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## Marks and Standards

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### 1.1 Introduction

This Marks and Standards Section complies with QQI's *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013*, and specifically reflects QQI's Sectoral Conventions for Assessment.

The document reflects the College's policy in respect of Assessment and Standards and describes how this policy and associated assessment regulations and academic procedures are implemented for all College programmes leading to QQI awards.

The Marks and Standards section does not replace the Quality Assurance Manual or other policies and procedures relating to assessment but rather complements them.

Examiners must familiarise themselves with the Marks and Standards and the QA Manual and learners are strongly advised to become familiar with the essential procedures as they apply to their studies.

The document is subject to review and, from time to time, may be revised and updated with the approval of the Academic Council.

The assessment of learning is a complex process. In the context of College programmes, assessment of learners entails appropriately and experienced qualified persons making inferences about a learner's knowledge, skills or competence. This is always based on appropriate evidence, and evaluations are criterion-referenced, meaning they are made with reference to pre-defined standards.

The College is committed to operating assessment methods that:

- Are fair and consistent and align with relevant award standards determined by QQI.
- Are effective in measuring the students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes.
- Provide feedback to the learner enabling the learner to improve their performance.
- Contribute positively to the total learning experience and in particular to achieving the intended learning outcomes.
- Encourage creativity and originality where appropriate.

### 1.2 Approved Programme Schedule

The Approved Programme Schedule defines the programme structure approved at validation. It details, for each stage, the modules, and combinations thereof, validated by QQI for that programme.

In the context of Marks and Standards, the Schedule shows the credits, total learner effort and weighting of each element of assessment, for each module. It will also include any special conditions of validation.

## Precepts for Assessment

The fundamental precepts for assessment are:

### 1.2.1 Learners

Learners are responsible for:

- Demonstrating their achievement of the learning outcomes.
- Undertaking assessment in a fair and honest manner.

### 1.2.2 Assessment methods:

- Support credible evaluations of the achievement of learning outcomes.
- Support effective teaching and learning.
- Are regularly reviewed and improved.
- Are valid, fit for purpose and reliable.
- Incorporate reasonable accommodations.

### 1.2.3 Assessment processes:

- Are transparent and easily accessed by learners and other stakeholders.
- Are clearly communicated to learners within a programme.
- Are equitable and reflect QQI's guidelines.
- Are subject to internal moderation and external authentication.
- Include procedures to facilitate learners seeking a recheck, review or appeal of an assessment decision.

## 1.3 Principles of Assessment

The College manages its assessment processes based on the precepts above and applies the following principles:

- Assessment is an integral part of programme design and is constructively aligned with the programme/module learning outcomes.
- Assessment opportunities support standards based on learning outcomes.
- Assessment is fit for purpose, authentic, relevant and varied.
- There are clear and consistent assessment criteria prepared by the examiner and these are provided to the learner at the time the assignment is set.
- Assessment is transparent.
- Assessment is valid, reliable and free from bias.
- The assessment framework facilitates the learner's learning and informs and supports learner progression.
- The assessment process is inclusive and equitable.
- Learners are provided with opportunities to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the programme learning outcomes.

- Learners are provided with feedback on assessment that is timely and promotes learning and facilitates improvement.
- The management of assessment is efficient, especially regarding the amount and timing of assessments, taking into account learner workloads and allows time for learner reflection.
- The processes for appeals are straightforward, clearly communicated and executed in an efficient and timely manner.
- The staff development policy and strategy supports the College's policy to ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of learners are competent to undertake their responsibilities.

## 1.4 Responsibilities for Assessment

### 1.4.1 The Academic Council

The Academic Council has overall formal responsibility for formative and summative assessment. These regulations are subject to the approval of the Academic Council. The College's Assessment Strategy is subject to the approval of the Academic Council.

The Examination Board has the final decision regarding assessment results. The Academic Council is responsible for monitoring the overall assessment process and ensuring issues are addressed and good practice is sustained. The Academic Council receives and reviews the minutes of the Examination Boards, the Examinations Reports, which contains details on any trends or anomalies in assessment, External Examiners Reports, Progression and Retention Report and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and other such reports or audits that it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities for summative assessment.

The Academic Council approves External Examiner nominations for appointment by the College.

### 1.4.2 Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar

The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar has executive responsibility for the overall management of assessment and conduct of examinations and is tasked with ensuring the effective implementation of policies and procedures approved by the Academic Council.

The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for ensuring all learners are properly registered for the examinations and resit examinations as appropriate and ensuring that processes covering reasonable accommodation, mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct and appeals are implemented.

The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for handling, managing and recording assessment data and compiling and maintaining the Examination Board broadsheets.

The instruction for 'Regulations for the Management of Assessment and the Conduct of Examinations' includes:

- The organisation of examinations.
- Mechanisms to ensure security of assessment material, including examination papers and scripts.
- Arrangements for the archiving and retention of learner assessment data including, transcripts, the relevant curricula and such information as is required to facilitate the issue of a Diploma Supplement, subject to the College's Data Retention Schedule.

### **1.4.3 Director of Academic Programmes**

The Director of Academic Programmes is responsible for the College's teaching, learning and assessment strategies that provide a framework within which programme and module assessment strategies are developed and to ensure that these strategies are current and informed by best practice.

The Director of Academic Programmes is responsible for ensuring that assessment is conducted within the QA Framework.

The Director of Academic Programmes is responsible for ensuring the Examiners Meetings and the Examination Boards are conducted in accordance with these regulations.

