



Brunel
University
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Guidelines For Vice Chancellor's **and Deputy Vice Chancellor's** **Representatives**

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GUIDELINES FOR VICE-CHANCELLOR'S AND DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPRESENTATIVES (BOARDS OF EXAMINERS)

Introduction

1 Vice-Chancellor's Representatives (VCRs) are drawn from appropriate administrative staff across the University to attend Boards of Examiners. Appropriate members of staff are appointed as Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Representatives (DVCRs) in the first instance and when they feel confident enough, they move on to being VCRs. For information about the constitution, roles and responsibilities of Panels and Boards of Examiners please refer to [Senate Regulation 4](#).

What is a Vice-Chancellor's Representative?

2 VCRs attend Boards of Examiners to ensure that appropriate decisions are reached in accordance with current University Regulations and policy, and that decisions are properly recorded. Briefing sessions are held annually for VCRs and DVCRs. Those sessions usually occur shortly before the summer assessment period and are intended as an opportunity to identify any changes to regulations and to share experiences and good practice.

What is a Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Representative?

3 The DVCR will usually have less experience of Boards of Examiners than the VCR and they attend Boards of Examiners to provide support to the VCR and to record all decisions of the Board accurately. DVCRs will be able to observe a number of Boards before taking on the role of VCR and are invited to attend the annual VCR and DVCR briefing sessions described above. It is expected that when DVCRs feel confident enough they will move on to being VCRs.

Panels and Boards of Examiners

4 The University operates a two-tier assessment decision-making system: Panels of Examiners consider and confirm the results of modular/assessment blocks within a subject area; Boards of Examiners make decisions about the progress of individual students and make award recommendations to Senate. It should be noted that, under current Senate Regulations, much of the academic judgement is exercised in Panels of Examiners. Boards of Examiners are concerned with ensuring that each student is treated equitably and fairly under the regulations.

The four key concerns of both Panels and Boards are:

- a** the evaluation and maintenance of standards;
- b** ensuring robust decision-making, including adherence to the regulations;
- c** the interests of individual students;
- d** comparative fairness across cohorts of students.

5 The University requires the presence of a VCR only at Boards of Examiners where awards are to be recommended.

Arrangements for Boards of Examiners meetings

6 The Timetabling and Awards Group (TAG) publishes a schedule of Board meetings for each Board of Examiners cycle, using information supplied by Departments. VCRs and DVCRs are assigned to each meeting and the rota is circulated by TAG ahead of each Board of Examiners cycle.

7 Chairs of Boards of Examiners are appointed by Colleges, usually by the Dean of College, on behalf of Senate. The Chair must be independent of the delivery of the programme(s) under consideration and Senate Regulation 4.58 establishes the composition of Boards. The Chair is responsible to Senate for ensuring that the Board is conducted in accordance with University and programme regulations.

8 Boards of Examiners are required to use a [standard agenda](#), which is circulated on an annual basis and published on the [Quality Assurance webpage](#).

VCR Role - overview

9 The University takes its responsibilities for the assessment of its students and the award of its degrees very seriously and seeks to ensure that all awards are made fairly, transparently and with due regard to the Senate Regulations. A number of processes have been put in place to ensure that the University can have confidence in these arrangements.

10 The VCR provides support to Boards of Examiners in their decision-making processes, particularly when the key concerns outlined in paragraph 4 are in conflict.

11 The VCR and DVCR record decisions taken by the Board on the Board paperwork with the purpose of ensuring the accurate input of those decisions into SITS. The VCR is responsible for the following broad functions:

a advising the Board on Senate Regulations and other published policy and their interpretation, taking into account any variations approved for a particular programme, as defined in the programme specification;

b intervening in cases where an improper decision might be made, or notifying the Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services of decisions taken improperly, against the advice of the VCR, or of any other problems;

c ensuring that all decisions of the Board are properly recorded both in the Minutes of the Board and on SITS;

d ensuring that all necessary paperwork is completed, signed, and dated by the Chair and External Examiners, and that the Minutes of the Board's decisions in relation to students are completed accurately;

e supporting comparability and consistency of practice across the University;

f a report must be made by the VCR in cases where irregularities occur in a Board's proceedings and were not remedied at the time. Such reports should also be made where one or more external examiners expressed dissatisfaction with the proceedings or decisions or recommendations of the Board. In the first instance, the VCR should contact Quality Assurance to report any such concerns.

DVCR Role - overview

12 DVCRs are responsible for recording the discussion and decisions of the Board on their copy of the Board paperwork; for attending the pre-meeting with the Chair of the Board and Administrator prior to the Board; for assisting with the recording of the recommendations of the Board on SITS and for supporting the VCR generally.

