

GUIDANCE ON EXAMINATIONS BOARDS and FINAL AWARDS BOARDS:

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMA QUALIFICATIONS

Reference: QAA Grading Implementation Handbook Part I and Part J July 2009

Introduction

All Access to Higher Education Diploma programmes are required to hold an Examinations Board and a Final Awards Board for each run of the programme.

Within an AVA formal authority for the award of Access to HE Diplomas is delegated to an Awards Board. The Access Centre Moderator, and one other person appointed OCN Eastern Region by the AVA, act as the AVA's representative at the Final Awards Board.

Examinations Boards

The Access Centre Moderator does not attend the Examinations Board which is an internal meeting held by the Access provider. The Exams Board is the place where detailed discussion of all assessment decisions concerning the achievement of individual learners by the Access programme team takes place.

The Exams Board is a detailed discussion of individual learners and is a separate meeting from the Final Awards Board. It takes place ahead of the Final Awards Board (FAB) and sufficiently far ahead that minutes and results can be produced, so that the Access Centre Moderator can take an informed decision, where required, at the FAB. This will result in a final set of results, borderline decisions, referrals; instances of extenuating circumstances; aegrotat or posthumous awards; incidences of academic misconduct which will need to be presented to the FAB for a final decision to be made by the Access Centre Moderator.

There may be a series of meetings, one for each pathway / subject, or there may be one meeting which includes the results for all learners from all Access Diploma pathways.

Only in the most exceptional circumstances (agreed with the Access Centre Moderator in advance) will learners be allowed to complete assessed work required for the award of credit or the award of an Access Diploma after the Exams Board, and any extension must be agreed with the OCN Eastern Region (using the NR Form).

Outcomes of the Examinations Board

- Proposals for the FAB relating to resubmissions; extensions for learners with extenuating circumstances; incidences of academic misconduct; proposed aegrotat or posthumous awards.
- A final set of results to be presented to the FAB for a final decision to be made by the Access Centre Moderator.

- Minutes of the Exams Board
- Recommendations for the Award of the Access to HE Diploma
- Recommendations for the award of credit (where the full Access Diploma has not been achieved)

The Final Awards Board (FAB)

For efficiency and practicality the FAB usually takes place on the same day as the final visit by the Access Centre Moderator. All FABs for Access to HE courses should normally take place before 15 July for September Cohorts and 31 January for January cohorts.

The date of a FAB should be agreed in advance with the Centre Moderator and notified to the OCN Eastern Region by the date of the Initial Visit so that an AVA representative can attend.

Any final examinations required for certification should be held at least three weeks before a FAB to allow time for assessment and collation of results to occur.

At the final visit the Access Centre Moderator will:-

- Check the provider's response to OCN Eastern Region Quality procedures.
- Scrutinise course management; delivery and assessment; learner achievement and progression; learner feedback on the programme(s); internal quality assurance including internal moderation and subject moderation outcomes and actions.
- Request and sample learners' work as agreed with the provider.
All portfolios of learners' work must be available. It is desirable for the Centre Moderator to review the work of any learners thought to be borderline in advance of the Final Awards Board. (QAA)
- Scrutinise the Rules of Combination for each Access Diploma to ensure that learners are able to meet the requirements for the course.
- Record actions, recommendations and examples of good practice to be reported to the FAB.

What must be presented to the Access Centre Moderator at the visit?

- Criteria for successful completion of the Access Diploma (validated as part of the formal Access Diploma submission)
- Rules of Combination (ROC) for each Access to HE Diploma.
- A copy of the Access Diploma submission document must be available for consultation if necessary.

