This document summarises the University’s assessment and examination policies and practices and provides information on graduation and transcripts. It should be of interest to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and to all staff involved with assessments and examinations. All External Examiners for taught programmes are given the Academic Quality Handbook web address on appointment, directing them to this Section.

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7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 All of the University’s undergraduate programmes, and the majority of postgraduate taught programmes, consist of discrete courses. Normally, courses comprise an eleven-week teaching period, followed by a one-week formal revision period, followed in due course, where appropriate, by the formal end-of-course written examinations. Some courses, however, are of only five weeks’ duration, with any end-of-course written examinations being held at the end of the relevant half-session. Exceptionally (and usually only as part of an Honours programme), a course may extend over two half-sessions.

7.1.2 In some cases, the formal end-of-course written examinations for first half-session courses are held at the end of the second half-session (see 7.4.1).

7.2 Types of Assessment

7.2.1 The University encourages a mixed method of assessment, as appropriate to the nature of individual courses. As part of Curriculum Reform, the use of different forms of assessment has been encouraged, for example, assessment of Sixth Century Courses focuses on student activity and formal unseen written examinations are not part of the assessment.

Prescribed Degree Assessments

7.2.2 The assessments which contribute a specified percentage of the overall assessment prescribed for a course or programme are described as Prescribed Degree Assessments. For undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses the Catalogue of Courses indicates whether a course will be assessed entirely by written examination, by in-course assessment, by submission of a dissertation/project report, by oral/practical examination, or by a combination thereof. Details of the assessment arrangements for resit examinations are also provided.

Summative and Formative Assessments

7.2.3 Prescribed degree assessments are summative assessments. Some courses will also include elements of formative assessment which differ from summative assessments in that they do not contribute towards the final mark for a course or programme: they are primarily for the benefit of students in gauging their knowledge and ability at the time of the assessment.

7.2.4 Some honours and postgraduate taught programmes will also have summative assessments which are not linked to a specific course: e.g. a General Paper or oral examination that might relate to the programme as a whole or to part of a programme. These are detailed under the prescription for the programmes concerned in the University Calendar and in course handbooks.

7.2.5 The ultimate authority for conduct of all prescribed degree assessments resides with the Head(s) of the relevant School(s) or, in the case of certain interdisciplinary programmes, an Honours Programme Co-ordinator. References hereafter to Heads of School refer to such Programme Co-ordinators where relevant.
7.3 Setting and Arranging Assessments

Written Examination Papers

7.3.1 Course Co-ordinators are responsible, under the ultimate authority of their Head of School, for preparing written examination papers in consultation with those involved with the delivery of a course. While questions should relate to the course delivered, they may include reference to material not actually taught, provided that students have been told explicitly (e.g. in the course documentation) that a particular subject would form part of the course aims and learning outcomes and that students would be expected to undertake self-directed learning on such material.

7.3.2 In finalising the draft written paper, Course Co-ordinators should ensure:

- that the material has not been assessed previously (e.g. by way of an in-course assignment, the mark for which contributes to the overall course mark);
- that the paper covers an adequate breadth of material and adheres to SCQF level descriptors (Appendix 7.9);
- that there is no overlap/similarity in material being assessed where more than one written paper is being set for a particular course;
- that questions at Levels 3, 4 and 5 in particular are designed to allow students to demonstrate independent critical awareness and understanding of the subject, analysis and judgement.

7.3.3 The External Examiner must be asked to approve the final paper and should be sent all relevant Course Handbooks to enable them to ascertain whether the draft questions are fair and appropriate in relation to the course aims and learning outcomes. Where all substantive changes requested by the External Examiner have been incorporated into an examination paper, the Head of School, or nominee, may ratify the final version. Where a School does not act on all changes required by the External Examiner, or makes additional substantive changes to the paper, it must be returned to the External Examiner for final approval.

7.3.4 Heads of School should ensure that details of the School’s timetable for ensuring that all examination papers are approved by the External Examiner, and are submitted to the Registry (academicservices@abdn.ac.uk) by 31 October each year.

7.3.5 It is good practice to draft a greater number of questions than required and to ask the External Examiner to select the questions to be set for a particular paper. External Examiners can also be asked if they wish to set any questions themselves. In such cases, the Course Co-ordinator must ensure that all questions relate to the course aims and learning outcomes.

7.3.6 Wherever possible, a model answer and/or marking scheme should be sent to the External Examiner with the draft questions, indicating how the total marks for the question could be achieved. [It is acknowledged that this will not be practicable for some subjects.]

7.3.7 If the question paper is structured and/or if a question is in several parts, the question paper should indicate the weighting that will be apportioned to each component: this will assist candidates in allocating an appropriate proportion of the examination time to answer a particular question.
In-Course Assignments and Projects/Dissertations

7.3.8 Although it is not a requirement for External Examiners to approve in-course assignments and project/dissertation titles, Course Co-ordinators should consider whether to discuss these with the External Examiner(s) before being finalised in view of the fact that External Examiners are required to approve overall course marks and, in so doing, have the right to request any item of in-course assessment (paragraph 7.10.6 below, refers).

7.3.9 Notwithstanding the above, topics for in-course assignments and projects and dissertations should be selected having regard to the criteria for setting written examination questions indicated in paragraphs 7.3.1 and 7.3.2.

Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism

7.3.10 Plagiarism is defined in paragraph 7.17.1. It is incumbent on those setting any type of assessment to ensure that the requirements of the assessment are clear and do not lend themselves to plagiarism.

7.3.11 It is also incumbent on Schools to ensure that students are given adequate advice on citation and referencing so as to avoid plagiarism. In so doing, Schools must provide the following information in their School/Course Handbooks:-

- the University’s definition of plagiarism guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in regard to particular types of assessment, which should include the following:-
  - instructions on the correct methods of referencing sources (i.e. both in footnotes and in the bibliography), with examples;
  - advice on when to use quotation marks;
  - emphasising the importance of a student giving their own interpretation when using, quoting or paraphrasing the work of others (this would include the use of information down-loaded from Internet sites);
  - guidance for those working in groups, to indicate whether or not an individual contribution was expected in regard to the assessment of the work (it is acknowledged that it may be impossible or undesirable to identify individual contributions for some group projects).