### **1.4.4 Head of Faculty**

The Head of Faculty has overall responsibility for managing programme level assessment. This includes the development of the programme assessment strategy prior to validation, the implementation of that strategy by ensuring academic staff are assessing modules in accordance with the Approved Programme Schedule; and ensuring that academic staff fulfil their obligations in respect of marking and providing feedback to learners.

The Head of Faculty is responsible for the monitoring and analysis of learner performance to initiate enhancement activities and for liaising with external examiners to facilitate improvement.

### **1.4.5 Programme Leads**

Programme Leads are responsible for consulting with the teaching and assessment team to ensure coordination of all module assessment strategies. It is their role to ensure that the module assessment is aligned with the overall programme assessment strategy, to ensure the teaching team select appropriate assessment instruments to assess the learner's achievement of the learning outcomes and to determine strategies for reassessment. The teaching team is also responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures governing assessment are properly observed, such as security of examination material and responding to external examiners

The Programme Lead is also responsible for approval of draft examination papers, or other major elements of summative assessment, before being forwarded to the external examiner, for review.

### **1.4.6 Internal Examiners**

The role and responsibilities of internal examiners is as follows:

- Submit draft examination papers/assessment briefs for 100% CA modules, together with appropriate marking schemes and worked solutions to numerical questions involving quantitative data, to the appropriate programme lead for review.
- Following approval by the programme lead, to forward the draft assessments and associated documentation to the External Examiner(s), in good time.
- Take account of all suggestions, criticisms, or amendments proposed by the External Examiner(s).
- Submit examination papers and marking schemes, as approved by the External Examiner(s), to the Director of Academic Programmes, or to the person nominated thereby for this purpose.

- Retain all examination material in a secure manner and ensure that all communications in relations to examinations by telephone, email, are consistent with GDPR guidelines.
- Upload their results for all exam components to the Learner Management System (LMS).
- Participate in the post assessment moderation process with colleagues by making available a sample of assessments to a colleague for review.
- Make available all examination and assessment material for scrutiny as required by the External Examiner(s).
- Consult with the External Examiner(s) prior to the meeting of the Examination Board, and to agree the marks proposed to be awarded.
- Attend all meetings in relation to examination process and the meeting of the Examination Board.
- Be available to meet with learners, either in person or on-line, by appointment to discuss assessment performance.
- Participate as required in the Review/Recheck process.

Internal Examiners are normally required to meet, as a group, in the days prior to the Examination Board to review and discuss their findings; ensure that they are accurate; and prepare the draft broadsheet of results for presentation to the Examination Board.

## 1.5 External Examiner Policy

The College appoints External Examiners to assure standards, to enhance teaching, learning and assessment and to support programme development.

## 1.6 Learners

Learners must familiarise themselves with:

- Assessment schedule for their programme.
- Penalties for work submitted late.
- Procedures for seeking a CA deadline extension.
- Assessment criteria used to mark submitted work.
- Guidelines for referencing.
- Plagiarism Policy.

Learners will be briefed on their responsibilities during induction and have access to the relevant information via the VLE/Website throughout their studies. This communication will be managed by the relevant Programme Lead.

Furthermore, learners must:

- Ensure that they are correctly registered on programmes.
- Ensure that they are correctly registered for examinations.
- Attend examinations, class tests, practical etc.
- Complete all CA work as required.

- Notify the Director of Academic Programmes (or their nominee) in writing of reasons for absence from class tests, practical etc. (supplying relevant documentary evidence).
- Notify the Director of Academic Programmes (or their nominee) in writing of compassionate circumstances that have impeded their examination/assessment performance.
- Comply with any programme board requirements for (i) receipting work, (ii) seeking deadline extensions, and (iii) referencing.
- Retain a copy of submitted work.

It is the responsibility of learners to check the date, time and venue for each of their examinations and learners must adhere to Examination Guidelines.

Any candidate who fails to attend for an examination, who arrives late, or who leaves early for any reason other than they have completed the examination, is required to send a written explanation to the relevant Programme Lead and as appropriate complete the Examinations Deferral Form.

## 1.7 Conflict of Interest Policy

All persons involved in the examination/assessment process must be aware of the College's Conflict of Interest policy.

## 1.8 Registration for Assessment

Learners who are registered with the College are automatically registered for the examination for the programme on which they are enrolled. Maximum registration periods for a programme are normally:

Programme Duration/Minimum Registration Period (Years)	FT/PT	ECTS	Maximum Registration Period (Years)
2	FT	120	5
3	FT	180	5
4/5	PT	180	8
4	FT	240	6
5/6	PT	240	9
1	FT	60/90	4
2	PT	60/90	5

Figure 8.1: Registration Period (Note: exceptions apply for learners with exemptions)

Where a learner's registration period expires, including periods of deferral, they are notified and formally withdrawn at the next Examination Board for that programme. Where a learner has failed a module, they will be automatically registered for the next available sitting until they have exhausted

sittings (maximum of four attempts), unless formal arrangements have been made under the policy for Reasonable Accommodation.

## **1.9 Deferrals**

A learner may be granted a deferral of an examination, a module, or a stage under the Reasonable Accommodation Policy. In cases where a deferral has been granted, the learner will be recorded as deferred for that examination and the subsequent attempt will be treated as a first sitting for the purposes of progression and award calculations. Any marks already awarded for completed module components in that module will be carried forward.