- An agreed results profile for each learner. This should directly address the programme's Assessment Regulations and assessment strategy.
- Records of any representations (by learners to challenge grades) and the outcomes of this process
- Records and documentation related to any requests for referral being brought to the Final Awards Board
- Minutes of the Examinations Board.
- Completion, achievement and progression data
- Any claims for award of credit based on credit exemption (for example from GCSE Equivalent units), credit transfer or accreditation of prior learning (APL)

Business of the Final Awards Board

The business of the Final Awards Board covers the following activities:-

- Approval of the award of credits, grades and Access to HE Diplomas.
- Confirmation that, for each student for whom the award of the Access to HE Diploma is approved, the rules of combination for the named Access to HE Diploma have been met and the credit and grade profiles are accurate and complete.
- Final Decisions about referrals; special cases, including extenuating circumstances; aegrotat and posthumous awards; and cases of academic misconduct.
- The Centre Moderator signs the Recommendation for Award of Credit to confirm the Awards Board's approval of all Awards and any other decisions made by the Awards Board.
- The signed documentation is returned to the AVA, by the specified deadline and in accordance with any other AVA reporting requirements.
- The AVA checks the documentation received from the awards board and issues Access to HE Diplomas and transcripts of achievement to students.
- The Awards Board's decisions are formally recorded by a set of minutes which relate to the Agenda drawn up OCN Eastern Region. Where any alterations or additions to the recommendations are agreed by the Awards Board, these are normally recorded as amendments on the minutes.

*'The awards board receives **no information about offers for progression** to higher education which may have been made to any student, and such information will play no part in its considerations. (The meeting of the awards board will be formally closed before any such information is shared.)'(QAA)*

Membership of the Final Awards Board

Final Awards Boards may need to differ in size and composition to reflect the size, range and organisation of all the course(s) being considered.

The Final Awards Board comprises:-

- The Chair
- The Access Centre Moderator (or equivalent)
- One other representative from OCN Eastern Region (the AVA)
- A provider representative for example, the Quality Manager
- Access Co-ordinator or Access Programme Manager
- Course representatives for each pathway

Please note: Neither the Access Centre Moderator nor the Access Co-ordinator should chair the meeting.

Responsibilities

Access Centre Moderator

Responsibilities include:-

- Confirms assessment judgements.
- Ratifies results, including the achievement of the correct combination of credits (detailed in the rules of combination).
- Makes final decisions on borderline cases, referrals; instances of extenuating circumstances; aegrotat or posthumous awards; incidences of academic misconduct.
- Countersigns the Recommendation of Award of Credit (RAC) forms if all prescribed requirements have been met.
- Presents a report based upon moderator reports and the outcomes of the Final Visit.

It is not expected that the Moderator will be involved in detailed discussion of individual learners' cases, as this will occur at the Exams Board.

Moderators will only confirm the recommendation for the award of credit (RAC) if they are satisfied that adequate summative information has been provided on a learner's achievement.

The AVA representative will ensure that the Final Awards Board is conducted in accordance with the OCN Eastern Region's requirements, and the moderator should not countersign the Recommendation of Award of Credit (RAC) forms if the prescribed requirements have not been followed.

Moderators will sign RACs for Access Diplomas which contain GCSE equivalent credits conditionally and these RACs will also be countersigned by the relevant GCSE Equivalence Moderator in order that a separate award for the GCSE equivalent qualification can be made.

It is the responsibility of OCN Eastern Region to ensure that this countersignature is gained before certificates are produced.

Chair of the Final Awards Board

- Ensures due process is followed and the agenda is followed in an effective and timely manner.
- It is recommended that this is a member of senior management team from the provider with sufficient authority and distance from the Access programme to act with objectivity.

AVA Representative (this person can be a second Moderator)

- Ensures due process is followed.
- Provides advice and guidance on matters relating to the AVA.
- Reports any queries to the AVA which cannot be resolved by the Moderator at the Final Awards Board

Provider Representative/ Access Coordinator

- Ensures due process is followed.
- Takes minutes of the Final Awards Board and provides copies to the provider and OCN Eastern Region

Course Representative

Presents results and the outcomes of the Examinations Board for their Course to the Final Awards Board.

