

The future of exam boards

ARC ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONERS' GROUP

9 FEBRUARY 2024

DELIVERED BY CHARLOTTE VERNEY & MICHAELA PITTOM

Context of this session

Builds on a previous online workshop in **November 2023**

To **continue a conversation** about the challenges we face in exam boards and how to find solutions

To inform a sector-wide project supported by the **QAA**

Participation: We will be creating a record of today's workshop contributions to inform the next steps of this project. Details will be stored anonymously. We have asked those taking part in this scoping workshop (online and in-person) to sign consent forms.

Structure of this session

Approximate timings:

11:00 Who is here today?

11:10 The future of exam boards project

- Project scope, approach, ways to get involved

11:20 Kingston University Exam Board Change Project

- Presentation followed by questions – padlet for questions

11:50 Exam Board Paperwork Group Discussions

12:20 Feedback & next steps



Who is here today?

go to www.menti.com
Code: 5331 5131





QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

The future of exam
boards

Why think about the future of exam boards?

Exam boards are decision-making bodies that ensure there is fair, equitable and robust consideration of student outcomes, making decisions on student achievement, progress and reassessment.

Exam boards are under increasing pressure

- Larger student numbers
- Shorter timescales
- Complex decision-making frameworks

There is mixed practice, yet shared challenges across institutions

- Potential data quality risks
- Consistency of decision-making
- Timeliness of decisions
- Staff wellbeing

Institutions are responding in different ways

- Removing activity from exam boards to reduce complexity
- Standardising regulations to make decisions more routine
- Leveraging benefits from technology
- Rethinking composition & timings of exam boards

Lack of visibility of exam board practice, pressures and changes in research literature, practitioner guidance, and practice-sharing spaces.

Overview of Project

- **18-month project**
 - Key dates and contractual arrangements being finalised with QAA - not officially launched yet
- **Collaborative project team**
 - University of Bristol – Lead Institution
 - Kingston University – Partner Institution
 - We hope to add up to 5 further partner institutions to the project
- **Collaborative design**
 - Input from across the sector through workshops, surveys and case study summaries

Intended Outputs

- developed by the sector
- useful for the sector

- Practice-sharing and problem-solving workshops for higher education institutions on the future of exam boards
- A report summarising existing and evolving practice in exam boards in the UK
- A framework for defining exam board activity in the UK, drawing out good practice where possible
- Reflective case studies from selected institutions which factor in the opportunities and challenges experienced with existing exam board models
- Reflective case studies from selected institutions who have delivered institution-wide change in exam board models
- A microsite on the QAA website to host the emerging practices in exam boards.

As the project is intended to serve the needs of the UK higher education community, the sequencing of the project deliverables may be adapted based on the emerging picture from the data gathering and practice-sharing.

QAA Microsite on Exam Boards

Desk-based research

Survey of practice

Sector workshops (practice-sharing & problem-solving)

Report

Framework
of Models

Case studies
of existing
practice

Case studies
of change
initiatives

Ways to get involved

Further details of each of these will be available once the project formally launches

You can express an interest by contacting:
charlotte.verney@bristol.ac.uk or
michaela.pittom@kingston.ac.uk

- 1. Complete the survey of exam board practice (and share your documents)**
- 2. Contribute to collaborative workshops**
 - Plan to deliver 3 – timings and audience TBC (may include SACWG and academic leads)
- 3. Develop a reflective case study of exam board practice at your own institution (template will be provided)**
- 4. Develop a reflective case study of delivering changes to exam boards (template will be provided)**
- 5. Join the project team**



Questions for you

1. What would you want this project to deliver?
2. What is most interesting to you about what we intend to do with this project?
3. Do you have any suggestions for us in delivering the project?