## **1.10 Policy for Reasonable Accommodation and Additional Supports**

The College is committed to facilitating fair, equitable and accessible participation in learning and assessment for learners with disabilities, learning differences, medical conditions or temporary support needs, and will make Reasonable Accommodations and provide Additional Supports for learners as far as is reasonably practicable. Details of the relevant policy are included in Policy for Reasonable accommodation and additional supports.

## **1.11 Mitigating Circumstances**

Learners should seek advice and support offered by the College via the Learner Support Coordinator in circumstances where an assessment is missed, or their performance may have been adversely affected due to a health or compassionate grounds. In the case of missing an assignment deadline, the learner must notify the lecturer who will direct them to the Programme Lead who may arrange for an extension or advise the learner to apply for consideration of mitigating circumstances. Where a learner has not communicated with the College staff a late penalty will be applied.

In the case of an examination where a learner knows in advance that they are going to miss the examination, they must apply to the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar for authorised absence from the examination via a formal application for the consideration of mitigating circumstances.

In the case of missing an examination due to an unforeseen circumstance or being taken ill during an examination, then the learner must apply for the consideration of mitigating circumstances as soon as they are well enough to return to College. In cases of an ongoing issue, a learner may apply for a deferral or an alternative assessment or additional supports in cases involving temporary injury or disability. An alternative assessment will be aligned to the same learning outcomes and be of the same standard as the original assessment.

### **1.11.1 Application for Consideration of Mitigating Circumstances**

To apply for consideration the learner is required to fill out the Request for Mitigation Form available from the Examinations Office and submit it to that office with all relevant paperwork. The form is screened for eligibility by the Examinations Office and if it is deemed valid will be passed to the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar for consideration, prior to the appropriate Examination Board. Where there is a suite of examinations at the same time, a learner may not select to take some and present mitigation for others, unless there were special circumstances. Where a learner is taken ill or unforeseen circumstances arise just before or during an examination the invigilator should be

notified, and the circumstance recorded in the Invigilator's Report. The learner may fill out the Mitigating Circumstances Form on their return. In all cases of a medical nature, medical certification will be required – such certification must be issued by recognised practitioners and dated at the time of the illness and not be retrospective. Where a learner presents at an examination, they have deemed themselves fit to take that examination. The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar, Director of Academic Programmes and Head of Faculty will meet to consider those applications that the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar has approved for the consideration of mitigating circumstances.

They determine:

- If the circumstances presented were exceptional and may have affected performance.
- The degree to which the performance may have been affected.
- The actions taken to mitigate the effect on performance.

The typical outcomes where a case is upheld are:

- The learner is allowed to defer the examination.
- Penalties for late submission may be lifted or reduced.
- Consideration will be made in respect of borderline cases, where there is other evidence the learning outcomes have been achieved.

In all cases, the nature of the mitigating circumstances is confidential, and the Examination Board is provided with only sufficient information to discharge its duty. The Programme Lead will note the decision and liaises with the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar to update the LMS. All applications for reasonable accommodations and mitigating circumstances are recorded and an overall, anonymised, analysis is included in the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar's Examination Report to the Academic Council.

Deferrals are not indefinite and learners who defer an examination must take that examination at the next available sitting or apply to renew the deferral. The learner's registration status must also be taken into consideration.

### 1.11.2 Extensions and Late Submission of Assessed Coursework

A learner may apply for an extension to the deadline for an element of continuous assessment under the College's policy for reasonable accommodation. Extensions are considered only where a written application is submitted to the lecturer in advance of the deadline with supporting evidence as to why the extension is warranted (e.g. medical certificate). Extensions to coursework may be approved by the Programme Lead who will consult with the Head of Faculty as appropriate. Technical problems, such as computer failure or viruses, are not deemed legitimate reasons for late submission or non-submission of work. The only exception is if the College's system for submission of coursework is not operating and in those cases a report will be sent from IT to the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar and Head of Faculty to ensure learners are not disadvantaged.

If an extension has not been granted and work is submitted after the extended due date, late submission of assignments is penalised as follows:

- 10% penalty for assignments submitted within three days of the submission deadline. (e.g. a grade of **50%** would become  $(50 \times 0.9) = \mathbf{45.0\%}$ )
- 20% penalty for assignments submitted within one week (seven days) of the submission deadline. (e.g. a grade of **60%** would become  $(60 \times 0.8) = \mathbf{48.0\%}$ )

Later submissions, i.e. after one week, will not normally be accepted. Learners are expected to retain a copy of all submitted coursework.

## **1.12 Preparation and Marking of Assessment**

The responsibility for the assessment of learners is within the Faculty.

- The Module Leader is responsible for managing assessment processes at the module level supported by the Programme Lead and Head of Faculty.
- The External Examiner provides public reassurance as they review the assessment process and safeguard standards.

The Head of Faculty and Director of Academic Programmes are responsible for the appointment of appropriately qualified Module Leaders and recommending appropriately qualified External Examiners for appointment by the Academic Council and/or awarding bodies.

Internal Examiners should prepare draft examination papers/assessment briefs for 100% CA modules, together with appropriate marking schemes and worked solutions to numerical questions involving quantitative data and submit these to the appropriate programme lead for review. The Programme Lead should consult with the internal examiner, in a collegiate manner, with a view to arriving at an agreed draft, which will be submitted to the external examiner. In the event of a disagreement, the Director of Academic Programmes will be asked to intervene, and their decision is final.

