, if an External Examiner, having seen the work of the full cohort, proposes changes to marks. The discussions arising from this should be minuted, along with the final decision.

## Documents to be Supplied for Boards of Examiners

The documents supplied by UST for its Boards of Examiners will typically include: -

- (a) Agenda
- (b) Minutes of previous meetings
- (c) Mark sheets containing all assessment components completed by students and information about pass marks for each component
- (d) Statistical analysis of marks sufficient to identify trends in student performance or marking practice
- (e) Quantitative data on progression and completion as detailed in the OU template 'Exam Board data'
- (f) Regulations for the programme as approved by the University; programme specification; programme handbook
- (g) Open University regulations on issues such as borderline cases, rounding results, extenuating circumstance, academic misconduct
- (h) Reports from the Extenuating Circumstances Committee
- (i) Reports on cases of student academic misconduct.

## Agenda for a Board of Examiners

The following agenda must be used for all Boards of Examiners

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for unavoidable absence and confirmation of the board member representing each absentee
3. Receipt of the terms of reference and confirmation the meeting is quorate
4. Declarations of interest with regards to the results
5. Summary of responses to the most recent External Examiner(s) report(s)
6. Minutes of the previous Board of Examiners(s)
7. Report of chair's actions taken since the previous Board of Examiners(s)
8. Other matters arising from the minutes

9. Receipt of a report listing approved claims for RPL relating to modules assigned to the board
10. Reports from Extenuating Circumstances Committee
11. Reports of cases of Academic Malpractice
12. Consideration of results for modules assigned to the board
13. Confirmation of the deadline for submission of reassessed and deferred components
14. External Examiner(s) comments
15. Responses to points raised by the External Examiner(s)
16. Authorisation that the Chair may sign off mark amendments
17. Date of next meeting
18. Any Other Business

## Results Notification

Results will not be issued to students until they have been ratified by the Open University, and formal notice has been received that they can be released.