Supplementary Guidance and Best Practice for Examiners and Exam Boards

It is anticipated that Exam Boards will be operating remotely for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year. The following guidance should be considered in conjunction with the standard Examiners’ Guide 2019-20.

If you have a question that is not addressed here please email Jane.Clare@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Marking and Classing

Summative examinations and assessments must be marked and classed using the criteria already made available to students.

As is usual, Examiners may not take extenuating circumstances into consideration. The Examinations, Access & Mitigation Committee or Board of Graduate Studies will deal with mitigation after the assessment period in the usual way.

External Examiners

As far as circumstances allow, External Examiners should be involved in the classing process in the usual way. If an appointed External Examiner is unable to fulfil the role and it is not possible to appoint another, the process can continue without one in exceptional circumstances.

Exam Boards

Exam Boards are not expected to consider formative assessments.

Exam Boards should take place remotely. As always, Faculties and Departments are expected to retain clear robust evidence of decisions made.

All Examiners (including External Examiners) are expected to attend the final meeting as usual, although the normal process for dispensation remains.

It is understood that this year, and with the extension to the assessment period, that it will not be possible for Exam Boards to meet before the end of the Easter Term.

Please note: this year the University will require a record of which students have benefited from the safety net. Since this won’t be possible to verify via CamSIS, Exam Board minutes should be shared with the Education Quality and Policy Office (educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk).

Safety Net (full detail in appendix)

Examiners, in the Final Examiners meeting will agree marks and Class for each candidate, including any borderline candidates. Once these are agreed, Examiners will apply the safety net as defined in the appendix (noting exceptions below).

As is usual, even if Examiners are aware that a student had mitigating circumstances during the year (including disability, poor health, caring responsibilities etc.), Examiners should mark that candidate on the assessment(s) submitted and with the rest of the cohort, should assign a provisional class based on usual grade boundaries and then apply the safety net if required to determine the class to be awarded. As noted above, the student is eligible to apply to the Examination Assessment and Mitigation Committee or Board of Graduate Studies for an allowance to take mitigating circumstances into account.
Examiners will require, for each candidate, the previous Class awarded. The Exams Team will circulate to each Chair of Examiner a list of 2019 examination results. This will include:

- any changes that were made after the Class List was published, following an application for an Allowance. For these students, Examiner should use the Class awarded following the allowance.
- information for students who transferred into another Tripos.

The list might not include information for those students who intermitted last year, but this is available from the Exams Team.

The Chair is asked to review this information in advance of the Final Examiners meeting and contact the Exams Team (examops@admin.cam.ac.uk) if the information is incomplete.

Examiners should not rank candidates this year.

Examiners should apply Grade Boundaries to the cohort this year.

After the final Examiners meeting, the Class awarded must be uploaded into CamSIS. You do not need to enter the Class determined pre-application of the safety net. The marks provided to the Student Registry will be uploaded and will appear on the student’s University transcript.

In the College mark book, you should provide the mark breakdown and final class awarded after the safety net has been applied.

There is no mechanism for Examiners to appeal against the safety net, the University expects Examiners to apply the safety net according to the Principles and Policies for Modified Assessment.

**Second Assessment period**

For those students whose timed summative assessment is disrupted in Easter term, a further opportunity to sit the assessment will be available once the University is fully operational. (Timed assessment refers to those timed for 24-hours or less.)

Students will, via their College, inform the University of the reason they were unable to take the assessment in Easter term and then arrangements will be made for the student to sit in the later assessment period.

Participation in the later assessment period by final year undergraduate students and postgraduate taught students will impact on the timing of their graduation.

Students unable to sit their exams in the first period will be allowed to sit in the second. For this purpose, students will be allowed to self-certify illness or caring responsibilities.

It may therefore be necessary to hold a second Exam Board after the second sitting of exams which will be held when the University is fully operational. New examination papers should be prepared for the second assessment period. The Board should consider marks and classing for the second period students only, or for any student who has had a coursework extension beyond the first Exam Board.

**Class Lists**

Class lists should be produced as usual, although they will not be published at the Senate-House or in the Reporter this year. Marks will still be posted to students’ records. Chairs of Examiners must still arrange for the upload of classes and marks into CamSIS immediately after the meeting. Scanned signatures will be permitted this year on the final mark book.
Graduation and Transcripts

General Admission will occur on 27 June, and another congregation is scheduled for 18 July.

Since a large proportion of Class Lists will not be available in time for the 27 June General Admission, a further date has been proposed. This date (8 July) would allow those students the opportunity to graduate in absentia without having to wait for the Congregation on the 18 July.

A statement will appear on transcripts noting the COVID pandemic circumstances in the academic year 2019-20, which will be approved by the General Board Education Committee.