### **1.12.1 Marking Principles**

The College uses a criterion referenced marking system. Each module is marked by the Internal Examiner(s) against a set of agreed criteria informed by the appropriate awards standards and set out in a published marking scheme. Marks are awarded as specified in the appropriate Approved Programme Schedule, relating to the validated programme, as published in the Student Handbook and are provisional until they have been verified and agreed at the Examination Board which ultimately makes decisions regarding awards.

Marks are awarded on the basis of an individual's performance. Assessment determines a learner's individual achievements of the intended learning outcomes. Marks are expressed as percentages.

To ensure validity and reliability of assessment staff undertake staff development activities in teaching and assessment. Strategies to support staff in the assessment process include peer review of both teaching and assessment. Moderation and Double-blind marking support these development activities.

### **1.12.2 Marking Processes**

For individual, high-stakes assessment instruments the Module Leader must provide a grading scheme to the External Examiner prior to the approval of the assessment task.

All assessment instruments are marked according to the agreed grading scheme and aligned to the relevant grade criteria. Marks are included on the assignment or script and are clearly annotated.

### **1.12.3 Feedback**

For assessment to be effective 'as and for' learning, formative, timely and personalised feedback is essential. Feedback provides a transparent evaluation of the learner's performance regarding the assessment and is benchmarked against published criteria.

Internal Examiners:

- Must ensure that they supply considered, personalised and formative feedback.
- Must supply feedback in a timely manner after the agreed submission date unless otherwise agreed with the Programme Lead and learners are notified.
- May use generic feedback to highlight common successes and problems; this should be delivered as soon as marking is complete and in a classroom setting.

The Regional Programme Administration Team support the Internal Examiners by:

- Facilitating communication and distribution of examination material between examiners, moderators and External Examiners where appropriate.
- Monitoring the submission of coursework as part of the learner success and academic retention strategy and support the Internal Examiners.

## **1.13 Moderation and Double Marking**

### **1.13.1 Policy**

The College has developed processes to ensure that assessments are fair, consistent and as part of this it has developed a Policy for Moderation.

### **1.13.2 Procedure for Post Examination Moderation**

The programme team takes a random sample of the grades for moderation. The sample chosen will include at least one example of work from the percentage bands, 30-39, 40-49; 50-59; 60-69; 70-79; Above 80. All borderline grades shall also be included.

The moderator reviews the application of the marking scheme against the learner effort by the original marker to ensure consistent and fair assessment. Variation in grading between the first examiner and the moderator is discussed between the two in order to reach agreement. In some cases, it may be necessary to engage the Director of Academic Programmes or the Programme Lead in the discussion, to determine the final grade that will be presented to the Examination Board.

The Director of Academic Programmes has the final decision on moderation of a grade, subject to the Board of Examiners.

Where double marking is required such as in postgraduate projects or dissertations, the College uses double-blind marking to ensure reliability. The Internal Examiners mark independently of each other and fill out individual feedback sheets. On completion of the process the markers consult and arrive at an agreed mark. Where agreement cannot be reached, or the individual marks differ by more than 10%, the Programme Lead will work with the Internal Examiners to facilitate resolution.

Procedures for the management of assessment, including preparing assignment specifications and communicating provisional results can be found in the guidelines for Regulations for the Management of Assessment and the Conduct of Examinations.

## **1.14 Responsibilities for Preparation and Marking**

### **1.14.1 Module Leader's Responsibilities**

The lecturer responsible for teaching and assessing a module is termed Module Leader for the purposes of the academic administration of a module. Normally there is one lecturer per module but

where a module has more than one lecturer, then one lecturer is assigned responsibility for coordinating the assessment and other academic administrative functions.

The Module Leader is responsible for:

- The preparation and coordination of all assessment instruments for that module.
- Consulting with the teaching team in advance of the commencement of teaching, ensuring the preparation of examination papers in good time and ensuring the paper is moderated before it is submitted to the external examiner.
- The security of the examination paper as it is prepared and submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar' office.
- Ensuring the assessment material is marked and the provisional results are uploaded to the LMS.
- Ensuring the learners are supplied with feedback within the published timescales and that scripts and assignments are sent to the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar for verification.
- Liaising with the External Examiner regarding content, learning outcomes and standards.
- Ensuring that they themselves are familiar with all assessment policies and procedures and be able to advise learners regarding reasonable accommodation.
- Taking account of feedback from the External Examiner.
- Monitoring assessment trends, completing a Module Review and Development Form (Ref: Associated Form 2) and feeding into the appropriate Programme Board.
- Ensuring that the assessment is managed in accordance with instructions laid out in the Regulations for the Management of Assessment and the Conduct of Examinations.

### **1.14.2 Material for External Examiner**

All examinable material is available to external examiners. However, as a matter of procedure, a sample of at least 10% of assessment material is sent to the External Examiner prior to the Examination Board in good time to allow the examiner to respond in advance of the Examination Board.

Criteria for the selection of material to be sent to External Examiner:

- The sample should contain examples of all assessment instruments contributing to the final assessment mark for that module.
- The sample should represent at least 10% of the cohort, but no fewer than 3 learners' work.
- The sample should include a sample of failed work and borderline cases with examples from the middle of each classification.

All learner work that contributes to the overall final assessment should be available on request to the External Examiner. Where practical demonstrations are assessed, and where they represent a significant component (i.e. >25%) of a module then a representative sample of these may be recorded.

### **1.14.3 Broadsheets**

All marks are recorded in the LMS and presented to the Examination Board on formal broadsheets.