7.3.12 In addition, Schools are asked to make every effort to ensure that the design of an assessment does not promote the possibility of plagiarism but instead requires from the student individual and critical use of resources appropriate to their level of study.

7.3.13 TurnitinUK (plagiarism avoidance software) is an on-line facility which enables electronic comparison of students’ work against electronic sources, including Internet material and work submitted by students at the University of Aberdeen and at other institutions. Further information can be provided by the Centre for Academic Development.

Information to Candidates

7.3.14 In regard to the information that might be provided to students concerning written examinations, staff must ensure:-

- that caution be exercised when informing students about the content (as opposed to the structure) of a written examination and should be sufficiently broad so as not to give students an unfair advantage in completing the examination;
• that any information which staff give to students in regard to the structure and/or content of an examination should be in writing and made available to all students (preferably in the Course Handbook);
• that the actual examination paper must comply with the above information provided to students;
• that written examinations (indeed, all assessments) must relate to the learning outcomes for a course, which should be indicated in the Course Handbook.

7.3.15 Course and Programme Handbooks should contain all relevant information for candidates in regard to assessments, including the deadlines for submission of in-course assignments and the consequences and penalties for late or non-submission of material for assessment.

### 7.4 Scheduling of, and Entry to, Assessments

#### Examination Diets and Timetables

7.4.1 There are three formal diets for written examinations for undergraduate courses each year: in December, April/May and summer. Special diets are held in regard to the MBChB, Education and some postgraduate taught programmes. The timetabling of written examinations for courses (except those that are part of the MBChB programme) at the three formal diets is the responsibility of the Registry. It is University Policy that no student is required to sit more than two examinations in one day and there should not be any clashes for students registered correctly for courses by the end of the second week of teaching. A draft timetable is sent to Schools prior to each diet. At this stage a School may request a change in the date of a course examination. Generally, at the April/May diet, Level 4 courses are scheduled in the early part of the examination diet. The timetable is finalised as follows:-

- by early November;
- by mid-March;
- four weeks before commencement of the Summer resit exam diet.

7.4.2 Students taking examination in the December and April/May diets can find details on the date, time and venue of examinations via MYTIMETABLE, the Infohub website, and on notice boards in the Infohub. Students taking examinations in the Summer Resit diet can find details of the date, time through the Infohub website after the timetable has been published. Later, after all resit applications have been processed students can view their exam details, with exam venues allocated, through MYTIMETABLE, the Infohub website and on the noticeboards in the Infohub.

7.4.3 Students taking examinations externally (paragraphs 7.4.16-7.4.18 refer) are referred to the Infohub website, however a paper copy of the examination timetable can be sent on request.

7.4.4 For postgraduate taught courses scheduled outwith the normal examination diets, it is the responsibility of the parent School to inform students of the date, time and venue of all such examinations.

**Latest Date for Submission of Overall Course Results**
Schools are informed annually of the deadlines for the latest submission of results. All written papers should be timetabled to allow maximum time for internal moderation and then consideration by the External Examiner in order for results to be submitted to the Registry by the Senate-prescribed deadlines with reference to paragraph 7.4.1.

First Attempt

Course hand-outs should state clearly the deadlines for submission of any in-course assessments (e.g. essays, practicals, reports, projects, dissertations) associated with a course, together with any penalties for late submission.

The written examinations (except MBChB, BDS and BScMedSci) normally take place in the fixed examination period at the end of each half-session, i.e. in mid-late December for first half-session courses or in April/May for second half-session courses. At Levels 4 and above, particularly in Science, both first and second half-session courses taken as part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme are often assessed in April/May along with dissertations written during the first half-session. Details are given under the relevant programme prescriptions. The Medicine and Dentistry Offices will inform MBChB, BDS and BScMedSci students of the dates of their examinations.

Students who are awarded a Class Certificate for a course are entered automatically for the first available opportunity of prescribed degree assessment following award of the certificate, i.e. in the period immediately following the teaching and learning period (or in April for those first half-session courses where paragraph 7.4.1 applies). Students who are refused a Class Certificate (paragraph 6.7.8 refers) or who are deemed withdrawn from the course through their failure to respond to being reported as ‘at risk’ in the system for monitoring students’ progress (paragraph 6.6.1 refers), lose the right to appear for any associated end-of-course written examination unless they have an appeal against the decision pending.

Re-assessment

Undergraduate and postgraduate taught candidates holding a valid class certificate are permitted a total of three/two opportunities of assessment respectively. A re-assessment opportunity for both first and second half-session undergraduate courses (except courses at Level 4 and above) is offered in the summer examination diet. In the case of courses at Level 4 and above, including postgraduate taught courses, the timing and format of the resit shall be approved by the Head of the relevant School. Students must formally apply to enter resit examinations (and must have a valid Class Certificate for the related course(s)). Where re-assessment is by re-submission of written work, it must normally be submitted by the first day of the summer diet. However, candidates may be declared as having passed in June if they have completed the required work by then in order to obtain the necessary credits to graduate.

In the case of courses resat as part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme, normally only the first attempt contributes to the final award. For postgraduate taught students, grades achieved at resit are marked as either ‘resit pass’ (RP) or ‘resit fail’ (RF).

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1 A Class Certificate is a certificate confirming that a candidate has attended and duly performed the work prescribed for a course. With the exception of the MBChB and BDS degrees, Class Certificates are valid as an entitlement to admission to a degree assessment in the academic year in respect of which they are awarded, and in the academic year immediately following. Students holding a valid Class Certificate are permitted a total of three opportunities of assessment within this period.
7.4.11 Although the first entry to a prescribed degree assessment for a course may include an element of in-course assessment, this may not always be practicable for the second, or a subsequent, entry. While the resit result for some courses will be based entirely on the written examination, for others a new element of in-course assessment will be required or the result for the in-course assessment submitted for the first attempt will be carried forward and counted at the resit attempt. Schools are required to provide this information to students in Course Handbooks. **Students who are in any doubt as to the nature of the assessments associated with a resit attempt should consult the relevant Course Co-ordinator.**

**External Candidates**

7.4.12 Students who have withdrawn from the University with the intention of obtaining additional credits to allow them to return to the University, and those who have left the University but who may require additional credits to satisfy the requirements for an award (e.g. a non-honours degree or a certificate or diploma), are eligible to take undergraduate course examinations as an external candidate if they possess a valid Class Certificate¹.