Records of Final Awards Boards

The Final Awards Board must be formally minuted. Minutes should be full and should demonstrate transparency and clarity in case an appeal is made.

Ideally the minutes should accompany the Recommendation for the Award of Credit forms (RACs), which should be completed and signed at the Final Awards Board and sent to the Registration and Awards Team at OCN Eastern Region.

A signed copy of the minutes should be sent to OCN Eastern Region within 10 working days of the Board.

ACCESS TO HE DIPLOMA

Agenda for the Final Awards Board

Name of Centre		
Date Time Venue		
Access to HE Diplomas included in FAB		
Chair		
Role in organisation		
Access Coordinator		
Access Centre Moderator(s)		
Attendees		
No.	Item	Name
1	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline of the function and purpose of the Final Awards Board Identify documents to be presented to the Final Awards Board <p>Confidentiality statement</p> <p><i>All discussions concerning learner performance must be regarded as confidential.</i></p>	Chair
2	Declarations of interest	All
3	Minutes of the previous Final Awards Board (date) and implementation of action points	Chair Course Representative(s)
4	Minutes of the Examinations Board (date)	Course Representative(s)
5	<p>Report by the Course Representative(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the programme in the current year 	CR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention information Changes and developments to the programme in the future 	
6	Report by Access Centre Moderator	ACM
7	Confirmation of Rules of Combination	ACM
8	Confirmation of learner achievement for the award of the Access Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement of any additional credit achievement 	ACM
9	Confirmation of decisions on referrals, extenuating circumstances etc.	ACM
10	Date of Next Board	Chair All
11	AOB	Chair All
Meeting Close		
Report by Course Representative(s) on progression to HE		

Document checklist

- Minutes of the Examinations Board
- OCN Eastern Region Guidance on Examinations Boards and Final Awards Boards
- OCN Eastern Region Access to HE Diploma Guidance on Grading Version 2 September 2009
- Rules of Combination
- Access to HE Diploma Programme Submission Document
- Recommendations for the Award of Credit
- Supporting documentation for requests for referrals
- Records of representations (to contest grades) and outcomes
- Results profile for each learner

Access to HE Diploma

Minutes of the Final Awards Board

Name of Centre				
Date time venue				
Access to HE Diploma pathways included in FAB				
Chair				
Role in Organisation				
Access Coordinator				
Access Centre Moderator(s)				
Attendees				
No.	Item	Discussion and Action	By Whom	By When
1	Welcome and introductions Apologies Confidentiality statement			
2	Declarations of Interest			
3	Minutes of the previous Final Awards Board and implementation of action points			
4	Minutes of the Examinations Board			
5	Report by the Course Representative(s)			
6	Report by Access Centre Moderator			
7	Confirmation of			

	the Rules of Combination			
8	Confirmation of Achievement			
9	Confirmation of decisions on referrals, extenuating circumstances etc.			
10	Date of Next Board			
11	AOB			

Report by Course Representative Template

Item	Content
Summary of key events and issues	Summary of the programme in the current year Course details Start and end dates Student numbers: Enrolments; transfers; withdrawals; completers. Ethnicity profile
Retention	Retention information and analysis Withdrawals with reasons
The Future	Changes and developments envisaged
After the meeting close	
Indicative progression information	

Report by Access Centre Moderator Template- this can be a verbal report to the Board based on notes taken during the Final Visit

Item	Content
Overview of the programme	Summary of key findings from the current year
Sampling Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes of sampling to include sampling strategy
Main report	Actions and recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Centre Management • For Tutors/Access Co-ordinator • For the OCN Eastern Region
Good practice	Examples of Good Practice seen in (for example):- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course management • delivery and assessment • support for learners • learner achievement and progression • learner feedback on the programme(s) • internal moderation and subject moderation
Final Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resubmissions and referrals • extenuating circumstances • aegrotat and posthumous awards • cases of academic misconduct.