- The Programme Lead is responsible for checking that all module marks have been properly uploaded to the LMS in advance of the Internal Examination Board.

- The Programme Administration Team provides an additional final verification of the inputted data prior to the submission of the module data to the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar via the LMS.
- The Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for:
  - Compiling and maintaining the Examination Board broadsheets.
  - Ensuring that the system is populated with all registered learners for that module and that the broadsheet includes the module calculation as per the appropriate Approved Programme Schedule.
  - Updating the broadsheet to reflect agreed outcomes from the Examination Board.

## 1.15 Examination Boards

### 1.15.1 Internal Examiners Meeting

An Internal Examiners Meeting is convened at the completion of every stage of a programme. Results are presented to this meeting, verified by the programme Lead. The purpose of the meeting is to give the Internal Examiners an opportunity to:

- Review and discuss their findings.
- Consider overall trends in module marks, averages etc.
- Review the overall profile of learners.
- Ensure that the results presented are complete and accurate.
- Prepare the draft broadsheet of results for presentation to the Examination Board.

The Internal Examiners Meeting may influence, but not compel, assessors to review their assessment findings. Marks are not changed at this meeting unless they are factually incorrect. Where there may be, for example, a module with a grade distribution which is persistently and significantly inconsistent with others, it will be investigated and if mitigation is required this will be discussed with the Examining Team and External Examiner and a solution proposed if appropriate. Any adjustments proposed are recommended to the Examination Board. No changes to marks are made at the Internal Examiners Meeting.

This meeting is chaired by the Head of Faculty or Director of Academic Programmes. An External Examiner may attend this meeting, by invitation, or at their own request. This meeting is minuted and the minutes made available to the External Examiners and Examination Board as required.

### 1.15.2 Examination Board

The Examination Board is convened at the completion of every stage in a programme to consider all assessment findings, including the findings of repeat/supplemental assessment and to determine assessment results for each of the learners presented.

The Examination Board has the final decision regarding assessment results.

Assessment results presented to the Board have been marked, verified and samples seen by the External Examiner. The Examination Board considers overall trends in module outcomes and then considers each learner's profile to determine progression or an award.

The Examination Board is chaired by the Head of Faculty or Director of Academic Programmes and follows the Internal Examiners Meeting. It is a formal board convened to make determinations regarding progression or awards.

The Examination Board considers overall trends in module marks, averages, etc. before reviewing individual performance. Where issues, such as anomalies or evidence of significant systematic bias, raised at the Internal Examiners meeting have been addressed and when the Examination Board is satisfied that there are no further issues then the learners' individual performances are considered.

The Academic Council receives minutes of the Examination Boards, External Examiner Reports and receives an Examination Report from the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar.

### **1.15.3 Preparation for an Examination Board**

The dates of the Examination Board are agreed by consultation with the External Examiners and communicated to all members in good time.

The Examination Board is supplied with:

- The programme assessment strategy and Approved Programme Schedule.
- A draft broadsheet of results, complete with all verified marks.
- A short report on trends in module marks.

### **1.15.4 Examination Board, Frequency of Meetings, Membership and Quorum**

The Examination Board comprises:

- Chair: Head of Faculty or Director of Academic Programmes or nominee as required
- Only (and all) Internal Examiners who have a role in the assessment of the programme
- External Examiners
- Programme Lead and Head of Faculty.

To be quorate there should be:

- A sufficient number of the programme's assessors present to deliberate competently upon the assessment findings presented.
- At least one External Examiner present where awards are to be decided.

The Chair will determine if the Examination Board is quorate and if not, the Examination Board must be reconvened.

There may be rare and exceptional circumstances where an External Examiner is unable to attend the Examination Board. Arrangements will be made for virtual attendance. In exceptional cases where they have examined the assessment findings and agree with the recommendations recorded on the draft broadsheet of results and still cannot attend, they may provide a written report to be read out at the Examination Board by the Director of Academic Programmes.

Where an External Examiner becomes incapacitated during their term of office, or unable to attend the Examination Board owing to unforeseen circumstances, a replacement External Examiner will be appointed.

### **1.15.5 Post Examination Board**

On completion of the Examination Board, the broadsheet is signed by the members of the Examination Board and retained by the College in compliance with the College's Data Protection and Record Management Policy. The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for maintaining these records.

The LMS is updated to reflect the outcome of the Examination Board. The signed broadsheets are sent to QQI by the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar's office.

Transcripts are issued from the LMS when formally released by the Director of Academic Programmes. The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar signs the academic transcripts and the Director of Academic Programmes oversees the publication of results on the College Moodle and by post.

A preliminary report on the examination process, including minutes of the Examination Boards and External Examiners Reports, where available shall be sent to the Academic Council as soon as practicable after the examination board meetings.

A more comprehensive report, as detailed in section 14 of this Manual is furnished to the Academic Council at the designated time.

The minutes of the Examination Meeting are retained by the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar and subject to the College's Data Protection and Record Management Policy.

#### **1.15.6 Confidentiality**

The proceedings and deliberations of meetings of Boards of Examiners are strictly confidential. Excepting legitimate reporting requirements, no person who has attended or observed a meeting of a board of examiners may disclose to any other person a decision of the board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting.

#### **1.15.7 Examination Board Decisions – Assessment Regulations**

The Examination Board is formal and deliberative. Decisions regarding progression and awards are made at the Examination Board in the presence of External Examiners. The Examination Board should satisfy itself that the learners' work has been appropriately marked and classified, that the prescribed learning outcomes have been attained and that the assessment regulations as described in this document are applied alongside any special regulations as recorded in the Approved Programme Schedule.