7.4.13 External candidates entering course examinations at the end of the first half session; end of the second half session; or over the resit examination diet must submit their resit application and the appropriate fee (where applicable) by the resit application dates as published through the [Infohub](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub) website.

7.4.14 External candidates can request a copy of the relevant examination timetable. A self-addressed stamped envelope is required. The timetable is available as a PDF file at [www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub). Students should check their student portal for their examination timetable to ensure there are no errors in their examination registration. Candidates should take their Online Store order confirmation email as a receipt and should check the email address provided in the order regularly as this will be used should there be any issues with registration.

**Examination Entry Fees**

7.4.15 There is no fee to pay for a first attempt at a Prescribed Degree Assessment. However, students must pay a re-assessment fee for any subsequent attempt, unless they were unable to take the first attempt due to medical reasons or other good cause (paragraphs 7.7.17 and 7.7.18 refer) and have this recorded on their Student Record. This requirement applies irrespective of the mode of re-assessment.

7.4.16 Details of re-assessment fees are announced on Student Portals, and can be obtained from the Registry.

**Examinations Held Outwith Aberdeen**

7.4.17 Permission to hold outwith Aberdeen those examinations which are published in the University’s examinations timetable (paragraph 7.4.1 refers) is only granted in exceptional circumstances (which do not include personal inconvenience or expense). Requests for examinations to be held outwith Aberdeen must be submitted in writing to [exams@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:exams@abdn.ac.uk) by the end of teaching in the relevant half-session or in the case of the summer resit diet by the resit application deadline. Requests will be passed to the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) for a decision.
Examinations Held Outwith the Formal Diets

7.4.18 Similarly, it is University policy that permission to hold a special diet of examinations in Aberdeen outwith the three formal diets will only be given in the most exceptional circumstances (which do not include personal inconvenience or expense). Requests must be submitted in writing to exams@abdn.ac.uk for consideration by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching).

7.5 Disabled Candidates

7.5.1 Notes of Guidance for Those with Responsibility for Making Examination Arrangements for Disabled Candidates have been approved in relation to candidates with disabilities [Appendix 7.2 refers].

7.5.2 In addition, staff should consult Section 5, Appendix 5.9 Recommendations Concerning Students with Dyslexia for information on characteristics of, and assessment for, dyslexia, and for good practice in regard to teaching, learning and assessment practices.

7.6 Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas

7.6.1 The Senate has approved Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas which relate to the following and which are provided as Appendix 7.1:-

- Responsibilities of the Registry
- Responsibilities of Heads of School
- Responsibilities of Senior Invigilators and Invigilators
- Rules for Candidates
- Cheating in Prescribed Degree Assessments
- Guidance Note on the Use of Readers and Amanuenses in Examinations

7.6.2 Plagiarism is defined within the University’s Code of Practice on Student Discipline www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/appendix5x15a.pdf.

Code of Practice on Assessment: downloadable as a discrete pdf (Appendix 7.14)

Purpose

7.7.1 Assessment is the central element of the process by which the University is able to make awards to candidates who have completed courses and programmes. The purpose of the Code of Practice on Assessment is to ensure that the processes of assessment are conducted in a fair, consistent and transparent manner across the University. This common approach is especially important due to the inter-disciplinary nature of many of the University’s programmes which means that candidates are studying courses offered by a number of Schools and these courses are then combined together in determining the overall award.

7.7.2 This Code of Practice on Assessment was approved by Senate on 11 June 2014 and came into effect from academic year 2014-2015. The Code of Practice covers:
7.8 Marking Policies

Double, “Blind” and Anonymous Marking

Written Examination Scripts

7.8.1 All written examination scripts must be anonymous, i.e. students should only be identified by candidate number. The University's examination booklets require candidates to write their student ID number on their scripts with their name being concealed in a sealable section.

Other Summative Assessments

7.8.2 Where appropriate, all other assessments should be marked anonymously. In determining the appropriateness of anonymous marking, the impact of this on the quality of the feedback subsequently available to students should be considered.

Moderation of Marks and Results

7.8.3 Moderation is a process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. The UK Quality code stipulates that “Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.”

7.8.4 Appendix 7.17 sets out the minimum requirement for moderation but Schools and Disciplines can choose to operate more extensive moderation procedures. Such procedures should be clearly outlined to all staff involved in marking and to the External Examiner, and should be notified to, and made available for scrutiny by, the Quality Assurance Committee on request. For all assessments subject to second marking, grades must not be returned to students until the second marking process is complete.

Role of External Examiners

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2 A script is defined as the totality of a candidate's answers to a written examination paper i.e. the answers to the required number of questions per paper.

7.8.5 External Examiners should have the opportunity to view samples of all assessed work. If the assessment cannot be easily viewed by the External Examiner the process by which the assessment has been graded should be made available to the External Examiner.

7.8.6 External Examiners should be asked to comment on the general standard of marking and assessment and may recommend an increase or decrease in all grades for a particular assessment. Any actual change to grades, however, needs the approval of the final Examiners’ Meeting. External Examiners may not make isolated changes to any student’s grades.

7.8.7 External Examiners are not normally expected to mark or re-mark assessments. Where second marking has been adopted and the two markers cannot agree on a final mark the assessment should first be sent to a third, internal, marker rather than the External Examiner. The External Examiner should, however, have such disagreements brought to their attention.

7.8.8 The results (i.e. Achieved or Not Achieved) of all courses at all levels of study assessed at the end of the first half-session are provisional until the final examiners’ meeting later in the same Academic Year (with one exception). The exception is that while E1 (Not Achieved) for a first half-session course that forms part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme may be changed at the final Examiners’ meeting to D3 or above (Achieved), D3 or above can NOT be changed to E1 or lower.