<https://uob.padlet.org/charlotteverney2/arc-apg-9-february-2024-hsoy4qxmd0a1b8ai>



Changing exam boards at Kingston University

A reflective case

Goals of this section

1. To share a real-life, recent, example of delivering change to exam boards
2. To help shape the project, particularly the development of case study templates, and the areas that are of most interest to colleagues in understanding examples of practice

Kingston
University
London

Changes to assessment boards- A reflective case

Michaela Pittom

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- Case for change
- Key changes
- Demo ratification process
- Challenges of single tier
- Benefits
- Lessons in delivering changes to assessment boards

Case for change

Undergraduate

- Year-long module delivery over two teaching blocks
- Exam period May and July retake period
- Boards held in June and August

Postgraduate

- Block and year-long module delivery
- September, January and March intakes
- Assessment/ reassessment periods (January, May and July)
- Boards held in March, June, August and November

VLE and student records system are not integrated (requires manual mark entry)

- Minimal discretion in regulations
- Mitigating circumstances considered outside of boards. Reports to board when a student requires a new assessment opportunity.
- Automated student outcomes based on their academic profile
- Two tier board structure (module/ programme boards) until January 2022.

Case for change

Module Assessment Board (MAB)

- Confirm module results for consideration at PAB
- Consideration of irregularities in the assessment process
- Recommendations for reassessment
- All module leaders, Heads of Dept, Heads of School, External Examiners, Clerk, Monitor
- External examiners confirm audit of sample student work, agree marks, comment on best practice/ areas for module development

Programme Assessment Board (PAB)

- Consideration of anonymized student profiles
- Confirm recommendations for reassessment, awards, progression and termination of registration
- Head of School, Heads of Dept, Course Leaders, nominated External Examiner, Clerk, Monitor.

Case for change

- Response to feedback from academic, professional services and External Examiner community
- Support staff to engage with External Examiners in a more effective way that is conducive for module and course enhancement
- Reduce time spent by academics in formal meetings
- Same assessment activity but finding more effective, flexible and meaningful ways to do it

Key changes

1. Removal of module assessment board
2. Developed online mark ratification area
3. External examiner model
 - a) Subject External Examiners:
 - audit work
 - not required to attend boards
 - enhancement activity
 - b) Programme Assessment Board External Examiners:
 - Attend boards
 - Oversee consistency of decision making.

Online Module Ratification

Each module must be individually ratified by the module leader within SITS eVision

- Module leaders track progress of mark ratification
- Module teams have visibility of assessment diet and weightings
- Module leaders confirm marks are complete
- Irregularities in the assessment process can be reported, and any remedies noted
- Module leaders confirm subject external examiner review has happened

Online mark ratification

Module Leader for the following Modules

Search:

Module	Module Name	Occurrence	Year	Period	External Examiner	Action	Status	Ratified	Last Class
AR7407	Research Project / Dissertation	A	2022/3	SPAN1	[REDACTED]	Module has been Ratified PDF View	✓✓✓✓	Ratified	04/Aug/2023
BA4801	Financial Accounting	A	2023/4	TY13	[REDACTED]	Mark ratification		Not Started	19/Apr/2024
CE7016	Dissertation	J	2022/3	SPAN1	[REDACTED]	Mark ratification	XXXX	Needs Ratification	08/Jan/2024
FP6008	Final Major Project	A	2023/4	TY13	[REDACTED]	Mark ratification		Not Started	19/Apr/2024
NA6110	Safe and Effective Quality Care in Adult Nursing	A	2023/4	TB1	[REDACTED]	Mark ratification		Not Started	11/Dec/2023
NG5105	Therapeutic Interventions in Nursing: Bio-psycho-social	A	2023/4	TB2	[REDACTED]	Mark ratification		Not Started	19/Feb/2024

Online mark ratification

Assessments as held in SITS

Assessment Type	Name	Element of assessment	Mark Scheme	Percentage
Coursework	Portfolio	001	UG Element Scheme at Levels 3,4,5 & 6 2021	20%
Examination - In Class test	In-class tests	002	UG Element Scheme at Levels 3,4,5 & 6 2021	30%
Written Examination	Exam	003	UG Element Scheme at Levels 3,4,5 & 6 2021	50%
Examination - In Class test	In-class tests	002	UG Element Scheme at Levels 3,4,5 & 6 2021	30%

A) Confirmation of Module Leader check

Section not confirmed 

[→ Click here to run the module mark grid \(MAB1a\)](#)

Please use the link above to view the most recent module mark grid (MAB1a) and carefully check that the marks on the grid are accurate (click on the blue bar below for a checklist to guide you with this activity). If you need to amend or discuss any marks, please contact your Faculty Student Office who will be able to amend the marks. After the marks have been amended by the Student Office, these changes will be reflected on the module mark grid (MAB1a). Once you are ready to confirm that the marks are accurate, please click the **edit section** button below.