Where there are decisions to be made requiring academic judgement such as borderline cases for awards or, in rare cases, the readjustment of a module mark to mitigate a systematic trend that may indicate a bias (positive or negative) then the Chair attempts to arrive at a decision by consensus. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the majority ruling is taken. No one member of the Examination Board has more influence than another. Where there is disagreement, the minutes should reflect the deliberation and the outcome without identifying those involved.

In the unusual event that an adjustment has had to be made to compensate for a significant systematic error, a supporting rationale is to be recorded in the minutes so that the Programme Board and the Academic Council are informed for the purpose of monitoring and follow-up.

All trends are reflected in the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar's Examination Report to monitor trends in retention, progression and awards and benchmarked against other providers where the data is available for the purposes of comparison and vigilance against any tendency toward grade inflation.

### 1.15.8 Examination Board Decisions Regarding Progression

Each assessment and module is marked as a percentage. The pass mark for modules is 40%, unless otherwise stated in the Approved Programme Schedule or Programme Specification.

A pass in a module is a positive statement of achievement of the stated Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes. A learner may not reattempt a module they have passed with the intention of achieving a better mark.

### 1.15.9 Stage Progression

A percentage point average system is used, this is defined as the credit-weighted mean of the percentage values for the constituent modules. The percentage point value is the same as percentage except for marks below 35 where it is zero. A candidate must pass all modules in a stage to progress to the next stage of the programme with the following exceptions:

- a) Where exemption from part of the programme has been agreed on admission.
- b) Where the Examination Board permits a pass by compensation.
- c) Where in exceptional circumstances a candidate is permitted to progress carrying failed modules (credit deficit) to be passed during the subsequent stage.

Where a candidate has failed or is just below pass in each of a string of independent modules in the same stage, the results are reinforced and compensation or trailing with credit deficit is not appropriate.

### 1.15.10 Pass by Compensation

Where a learner has marginally failed to demonstrate attainment of the minimum intended module learning outcomes, a pass by compensation may be allowed subject to the following conditions:

- a) The learner has been assessed for all stage modules and no module in the stage has been failed outright (i.e. <35%).
- b) The results of all modules in the stage are from first attempts, in the case of full-time learners, the results are from the same sitting.
- c) Up to one third of the credit for the stage: e.g. 20 credits in a 60-credit stage, can be compensated.
- d) To apply the compensation rule, the stage aggregate of credit-weighted excesses of percentage marks (>40) is greater than or equal to twice the stage aggregate of credit-weighted deficits of marks (<40).

Compensation may be applied only to enable a learner to pass a stage (at the award stage, a learner who passes by compensation remains eligible for honours, etc.).

Compensation does not change the result of the modules passed in that way. When reporting module passes by compensation, the actual result is returned, e.g. 37%, along with an indication that the module pass has been granted by compensation. Pass by compensation does not preclude an honours award.

### 1.15.11 Progression with Credit Deficit

In exceptional circumstances a candidate may be permitted to progress to the next stage of a programme carrying a failed module(s). This is subject to any special regulations for that programme

reflected in the Approved Programme Schedule or Programme Specification, and is considered on a case by case basis using the following criteria:

- a) The failed modules are no more than 16% of a stage (10 ECTS of a typical 60 ECTS stage).
- b) The candidate has demonstrated, as determined by the Examination Board, an otherwise strong performance across the stage that would indicate a reasonable expectation of achieving the minimum intended learning outcomes for the failed module in addition to the workload in the subsequent stage.

Where this is allowed, the candidate must retrieve the failed module(s) within the next stage. The additional workload cannot be used as mitigation for further accommodation.

#### **1.15.12 Reassessment**

Where a candidate fails to pass an examination or assessment component the following may apply:

- a) The candidate is required to re-sit the failed component of the module. The marks for all other complete components are carried forward.
- b) The candidate is required to retake the full module; this includes attendance and all coursework. Previous marks awarded for completed components are not carried forward.
- c) The candidate is required to re-sit stage, i.e. resit certain elements of the stage, previous marks for completed components awarded are carried forward at the discretion of the Examination Board which will also determine the attendance requirements.
- d) The candidate is required to repeat stage, i.e. repeat the full stage of a programme with attendance; previous marks awarded in that stage are not carried forward.

There is a maximum of four attempts for a module, i.e. two iterations of the module. Where a candidate does not pass a core module at the last attempt they are withdrawn and deemed to have failed the programme. Where a candidate has exhausted sittings on an elective module the module may be substituted with an alternative elective.

Reassessment instruments are prepared, by the examiner, in advance of the Examination Board and re-assessments are not the same as the original assessment.

When a candidate has passed all of the modules in a stage the Examination Board allows them to progress to the next stage or at the final stage determines an award.

Where a candidate has demonstrated extremely poor performance by failing the majority of modules with low marks the Examination Board may decide, at its discretion, to terminate the registration of the candidate and remove them from the programme. In this case, the candidate is deemed to have failed the programme. The Examination Board should ensure consistent treatment of all candidates in these cases.

#### **1.15.13 Suspension and Withdrawals**

A candidate may be suspended or withdrawn from a programme for disciplinary reasons such as Severe Academic Misconduct or a penalty determined by the Student Disciplinary Committee. A candidate may elect to withdraw from a programme at any time.