7.8.9 For Honours programmes of more than one year’s duration, the grades for courses taken in previous years can NOT be modified at the end of the Final Honours Year – they are regarded as having been signed-off in previous years by the External Examiner in office at that time (who may not be in post when a candidate reaches the end of his/her programme). However, the External Examiner in office at the end of the Honours programme may request that a candidate’s scripts and in course/continuous assessments taken in previous years be made available at the end of the Final Honours Year to assist the Examiners in determining the final degree classification: this may be particularly the case for borderline candidates where the Examiners wish to use their discretion in departing, in an upward direction, from the classification indicated by the Grade Spectrum or Grade Point Average.

7.8.10 The signature of two Examiners must be appended to the list of results as evidence that the marks and results are agreed and approved and that processes have been carried out in accordance with the conventions of the University. Normally, no result will be published unless the results are signed by the Examiners.

7.8.11 Normally, the decision of the External Examiner in confirming a course or programme result shall prevail. Where, after appropriate discussion, two External Examiners disagree as to the grade or result to be awarded to a particular candidate, the higher grade or result shall be awarded, i.e. the candidate shall receive the benefit of any doubt.

Feedback to Students

7.8.12 Feedback is an important part of the learning process and can serve a dual purpose: it can confirm a student’s strengths and/or identify potential weaknesses, which may assist a student to focus on their future learning requirements, thereby serving a formative function; and it can provide motivation for future learning and assessments. Timely and appropriate feedback should be provided to students, as indicated in the Institutional Framework for the Provision of Feedback on Assessment (Appendix 7.8). Students should be informed of the arrangements for the provision of such feedback in Course or School
Handbooks, which should include the timescales in which students can expect to receive feedback. Our Enhancing Feedback website brings together materials and sources of further information to support staff in providing the best possible feedback to their students, including examples of feedback pro formas from Schools within all three Colleges. The website also provides information to raise students’ awareness of their role in the feedback process and to help them to engage successfully with the feedback they receive.

7.8.13 Only marks on the Common Grading Scale may be disclosed to students (Appendix 7.10 refers).

**Written Examination Scripts**

7.8.14 Although it is University policy not routinely to return written examination scripts to students, students can expect to receive feedback on their performance in all written examinations. The mechanism by which feedback on written examinations should be given is left to the discretion of Schools. Students will be informed of the mechanisms and timescales via relevant handbooks.

**In-Course Assessments**

7.8.15 Markers should provide timeous feedback to students on all types of in-course assessment, including oral or clinical examinations, even when the grades are summative and contribute to the overall course CAS or CGS grade. The Senate has agreed that Schools must inform students of their CAS or CGS grade for individual elements of in-course assignments irrespective of whether the marks are to contribute to the overall course CAS or CGS grade. Thus, for example, for a course assessed entirely by three in-course essays, Schools should inform students of their individual essay CAS/CGR grade and the Registry would inform students of their overall course CAS/CGR grade. However, only the latter would be released to students in regard to a course assessed entirely by written examination.

**Data Protection**

7.8.16 Schools should be aware that the Data Protection Act 1998 gives students the right to request access to personal data held relating to them (including from 1 January 2005 such data held in manual datasets which are not structured by reference to individuals). This could include examination scripts and any written comments made by examiners on their assessments. Schools should therefore ensure that all Examiners, including External Examiners, are aware that their written comments on candidates’ written examination scripts may be provided to students who make a formal application for disclosure of their personal data under the Data Protection Act (Section 1.12 refers).

**Analysis of Marks**

7.8.17 Schools should undertake routinely an analysis of marking and marking trends to facilitate comparisons and provide evidence of standards.

### 7.9 Internal Examiners/Markers

7.9.1 University Court Ordinance 404 and the General Regulations for First degrees and for Taught Postgraduate Awards indicate that the Examiners for each degree shall be the
“Professors, Readers and Lecturers in the University [including those holding such status on an honorary basis] whose courses qualify for that degree, and such External Examiners as may be appointed by the University Court”. Notwithstanding these Regulations, the Senate has agreed that Heads of School may also permit others without that status, such as Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, Clinical Tutors or Recognised Teachers, (including those appointed as Relief Teachers and/or on a part-time basis) to mark prescribed degree assessments (in-course assignments and/or written examination scripts) where the Head of School is satisfied that the person concerned is sufficiently experienced to be a competent marker.

7.10 External Examiners

7.10.1 External Examiners make recommendations to the Senate, which authorises the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates.

7.10.2 Normally, no degree of the University will be awarded without participation in the examining process by at least one External Examiner, who should be a full member at the final Examiners’ Meeting (see also paragraphs 7.12.19).

Nomination, Appointment, Induction and Termination of External Examiners

7.10.3 Full details concerning the nomination, appointment and induction of External examiners are given in Appendix 7.15 of the Academic Quality Handbook External Examining: Taught Courses and Programmes.

Roles and Responsibilities

7.10.4 The primary role of External Examiners is to ensure that:

- the standards set for the University’s awards and a programme’s constituent courses are appropriate by reference to relevant national subject benchmark statements, the National Qualifications Frameworks, the relevant programme specification and, where appropriate, the requirements of relevant professional and statutory bodies;
- the standards of student performance in a programme and its constituent courses are appropriate and comparable with those of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions;
- the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound, have been conducted fairly and are in line with the institution’s policies and regulations.

7.10.5 In order to fulfil this role, External Examiners should:

- be familiar with the national subject benchmark statements for their subject and, where appropriate, the requirements of relevant professional and statutory bodies;
- be provided with adequate information on course and programme content and the University’s assessment policies;
- comment and give advice on course and programme content, balance and structure, and on assessment processes;
- comment on proposals for amendments to courses or programmes, including proposed revisions to the assessment procedures;
comment on the soundness of the assessment policies and procedures, and their development;
participate in the setting of examination papers;
participate in other assessment activities (e.g. clinical and oral examinations), where relevant;
review a sufficient number and range of assessments to allow them to confirm the marks to be awarded to students;
provide an evaluation of the standards of achievement;
formally comment on the appropriateness of the standards of the University’s awards by completing annually an External Examiner’s report (Appendix 7.16).