Exams Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC)/Board of Graduate Studies (BGS)

Students should be referred to the EAMC or BGS (via their college) if they have:

- Been unable to take exams in either sitting
- Been unable to submit summative coursework
- Wish to appeal their final marks/class

Extension of dissertation deadlines has temporarily been devolved to Exam Boards.
The University’s Safety Net

Appendix

Defining the safety net

The Principles and Policies for Modified Assessment defines the safety net and describes those courses and students to which the safety net applies.

The University will provide a ‘safety net’ for final year undergraduates and some integrated Master’s programmes.

The ‘safety net’ means that, as long as a graduating undergraduate student passes their assessments, no graduating undergraduate student will receive a class lower than that awarded in their second year exams in the same or a different Tripos, or, if they are a fourth year, their third year exams if they took exams in their third year.

The class will be determined on the basis of the marks achieved, but where the ‘safety net’ applies, the 2020 assessments will therefore only confirm the class awarded in their second (or third) year or improve it; the usual classifications being, 1st, 2i, 2ii, 3rd. Therefore, for example, if a third year finalist was awarded a 2.1 in their second year exams, they will not receive lower than a 2.1 in their final year exams. If a student was awarded a 'starred first' in part I, they are not guaranteed one in Part II.

To whom the safety net applies

The safety net will apply:

- To those courses, where the fourth year of the course is fully integrated into the undergraduate portion of the course and the modified assessment which has been arranged will provide a student with the opportunity to be classed. These courses are: Chemical Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, Natural Sciences Tripos (except Astrophysics).
- To the Management Studies Tripos, where a fourth-year undergraduate has the safety net from their third-year result and not the second year.
- To fourth year undergraduates who were not classed in their third year but were classed in their second year, it will be possible to rely on their second-year class as their safety net. This includes students who were on a Year-abroad in their third year, or those taking a Part II with a prelim.
- Regardless of whether the student was following the same Tripos or transferred to a different Tripos for their final year.
- To third year undergraduates on the Mathematical Tripos who will sit a pass/fail assessment in the summer and have the option of returning to Cambridge when the University is operational again in order to sit exams and improve on their safety net class.

The safety net will not apply to

- Computer Science because Part III is not fully integrated with Part II and is effectively a stand-alone Master’s course.
- Those where there will be a pass/fail assessment in the summer and where those students will be given the opportunity to return to Cambridge when the University is operational again to sit exams to obtain a class. These courses are Astrophysics and Engineering.
Conditions of the safety net

- Final year undergraduate students must take the 2020 assessments that have been set, and must pass them (either in the first assessment period or the second assessment period) to be classed and awarded the degree. The marks awarded will be included on the student’s transcript.

- Students who are unable to participate in the summative assessment in Easter term for reasons such as ill health, significant caring commitments, technical difficulties or similar disruption, will be given an opportunity to take the same method of assessment in a second assessment period when the University is back in full operation. Students may not re-sit the assessment in the second assessment period if they are able to sit it in the first period, unless they have been approved to do so via an application for an examination allowance.

Managing exceptions

- If a student is eligible to be classed but was unable to take any assessment either in the first or second assessment period, or only some of the assessment, or were otherwise affected by ‘serious medical or other grave cause’ then they can apply to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) or Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) for an alternative examination allowance, for example a ‘DDH’ (Deemed to Deserve Honours) or being classed on the marks received from a subset of the assessment that has taken place. The student’s College will advise students on this process.

- If a student received an allowance in their second year and were not classed, they should take their assessments and if their final year classification is lower than their first year result, they can apply via their College to the Examination and Assessment Mitigation Committee for a review. This review will have regard to the student’s first year result and marks; any marks in their second year, and marks in their third year (assuming that there may already have been some summative assessment) including the distribution of marks in the modified assessment; and any other evidence of the quality of their work during the second and third year such as supervision reports. In the light of this evidence, if the EAMC concludes that there is a case to support the student being capable of achieving a higher class than that awarded, the EAMC will make a recommendation to the Chair of Examiners that they reconsider the class. This recommendation will be considered by the Chair of Examiners and up to (any) two examiners. If approved, the higher class will appear on the transcript.
Suggested process

1. In advance of Final Examiners meeting, review cohort and prepare by checking list of candidates against last year’s marks available. Contact examops@admin.cam.ac.uk for any missing marks

2. Consolidate raw marks from this year’s assessment

3. Apply usual marking process, scaling, borderline cases etc

4. Agree final Class

5. Review cases against the safety net policy

6. Amend final Classes

7. Sign off Final Class List

8. Upload Final Class List into CamSIS

9. Circulate College markbook, with Final Class List