#### **1.15.14 Examination Board Decisions Regarding Awards**

The Examination Board reviews the overall profile of the candidates to determine the classification of an award. All major, minor and supplemental awards including special purpose awards which have a volume of at least 60 ECTS are classified.

The classification of awards is based on the credit-weighted mean value of the marks in the modules comprising the award stage as defined in the Approved Programme Schedule.

For honours classification - any classification higher than a Pass - shall be made based on first attempt grades. Candidates may not repeat for honours.

Classification is determined by the appropriate Examination Board and is informed by the award calculation. A borderline zone is determined around classification boundaries to allay the effects of measurement uncertainty and to ensure that the award is based on an academic decision and not merely on computation. Borderline is defined as within 1% of a classification boundary, unless otherwise stated in the Approved Programme Schedule or Programme Specification.

In such cases the Examination Board should discuss the merits of the candidate and whether the mark accurately reflects the candidate's achievement. A candidate may drop a classification as well as be promoted, in each case the rationale for promotion or demotion is documented. When the Examination Board decision has been made to change a mark, the broadsheet is adjusted by the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar to reflect that decision.

Criteria to assist in determining the outcome of borderline cases for undergraduates:

- Within 1% (percentage point average) of the classification boundary.
- Demonstrate continued improvement over the programme in respect of the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Have the greater number of modules (adjusted for credit weighting if appropriate) in the higher classification.

In some very exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the Chair and External Examiners, a learner may be called for a viva voce. The learner must be given adequate notice and be informed of the learning outcomes to be determined. The viva voce is undertaken by the Module Leader and one External Examiner. A nominee of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar' chairs the viva voce.

### 1.15.15 Percentage Point Values (PPA) and Corresponding Award Classifications

Table 8.1: Percentage Point Values and Corresponding Award Classifications

<b>Classification Higher Certificates (Level 6) and Ordinary Bachelor's Degrees (Level 7) awards</b>	<b>Percentage Point Value (PPA) boundary values</b>	<b>Description</b>
Distinction	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this

Merit Grade 1	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Merit Grade 2	50%	Indicative descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes
Pass	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

<b>Bachelor's Degrees (Level 8) awards</b>	<b>PPA Boundary Values</b>	<b>Description</b>
First Class Honours	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second Class Honours	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Second Class Honours Grade 2	50%	Indicative descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes
Pass	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

<b>Classification of Postgraduate Diploma (Level 9)</b>	<b>PPA Boundary Values</b>	<b>Description</b>

Distinction	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Merit	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

<b>Classification of Taught Master's Degrees (Level 9)</b>	<b>PPA Boundary Values</b>	<b>Description</b>
First Class Honours	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second Class Honours	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

## 1.16 Embedded Awards

Where a learner is registered for an award and exits from that award before completing it, they may be made an alternative award subject to the following conditions:

- a) There is an embedded award validated for that programme.

- b) The learner has successfully completed all modules required for that award and accumulated sufficient ECTS in the modules of the embedded awards.

The award may be classified as outlined in Table 8.1 as appropriate.

This is only accessed by learners who enrol on a principal programme and exit early but have been assessed as having met the requirements for the lower NFQ level award.

## 1.17 Procedures for Reviewing an Examination Board Decision

The College procedures comprise a hierarchy of decision-making whereby the decision taken at any stage may be changed at the next proximate stage, without referral backward and in which the decision-making entity at any particular stage has full powers in relation to any decision brought before it.

### 1.17.1 Definitions

- QQI's Assessment and Standards defines a **Recheck** as *'the administrative operation of checking the recording and the combination of component scores for a module and/or stage'*
- QQI's Assessment and Standards defines a **Review** as *'the re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent persons'*. The College defines 'assessment decision' in this regard as referring to the decisions of an Examination Board. The College also allows the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar to initiate a review in relation to the examination process, where significant information comes to light following the examination cycle, that might have had a material impact on the process.
- The College defines an **Appeal** in this context as the re-consideration by the Appeal Board of the outcome of a review.

### 1.17.2 Procedure for Viewing Scripts

Recognising the ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that exam scripts constitute personal data, all learners are offered the opportunity to discuss their examination scripts with the internal examiner. This process takes place by appointment, not later than three working days after the date of the publication of results. The discussion may be conducted face-to-face or virtually and is designed to give the learner the opportunity to discuss with the examiner the rationale for the awarding of marks. Learners are encouraged to exercise this option before requesting a recheck or review.

Learners may not be accompanied and may not remove any examination material.

If the learner believes that there is an arithmetical error on the examination script, they should invoke the Recheck process.

### 1.17.3 Procedure for Seeking a Recheck

A candidate wishing to have the marks awarded for a particular module (or modules) re-examined should seek a recheck of the relevant module(s). A recheck is defined as the administrative operation of checking the recording and the combination of component scores for a module and/or stage.

Only a written request for a recheck made on the Learner recheck form; signed by the learner; and submitted to the Head of Assessment will be considered. The form is available on the VLE.

The candidate can supply details that they believe will help expedite the recheck.

The College will complete all rechecks within five working days where recheck requests have been received by the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar (or their nominee) not later than five working days after the examination results have been published. The recheck will be coordinated by the appropriate Programme Lead and carried out by the internal examiner. The fee for a recheck shall be refunded in the event of a successful recheck. The Examinations Office will inform the candidate in writing of the outcome of the recheck. The Examinations Office will prepare an annual report on rechecks which will be reviewed by Academic Council.