7.10.6 In undertaking the above, External Examiners, in conjunction with internal examiners, are required to approve the overall CAS/CGS grades for courses and recommend the degree classification or postgraduate taught award, as appropriate. External Examiners are not necessarily involved in the award of non-honours degrees or diplomas or certificates that are purely governed by the University’s regulations (i.e. those that are awarded on the achievement of the requisite number and level of credits following confirmation that a candidate has satisfied the regulatory requirements for the award of the qualification concerned). However, External Examiners assure the overall standards of these awards by approving the overall CAS/CGS marks for the constituent courses, thereby confirming that a student has achieved the requisite number of credits towards an award consistent with the National Qualifications Framework.

7.10.7 External Examiners may engage in discussions with schools at any stage during their appointment. Ideally, if time permitted, it would be appropriate to set aside a formal period for such discussions when an External Examiner visited the University to attend an Examiners’ Meeting.

7.10.8 Any comments or suggestions made by an External Examiner either informally or in formal examination meetings, should be discussed by the School. The outcomes of such discussions should be included in the School’s response to the External Examiner’s formal Annual Report, and should include whether or not the School has decided to introduce any changes (after approval by the University, where appropriate), and should give reasons if any suggestions will not be adopted.

7.10.10 Undergraduate External Examiners are required to submit an annual report to the University by 30 June, with postgraduate External Examiners having to submit an annual report by 30 November. All External Examiners are required to submit a final report (as part of their last annual report) at the end of their period of office. See Appendix 7.16 and here for further details of External Examiner Reports and Fees.

7.10.11 External Examiners should inform the relevant Head of School immediately if any conflict of interest arises at any point during their appointment.

Approval of Prescribed Degree Assessments

7.10.12 The role of the External Examiner in approving written examination papers and other summative assessments is described in detail in section 7.3.

Assessment of Examination Scripts

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4 A script is defined as the totality of a candidate’s answers to a written examination paper i.e. the answers to the required number of questions per paper.
7.10.13 An External Examiner has the right to see all written examination scripts.

7.10.14 The guiding principle for selection of scripts is that External Examiners should have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent.

7.10.15 External Examiners should see a sample of scripts from the full range of the CGS bands, and should normally be sent all scripts of borderline candidates and of those assessed internally as first class, as detailed in paragraph 7.10.17 below.

Assessment of In-Course Assignments and Projects/Dissertations

7.10.16 An External Examiner has the right to see any work that contributes to the overall CAS/CGS grade for a course or to the degree classification or programme award, including work undertaken on courses off-campus that contributes to the programme award (see paragraph 7.10.17 below).

Selection of Scripts and other work to be sent/made available to the External Examiner

7.10.17 It is important that External Examiners are able to satisfy themselves that the boundaries between Pass and Fail and between each grade band have been set at the appropriate standard. Consequently, each candidate’s scripts and any in-course assignments (including projects and dissertations) either should be sent to the External Examiner or should be made available to the External Examiner where they prefer to review candidates’ work while visiting the University, for the following:-

Courses and summative assessments (e.g. general or language papers) which are part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme

- those for which the internal markers have agreed a grade of E1;
- exceptionally those for which the internal process has failed to agree a grade;
- a representative 10% sample of all other assessments (unless there are fewer than 20 students in which case a 50% sample);
- a sample of coursework that individually contributes more than 30% to the course grade;
- all assessments for courses worth 30 credits or more which are assessed by a single piece of course work designed to demonstrate a large element of independent learning (such as a project thesis or dissertation);
- any others requested by the External Examiner or the Head of School.

For all other courses

- those for which the internal markers have agreed a grade of E1
- a representative 10% sample of all other assessments (unless there are fewer than 20 students in which case a 50% sample)
- exceptionally those for which the internal process has failed to agree a grade.

7.10.18 Notwithstanding the above, for all Honours and postgraduate taught courses each candidate’s in-course assignments (including projects/dissertations) should be made available to the External Examiner on request.

7.10.19 There is no requirement for a School to photocopy written examination scripts: it is acceptable to send scripts and other assessments to External Examiners by registered post or other secure means.
Oral Examinations and Interviews

7.10.20 Oral examinations are where the Examiners ask a student questions relating to the student’s programme of study, the answers to which can influence a student’s overall grade for a course or programme. There are two types of oral examination: compulsory and discretionary.

7.10.21 Oral examinations, where held, must take place within the published dates of term and must be conducted by at least two (and no more than three) Examiners: normally, one External Examiner and one (or two) internal examiner(s).

7.10.22 An External Examiner may request to interview students, either individually or in a group, in the absence of any internal examiners in order to allow the External Examiner to discharge his/her responsibilities (paragraph 7.10.28 below refers).

Compulsory oral examinations

7.10.23 Where an oral examination is to be a compulsory component of the assessment for a course or programme that all candidates would be expected to take, with the marks contributing a stated proportion of the overall result for a course or programme, the prior permission of the Quality Assurance Committee must be obtained (normally via the relevant Course or Programme proposal form).

7.10.24 Schools must make the following explicit to students in Course or Programme Handbooks in regard to compulsory oral examinations:

- the percentage contribution of the oral examination to the overall course or programme grade and result;
- the timing of the oral examination;
- the range of material that could be covered in the oral examination;
- the criteria for the award of grades for the oral examination.

Discretionary oral examinations

7.10.25 If Schools, exceptionally, want the right to hold discretionary oral examinations for some candidates only, details for the selection of candidates and the purpose of the examination must be submitted to the QAC, as part of the process for approving the assessment arrangements for courses and programmes.