What should the VCR and DVCR do before the Board?

13 At the beginning of each Board cycle, the VCR and DVCR must ensure that they know the date and time of each Board allocated to them. If a VCR/DVCR is unable to attend a Board, it is the VCR's/DVCR's responsibility to arrange for another VCR to take their place. This may well involve trading a Board for another scheduled at a different time. The original VCR/DVCR must make sure that the Awards team is made aware of any changes as the relevant programme administrator and others involved in the Board will need to be informed.

14 The VCR must contact the Chair of the Board, the programme administrator and the DVCR to arrange a meeting which must take place following the Panel(s) of Examiners and prior to the Board taking place. This meeting will provide an opportunity to identify and discuss any potential issues before the Board itself. If it transpires that no External Examiner will be present at the Board meeting (also see paragraph 37 below), the VCR should confirm with the Department that the External Examiner has had a chance to consider the profiles and provide written comments that will be presented to the Board of Examiners. It must also be confirmed that the External Examiner is aware that they will be required to sign the Board paperwork and return it to the University as a matter of urgency.

15 The meeting between the VCR; DVCR; the Chair of the Board and the programme administrator is also an opportunity to identify any incomplete student profiles and establish whether any manual calculations are required before the Board. Only colleagues in Quality Assurance are authorised to complete manual award calculations and should this be required, the Administrator will request such a calculation via the Awards Team. Any manual calculation paperwork will be provided to you by the Awards team and should be used to inform the Board. No other manual award calculations can be used.

16 Before the meeting of a Board, the VCR should ensure that the appropriate information is obtained from the [Awarding Team site](#). Please ensure that you have available at the meeting of the Board:

- the attendance sheet;
- relevant regulations and policies;
- the appropriate programme specifications;
- any manual award calculations (this will be in the electronic file if it is relevant to the Board)
- any information regarding students who may obtain a higher classification by dropping their placement (this will be in the electronic file if it is relevant to the Board)

17 The Department will provide the Board paperwork, produced from SITS, and should provide copies of minutes of relevant previous meetings at the Board meeting. This paperwork will include student names for the VCR and DVCR.

18 VCRs should refresh their understanding of the key [Senate Regulations](#) that they may need to consult during the meeting. The [Awarding Team site](#) also contains information for TPOs about Boards of Examiners which you may find useful.

What do the VCR and DVCR do during the Board?

19 The DVCR should circulate the blank attendance sheet at the beginning of the Board meeting and collect the completed sheet at the end of the meeting. The VCR must ensure that they collect a full set of all papers provided at the Board and return them to the Awards team in the Board file.

20 The VCR must always ensure that the Board refers to the Senate Regulations and the programme specification(s) that pertain to the relevant cohort as there will sometimes be students studying under different regulations considered at the same Board of Examiners. As part of the standard Agenda, the Chair of the Board should state which regulations will be used during the Board before the consideration of profiles takes place.

21 Most Boards will turn to the VCR for guidance if they feel that they have a difficult decision to make, or if they are unclear about the scope of their authority or the regulatory position. If a VCR is unsure of the correct response, they should ask for clarification of the nature of the query in order to identify which section of the regulations might be relevant. If the regulations are silent on the matter, or if they allow for the Board to exercise its discretion, the VCR should assist the Board in reaching a reasonable decision. If the issue cannot be resolved, the VCR must tell the Chair that further advice is required and the VCR should contact Quality Assurance. Guidance is issued separately each year regarding the process to be followed/contact details for such queries. The Board cannot continue to transact its business in the absence of the VCR, and the VCR should make sure that the Chair understands the need to wait until they return before continuing.

22 Sometimes a Board might be intent on a certain course of action that appears to be outside its authority or the regulations. Where this occurs, the VCR must intervene in order to ensure that the decision is valid and fair and that the basis on which the Board has reached it is clear. It can be helpful, in the first instance, to seek clarification of the Board's understanding of the issues and the rationale for the suggested decision. The VCR should set out clearly the reasons for seeking clarification, citing the relevant regulations, or their understanding of the custom and practice of the Board. If the Board cannot resolve a VCR's concerns, the VCR should seek advice as above.

23 With any difficult or complex decision, the VCR should make sure they understand precisely the grounds on which it has been made, and remind the Departmental Administrator that the details of the decision-making process should be recorded fully and accurately in the minutes. In the event that the Board wishes to make a decision contrary to the Senate Regulations/other policy, the VCR should inform the Board that the view and decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) will need to be sought. The VCR should report the matter in the first instance to Quality Assurance.

Confidentiality

24 As defined in the standard Agenda, the Chair of the Board of Examiners must stress to all members of the Board that proceedings of Boards of Examiners are confidential to members of the Board and that the recommendations of the Board must not be disclosed to students in advance of the official release of their results.