#### **1.17.4 Procedures for Seeking a Review**

A candidate wishing to have the marks awarded for a particular module (or modules) re-examined should seek a review of the relevant module(s). The grounds on which a review may be sought are as follows:

A request for a review will only be considered on the following grounds:

1. Procedural irregularity: Where there is evidence of substantive irregularity in the conduct of the assessment process.
2. Extenuating circumstances –
  - a) A prior circumstance emerged of which the Examination Board was not aware.
  - or
  - b) An extenuating circumstance of which the Examination Board was aware but had not considered because the submission was deemed too late.

Seeking a review disputing the academic judgment of the Examiners is not allowed.

The College will endeavour to complete all reviews within 10 working days where review requests have been received by the Head of Assessment not later than 10 working days after the examination results have been published.

1. Only a written request for a review made on the Learner Review form and signed by the person concerned will be considered. The form is available on the VLE.
2. The candidate must supply evidence in support of their request.
3. Formal processing of reviews of examination matters will be carried out having due regard to the schedule of meetings of the Academic Council and the annual conferring date.
4. The fee for a review shall be refunded in the event of a successful review.

The Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar shall appoint a senior academic staff member, who was not involved in the decision under review, to act as chair and convenor of the Review Board.

The Review Board is constituted as follows:

- The Chair
- 2 experienced members of the lecturing staff, nominated by the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar, neither of whom participated in the original Examination Board Meeting.
- 1 chair of an Academic Council committee, who has not participated in the original Examination Board Meeting.
- A learner representative, normally a class rep from another cohort.

The Head of Assessment will act as Secretary to the Review Board.

The Review Board shall consider requests for review received and shall in the first instance decide whether a review should proceed. Where a review proceeds, the Review Board may request information, for example, from the Director of Academic Programmes or the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar's Office to expedite the review. The relevant Programme Lead and the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar will compile the information necessary for the Review Board to complete its task. The relevant Programme Lead will be available to clarify any matters addressed to them by the review board with a view to assisting it in reaching a final resolution.

The Review Board shall consider the evidence presented to it and decide the outcome of the review. In carrying out a review, the Review Board may consult with such persons, as it deems appropriate. The Review Board may require that a re-marking of a script be undertaken by an alternate qualified examiner, who shall liaise with the extern examiner. In situations where a partner organisation has a role in the assessment process (e.g. work placements) the Review Board may consult with that partner organisation in reaching its conclusion.

All decisions of the Review Board will be by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair will have a casting vote. The candidate and the Programme Lead will be informed by the Examinations Office in writing. A candidate dissatisfied with the outcome or conduct of a review process may appeal the decision of the Review Board.

The Examinations Office will prepare an annual report on reviews which will be reviewed by Academic Council.

#### **1.17.5 Procedures for Seeking an Appeal**

The candidate may appeal the outcome of a review within four working days following receipt of the decision of the review board. The appeal must be based on one or more of the following grounds and must include evidence backing up the claim:

1. The College did not follow an established procedure in the making of a decision.
2. Circumstances or information of which the original decision-making body was not aware when its decision was taken, and a valid, substantiated reason why that information was not made available by the *appellant* (the person making the appeal).
3. Evidence of substantive bias by one or more of the decision-makers in arriving at a decision.

The following exclusions *do not* constitute grounds for an appeal:

1. Disagreement with an academic decision in respect of assessment.
2. Disappointment with the result of an assessment or an opinion that a higher mark should have been obtained.
3. Complaints about persons or procedures, which must be addressed in the first instance under the College's complaints policy and procedure.
4. Reopening of a matter that has already been decided on in a previous appeals process.

The introduction of new material that could have been included in the submission for the review shall not be a valid ground for appeal.

In the event where significant information comes to light following the completion of a review, that might have had a material impact on the result, the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar may seek to have an appeal conducted in respect of a review.

The detailed policy and procedure for an appeal is described in Policy for Appeals.

**STAGE 1: Recheck**  
**Carried out by Internal Examiner**

- **Recheck:** the marks awarded for a particular module or part of a module can be the subject of a recheck. A recheck is carried out to ensure that there have been no arithmetical or clerical errors, that the marks awarded are appropriate and that all the marks to which the learner is entitled have been included in the final total.
- The recheck will be coordinated by the appropriate Programme Lead and carried out by the internal examiner.
- The fee for a recheck shall be refunded in the event of a successful recheck.
- The Examinations Office will inform the candidate in writing of the outcome of the recheck.
- Learner may seek a Review.

**STAGE 2: Review**  
**Appointed member of academic staff not original marker**

- **Review:** re-consideration of a decision of an Examination Board in the light of additional information provided by the candidate or the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar in relation to the examination process.
- Learner must specify grounds for review.
- Process driven by Review Board, which includes learner rep.
- Alternate internal examiner and extern examiner involved in process.
- The fee for a recheck shall be refunded in the event of a successful recheck.
- Learner may seek an Appeal.

**STAGE3: Appeal**  
**Appeal Board, including External Chair; Extern Examiner; member of EMT and learner rep.**

- **Appeal:** re-consideration by the Appeal Board of the outcome of a review.
- President decides whether to convene Appeals Board.
- Appeal Board is chaired by external expert and includes an alternate external examiner, a member of the EMT and a learner rep.
- Board may seek professional advice, as appropriate.
- Learner may address Board, accompanied by another learner.
- Decision of Appeals Board is final.