7.10.26 Heads of School should clarify with External Examiners, on their appointment, whether or not they might wish to invite some candidates to attend a discretionary oral examination, subject to paragraph 7.10.21 above. Where discretionary oral examinations are requested, Heads of School should agree the principles for the selection of such candidates, including whether a candidate may request an oral examination, and the purpose of the examination with the External Examiner: these should be submitted to the QAC for approval and, if approved, they should be made explicit to students via Course/School Handbooks.

7.10.27 Under no circumstances shall the outcome of a discretionary oral examination be used to lower a grade or result that has been provisionally awarded to a candidate prior to such an examination: i.e. candidates can only benefit from a discretionary oral examination.

For postgraduate taught programmes, oral examinations should be held by the end of week 50 of the programme.
Students invited to attend a discretionary oral examination should be informed of the purpose of the examination and that their provisional mark would become their confirmed mark if they declined to attend a discretionary oral examination.

**Interviews**

7.10.28 External Examiners, in addition to participating in the assessment process, are required to report on the academic standards of student performance and the University’s awards. In order to fulfil these responsibilities, an External Examiner may invite students, either individually or as a group, to attend for an interview (paragraph 7.10.22 refers). An interview with an individual student is likely to be requested where an External Examiner wishes to ask a student questions on their programme in order to judge whether the standard of the award that was to be made to the student (which had been determined prior to the interview and could not be altered as a consequence of the interview) was appropriate. Interviews with groups of students are likely to be where the External Examiner wishes to obtain views from a representative group of students on their educational experience at the University, which may include their comments on the quality of the learning resources available.

7.10.29 Students who are invited to attend for interview with the External Examiner should be informed of the purpose of the interview and that it would not be part of the student assessment process.

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**7.11 Medical and other Extenuating Circumstances**

7.11.1 If candidates believe that illness and/or other personal circumstances may have affected their performance in an element of assessment they must submit written details to the Head of the relevant School(s). In line with the University’s Policy on Student Absence, where advance notification of circumstances is not possible, these should be reported on the day and certainly no later than three days following the date on which they submitted or appeared for the assessment concerned, to allow these to be taken into consideration by the internal markers. Refer also to paragraphs 7.7.17-7.7.18 and 7.7.55 for information regarding the impaired performance of students.

7.11.4 Refer also to paragraphs 7.7.17-7.7.18 and 7.7.55 for information regarding the impaired performance of students and the process to be followed with regard to assessments.

7.11.5 The Senate (12 June 2013) approved a Policy and Procedures on Student Absence (AQH Appendix 7.5).

7.11.6 The Policy on Student Absence permits self-certification at levels one and two and aligns the timelines for notification of absence with the requirements placed on University staff.

7.11.7 This Policy is kept under review by the University Committee on Teaching & Learning, in particular to ensure that it takes account of any national changes implemented by the Scottish General Practitioners Committee.

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**7.12 Examiners’ Meetings and Approval of Marks**

**Number, Composition and Purpose of Examiners’ Meetings**
7.12.1 The outcomes of assessments are approved by Examiners’ Meetings.

7.12.2 It is the responsibility of Heads of School (a) to decide how many Examiners’ Meetings they need to convene each year and (b) to ensure that External Examiners are informed of the dates well in advance (paragraph 7.12.19 refers).

7.12.3 Normally, Final Examiners’ Meetings (at which at least one External Examiner would be required to attend⁶) are held in May for undergraduate programmes and in the final month of the programme for postgraduate programmes. In addition, Schools may elect to hold a meeting of internal examiners⁷ after the April diet and immediately before a Final Examiners’ Meeting, primarily to identify any potential borderline candidates: this would allow a candidate’s scripts and in-course assignments to be collated and made available to the Final Examiners’ Meeting, in order to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to candidates for whom the assessment outcome may not be unambiguous.

7.12.4 Schools may also elect to hold an (internal) Examiners’ Meeting at the end of the first half-session or resit (summer) examination diets, to agree the marks, scripts and other information to be sent to the External Examiners: there is no requirement for External Examiners to attend these meetings.

7.12.5 Where an Examiners’ Meeting is not held at the end of the first half-session or resit diet, it shall be for the Head of School and Course Co-ordinator to approve the marks for an individual course, which should be submitted to the External Examiner for award of the final overall mark (subject to the policies outlined in paragraph 7.8.10 above).

7.12.6 The primary purposes of Final Examiners’ Meetings are:-

- to make recommendations in regard to programme awards;
- to finalise the grades to be awarded for all second half-session courses and those first half-session courses that are assessed at the end of the second half-session;
- to finalise the first half-session grades for courses for Honours and postgraduate taught candidates;
- For borderline candidates only, to take into consideration, in all of the above, any medical or other extenuating circumstances that had been submitted to the School within the required time limits;
- to assist Heads of School in identifying candidates for the award of any prizes that are the responsibility of a School;
- to receive oral comments from the External Examiner(s) in regard to (a) the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, (b) the appropriateness of the curricula, particularly in regard to any external reference points such as the national subject benchmark statement, where relevant, and (c) the structure and content of existing programmes of study, as part of a systematic reflection on the provision and appropriateness of these programmes.

⁶ In cases where a final Examiners’ Meeting would be considering a very small number of candidates, it is acceptable for an External Examiner to request that s/he should not be required to attend the University if candidates are not required to undergo an oral examination and if the External Examiner (a) is sent details of any extenuating circumstances that a student has submitted in regard to their performance so that these can be taken into account by the External Examiner in approving overall course grades and programme awards, (b) is sent, for each candidate, the written examination scripts and all in-course assessments not previously seen by the External Examiner, (c) agrees to raise any issues with the Head of School by telephone, facsimile or e-mail prior to confirming the marks and awards and in sufficient time for the School to meet the Senate-approved deadlines for the submission of results to the Registry and (d) agrees to provide feedback to the Head of School in regard to the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, and the appropriateness of the curricula.

⁷ Under current Regulations, internal Examiners are defined as the Professors, Readers and Lecturers responsible for teaching a course, though others may mark, subject to appropriate monitoring.
Programmes delivered by one School

7.12.7 Normally, the Head of a School (or his/her nominated Deputy) should serve as Convener of all Examiners’ Meetings for that School. In addition, all Course Co-ordinators would be expected to attend where the results for their courses were being considered and/or where the results for their courses would contribute to a candidate’s overall programme result. All other examiners are also eligible to attend internal Examiners’ Meetings. Other markers (paragraph 7.9.1 refers) may be permitted to be in attendance, but without power to vote.