Anonymity

25 Senate has resolved that Panels and Boards should consider the performance of candidates anonymously, i.e. by student number rather than name. VCRs should therefore check with the Administrator before the Board formally starts, that they, the DVCR, the Chair, the Chair of the extenuating circumstances panel and the programme administrator are the only people at the Board to have paperwork that includes student names. If it becomes apparent that members of the Board other than those listed above have named paperwork, the Board should be halted to allow for anonymized paperwork to be distributed.

Student Misconduct

26 SR6.48 to 6.58 sets out the procedures which must be adopted where there are concerns about student misconduct.

27 In cases of suspected academic misconduct, consideration of any award by the Board must be deferred in cases where an allegation of an academic offence has been made. No discussion about the allegations should take place at the Board.

Debtors

28 The formal Board paperwork will indicate those students whose record states that they are in debt to the University. FQ is used to denote debts of more than £100; students with debt of less £100 will be flagged as FQI. FQs must be highlighted for colleagues in the Awards team upon entry of awards on SITS. Students flagged as FQI require no attention.

29 Debtors will not be able to view their results on e-vision until the situation is resolved to the satisfaction of the Finance Office. The Board should reach a decision on the academic results of debtors, but the VCR should notify the Board that results should not be released, however informally.

30 'Financial Queries' is a standard Board Agenda item and this opportunity should be taken to remind the Board that results of any kind may not be discussed with or released to students. All students should, instead, be directed to the e-vision portal.

Decision deferred

31 Decision deferred (DD) should be entered on Board paperwork where there is insufficient information concerning the candidate's performance or the circumstances affecting it. The Board may empower the Chair to take Chair's Action by a fixed date.

Consideration for Ordinary Awards

32 Where a student profile does not fit requirements for an Honours award but the award of an Ordinary degree is defined in the programme specification, Boards should consider whether the student is eligible for the award of an Ordinary degree. Appendix C of SR2 outlines requirements for the award of an Ordinary degree and Boards should be encouraged to consider carefully the reassessment requirements for any student whose end award is likely to be an Ordinary degree.

Manual Calculations and Placement Checks

33 Any manual calculations must be carried out by Quality Assurance before the meeting of the Board and the results contained within the Board file. If it becomes apparent at the Board that a manual calculation is required, a decision should be deferred and the matter dealt with outside the Board. The Board paperwork should be annotated to that effect.

34 Quality Assurance will carry out daily checks to determine students who may be able to obtain a higher classification by dropping the placement assessment in the profile for award. If this is applicable to any students being considered at the Board you are attending, the Awarding Team will make you aware of this and provide you with the full information. The TPO Administrator will also be made aware and an appropriate decision can be made by the Board to allow the student a choice of award title.

Completing the Board paperwork during the meeting

35 Board paperwork will set out the student profile and the recommended outcome. VCRs and DVCRs should clearly annotate the paperwork with decisions taken as the Board works through its business. VCRs and DVCRs may wish to make separate notes for very complex discussions in order to cross-check against the formal minutes produced by the Department.

36 The VCR might find it helpful to ask the Chair to slow down whenever necessary.

37 At the end of the meeting, the VCR must ensure that the paperwork is signed and dated by the Chair and appropriate External Examiner(s).

38 Should the External Examiner(s) not be present at the Board, please ask the Chair to sign the paperwork and then return to the Awarding Team to assist the member of the Awarding Team in entering the Awards. The Awards will be held until the confirmation of the External Examiner is obtained.

39 There are a number of common issues which arise at Boards. The '[Assessment](#)' section of the Quality Assurance webpage provides links to a number of policy and guidance documents which are essential information for VCRs/DVCRs.

In particular, VCRs/DVCRs will wish to familiarise themselves with the following documents:

[Senate Regulation 2](#)

[Senate Regulation 3](#)

[Senate Regulation 4](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for EC Panels and Boards of Examiners](#)

[Provisional Progression Policy](#)

[Chair's Action Guidance](#)

[Policy for Coursework Submission](#)

What should the VCR and DVCR do after the meeting?

The results

40 As soon as the Board has concluded its business, the VCR and, for most Boards, the DVCR should return with the completed formal Board paperwork to the TAG office to enter the

results on to SITS.

41 The VCR and DVCR's responsibility extends to checking that the decisions of the Board are accurately entered onto SITS.

42 The VCR is responsible for ensuring that the section of the formal minutes of the meeting, produced by the relevant Department, relating to decisions regarding students is accurate and cross-checked against the Board paperwork. Formal minutes must be sent to TAG within a timescale established on an annual basis, notified separately.