7.12.8 The quorum for a Final Examiners’ Meeting would be the Convener, at least one External Examiner⁹, and normally, at least three other internal examiners.

Programmes delivered by more than one School

7.12.9 For programmes delivered by more than one School, the final decision on the award should be taken by an Examiners’ Meeting consisting of up to three examiners from each of the participating Schools, plus appropriate External Examiners where available. Where an External Examiner is not available, decisions will be subject to subsequent ratification by the relevant External Examiner(s). For multi-disciplinary programmes with a designated Honours Co-ordinator, and separately identified External Examiners, the Examiners’ Meeting must comprise, as a minimum, the Honours Co-ordinator, the External Examiner(s), and at least one representative from each School which has contributed courses.

7.12.10 For joint and major/minor honours degrees in which a candidate has studied two subjects, in practice one School will hold its Final Examiners’ Meeting and decide candidates’ marks to be awarded for the assessments for which it is responsible before the equivalent meeting for the second subject. Examiners representing the first School/subject will then take joint candidates’ marks to the Final Examiners’ Meeting for the second subject in accordance with paragraph 7.12.9: the examiners for the two subjects, jointly, will then determine the overall programme award.

Conduct of Examiners’ Meetings

7.12.11 Examiners’ Meetings shall be convened by the Head of the relevant School (or his/her nominated deputy) or Honours Co-ordinator where appropriate.

7.12.12 Examiners’ Meetings should be scheduled to ensure that the School can submit results, approved by the External Examiner, by the Senate-approved deadlines.

7.12.13 Those attending Examiners’ Meetings are obliged to declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with a student being assessed.

7.12.14 All written examination scripts and in-course assessments should be available for Examiners’ Meetings, if requested, in regard to any student for whom an assessment outcome is being considered (paragraph 7.12.3 above refers).

7.12.15 Where the Examiners have evidence (e.g. a candidate’s past performance) to believe that a candidates performance has been impaired for a prolonged period of time (e.g. long term illness of a parent), the Examiners may take account of this in reviewing borderline cases to determine final degree classification or postgraduate award (7.7.17 refers).
7.12.16 The Code of Practice on Assessment (Section 7) indicates that, in regard to degree classification, where the Examiners use their discretion to depart from the class indicated by the Grade Spectrum/Grade Point Average, such discretion can only be used in an upward direction.

7.12.17 In all circumstances where discretion is applied, clear reasons must be identified for doing so and a record kept in the minutes of the examiners’ meeting.

7.12.18 It is the responsibility of the Convener to ensure that an appropriate record is kept of the procedures and decisions of each Examiners’ Meeting.

7.12.19 External Examiners, as full members of the relevant Examiners’ Meeting, must be invited to attend all Examiners’ Meetings at which significant decisions are to be taken in regard to the specialisms with which they have been concerned (including those for which they have approved question papers). At least one External Examiner must be present at all Final Examiners’ Meetings i.e. normally in May for undergraduate programmes and September for postgraduate programmes (paragraphs 7.12.3 and 7.12.8 refer). Heads of School should therefore ensure that their External Examiner(s) are informed of the dates of Examiners’ Meetings for the whole session by the start of each academic year, or as soon as possible thereafter.

7.12.20 In addition to noting the comments from External Examiners referred to in paragraph 7.12.6, minutes of Examiner’s Meetings should include the following, minimum set of information:

- Full title of Examination meeting
- Date and location of meeting
- Those present followed by those who have submitted apologies
- List of programmes and/or courses being examined
- Explanation of calculations to be used in determining grades
- Candidates with special circumstances possibly affecting their performance
- List of results

Additionally, the following points should be taken into consideration when compiling minutes:

- The use of personal information should be avoided as much as possible
- Students should be referred to by ID numbers
- All decisions should be attributed to all Examiners

7.13 Examination Results

Preparation, Submission, Recording and Notification of Results

7.13.1 Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that robust and reliable School systems are in place for the computation, checking and recording of assessment decisions, and for providing relevant information in time for the Final Meeting of Examiners. They should also ensure that appropriate back-ups are made of data that is stored electronically, and that, where required, these are erased by the final date for return of the results to the Registry (paragraph 7.13.6 below refers).
7.13.2 Provisional marks for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses should be entered onto the Student Record and the list printed for the Examiners’ Meeting. During the meeting, the lists should be annotated and signed by two Examiners. Following the meeting, lists should be returned either by fax or by hand to the Registry. Students are then notified of their results by the Registry, via Student Portals, and consideration is given to the implications for student progress/graduation, as appropriate.

7.13.3 Results are recorded using the following conventions:

- a Pass is recorded as “A” (Achieved), supported by the relevant CAS/CGS mark or Honours classification;
- Any other Result is recorded as “N” (Not Achieved), supported by the relevant CAS/CGS mark or other reason why credit has not been obtained, e.g. “MC” (denoting that a student had submitted a medical certificate as a reason for not attending the end-of-course examination) or “GC” (denoting that a student had submitted reasons of other “Good Cause” as to why they had not appeared for, or completed, the course assessment), “SC” (denoting that a student had self-certified their absence from class or assessment), “RP” (Denoting a pass at PGT resit), “RF” (denoting a fail at a PGT resit) or “NP” (denoting that a student had failed to complete the course assessment without medical certification or other good cause).

7.13.4 Course and programme results are processed as quickly as possible following confirmation by the Examiners. Course and programme results that are submitted to the Registry on a particular day are confirmed on the Student Record the same day and published via Student Portals overnight.

7.13.5 All assessment results are covered by the Data Protection Act. No CAS/CGS grades or programme results should be divulged to candidates until after the results, duly signed by two Examiners, have been submitted to, and published by, the Registry (with one exception). Where Schools wish to publish results, they should be displayed using ID numbers, in ID number order, and without names. Results should only be given to students either in person or by ‘phone if steps have been taken to confirm the student’s identity: they should NOT be disclosed to third parties (including parents) without a student’s explicit consent. In view of the above, it is recommended that Schools do not release any marks or results to candidates, but instead refer students to their Portal.

7.13.6 It is University policy that, in the case of end-of-course assessments, “raw” grades (e.g. individual markers’ grades for examination questions) that contribute to the overall grade for a course or programme assessment should not be released to students and, therefore, can only be held on computer until the last date for submission of results to the Registry. After this date, such results may only be retained if they are rendered anonymous (e.g. for the purpose of statistical analysis) by removal of personal identifiers or if they are indexed by reference to criteria other than a student’s name or ID number (e.g. by tutorial group). Where an automated process is used to derive an overall mark for a course, Schools should inform students of the rules governing such processing.

Amended Grades or Results

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8 Exceptionally, the School of Education was given permission by the UCTL to release overall provisional grades together with feedback to students, with these grades being confirmed by the External Examiner(s) three times each year. This was approved on the proviso that, in the case of grades in the range E2-D2, candidates’ scripts should be sent to the External Examiner(s) on a monthly basis for confirmation of the grades before release to the students. This exception, which applies to undergraduate and postgraduate CPD provision and to students on the PGDE, was permitted to enable students to be offered a resit opportunity as soon as possible.
7.13.7 If a grade is amended after it has been submitted to the Registry for reasons other than on appeal, it is the responsibility of the relevant Head of School to submit this in writing with the External Examiner(s) signature to Registry for amendment of the Student Record and to write to the student concerned giving the revised grade.

7.13.8 Where the Examiners, including the External Examiner(s), agree that a candidate’s grade and/or course or programme result should be amended as a consequence of an academic appeal being upheld, the Registry will inform the student of the Examiners’ decision in writing on receipt of confirmation of the amended grade or result from the Head of the relevant School.

**7.14 Award of Certificates and Diplomas**

7.14.1 Students who are qualified, or about to become qualified, for the award of a Certificate or Diploma of the University should collect an application form from the Infohub.

**7.15 Award of Degrees and Graduation**

7.15.1 Students who successfully complete a programme of study must make an application to the Registry in order for their award to be conferred. Details of when and how to apply to attend ceremonies in-person are available on the Graduation website.  

7.15.2 Graduands (i.e. those eligible to graduate) are not permitted to graduate if they are in debt to the University.

7.15.3 Degrees are conferred on behalf of the Senate at Graduation Ceremonies in June and November. Exact dates can be obtained from the Graduation website. Students not wishing, or unable, to graduate in person may apply to graduate in absentia.

7.15.4 The degree certificate is awarded at in-person Graduation Ceremonies, and is sent to those who graduate in absentia normally within one month of the date of graduation.

**7.16 Transcripts**

7.16.1 A transcript listing all courses which a student has taken and their associated CAS grade is included with the relevant Certificate, Diploma or Degree certificate. The transcript indicates the Academic Year (not the diet) in which a course has been assessed, its credit value, and the definition of the grade bands. For visiting Erasmus and study abroad students, a conversion to ECTS grade/recommended US equivalent is also provided.

**7.17 Assessment Offences (including Plagiarism)**

7.17.1 The University’s Code of Practice on Student Discipline (see Section 5, Appendix 5.15a) states the following:-

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9 Undergraduate students who leave the University without completing their programme but who, nevertheless, fulfil the criteria for the award of an Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma in Higher Education, will be awarded the relevant award without formal application.

10 www.abdn.ac.uk/graduation
"Cheating in any assessment, whether formative or summative, can result in disciplinary action being taken under this Code.

7.17.2 Where there is reason to believe that cheating in any assessment has occurred a complaint should be made in writing through the Head of the appropriate School; it should not be dealt with as part of academic assessment. The Head of School (or nominee in cases of plagiarism) shall normally investigate the allegation with the student (Section 7 of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline refers). The role of the internal and external examiners shall be restricted to the presentation of evidence; they shall have no role in deciding whether a student is guilty of cheating. They may, as appropriate, submit evidence to a disciplinary hearing.

7.17.3 Although a Head of School may have delegated authority to investigate a case the Head of School must make a decision on whether cheating has occurred. If a Head of School believes that cheating has occurred he/she shall proceed in accordance with the relevant Section in the [link](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/appendix5x15a.pdf) (7.2.6, or 7.2.10, or 7.3.4, or 7.5.8).

7.17.4 The penalties for examination offences, including cheating in prescribed degree assessments, are also indicated in the Code.

### 7.18 Academic Appeals

7.18.1 A student may appeal against an examination mark or degree classification but specific rights of such appeals against a decision involving academic judgement are very limited. Academic appeals will be considered only in matters of procedure, competency and/or prejudice. Further details are provided in [Section 6](#).

### 7.19 Disposal and Retention of Work that Contributes to a Prescribed Degree Assessment

7.19.1 The University’s policy on retention of assessed work is that Schools should, as a minimum, retain students’ work which contributes to their overall course grade or programme award (e.g. examination scripts; projects; in-course assignments) as indicated below:

- Level 1 and 2 courses (and Level 3 courses for non-Honours candidates): retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the course results to the Registry;
- Level 3 and 4 and undergraduate Level 5 (Honours candidates) courses and programmes: retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the programme result to the Registry;
- Level 5 (postgraduate) courses and programmes: retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the programme result to the Registry.

7.19.2 While Schools may dispose of assessed work after the above dates, they should retain a sample of work that has been awarded grades in each grade band for internal monitoring purposes, to demonstrate that assessment standards over a period of time have been at least maintained. Also, a sample of work for individuals or groups of students at all Levels should be retained, to demonstrate how the standards achieved by students have developed as a consequence of progression through each Level of Study.

7.19.3 Formative assessments, or summative assessments, retained in anonymous form for ITR/ELIR, are exempt from release under Freedom of Information on the basis of an
expectation of confidence between student and the relevant staff within their institution and, where appropriate external examiners and reviewers.

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