If you wish to view a PDF copy of the module mark grid, click the link above to run the module mark grid, right mouse click on the grid, select Print, click on the printer drop down box and select 'Save as PDF'. Before confirming marks are correct, it is recommended that you check your module mark grid via the 'run the module mark grid' link to view the live version of the marks as recorded in SITS.

Checklist for checking the accuracy of module marks

(Click to expand)



Please confirm that the marks have been carefully checked and that the marks on the module mark grid are accurate for module Financial Accounting

No response recorded

Edit Section

Online mark ratification

A) Please confirm that the marks are correct for module Financial Accounting

GUIDANCE

→ [Click here to run the module mark grid \(MAB1a\)](#)

Please use the link above to view the most recent module mark grid (MAB1a) and carefully check that the marks on the grid are accurate (click on the blue bar below for a checklist to guide you with this activity). If you need to amend or discuss any marks, please contact your Faculty Student Office who will be able to amend the marks. After the marks have been amended by the Student Office, these changes will be reflected on the module mark grid (MAB1a). Once you are ready to confirm that the marks are accurate, please click the **edit section** button below.

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Checklist for checking the accuracy of module marks

(Click to expand)



Please confirm that the marks have been carefully checked and that the marks on the module mark grid are accurate

Please Select



Back

Next

Please confirm that the marks have been carefully checked and that the marks on the module mark grid are accurate

I confirm



Back

Next

Online mark ratification

B) Consideration of irregularities during the assessment process

Section not confirmed ✖

In most cases there will not have been any issues or irregularities with the assessment of a module. However, if there has been an irregularity, it is important that we maintain a record of what this was and how it has been resolved or what the current status is for resolving it.

An irregularity in the assessment process might be where there is evidence that the published assessment strategy has not been followed, where there has been a significant departure from our Fairness in Assessment Policy or UG or PG Regulations, or where there has been a significant disruption to the assessment itself that impacted the cohort.

Some indicative examples are:

- A different form of assessment was set to that which was published to students or validated in the module descriptor
- A different weighting of assessment was published to students to that which is validated in the module descriptor
- The details of a trail assessment were not provided to relevant students
- There is evidence of an inconsistent or misleading assignment brief
- There is evidence that marking has not aligned to the published rubric
- Significant disruption to an assessment due to a fire alarm going off
- Significant disruption to an online assessment due to technical issues

If there has been an irregularity, you should discuss this with your Head of Department to determine what action, if any, is required as soon as the irregularity has been identified.

As part of your ratification of this module we will also need you to provide a statement summarising the details of the irregularity. Ideally, any remedial actions should have already been taken and you should also provide the details of what these are here. However, if the issue is still pending, please indicate this in the section below.

Confirmation that there have been no irregularities in the assessment process or that any which have occurred are now resolved for module Film Making 3 (Dissertation)

No responses recorded

Edit Section

Confirmation that there have been no irregularities in the assessment process or that any which have occurred are now resolved for Module FK7005

There is no irregularity in the assessment process to report ▼

Back

Save

Next

Online mark ratification

C) Confirmation of External Examiner audit

Section not confirmed ❗

Assigned External Examiner for Module: **No Examiner Assigned**

It is a requirement for External Examiners to audit each element of assessment within modules that contribute to the degree classification. In practice this means modules at levels 5, 6 and 7 must be audited. As levels 3 and 4 do not typically contribute to classification, there is no requirement for them to be audited unless it is the first time that they are running as part of a newly validated programme. If you are not sure about whether this module should be audited, please contact your Faculty's Quality Assurance and Enhancement team for advice.

Has the external examiner audited the sample work for module Film Making 3 (Dissertation)?

The external examiner(s) has not audited the sample work

Has the external examiner(s) confirmed they are satisfied with marking and moderation for module Film Making 3 (Dissertation)?

The external examiner(s) has not confirmed they are satisfied with marking and moderation

Does the external examiner wish to audit reassessment work for module Film Making 3 (Dissertation)?

External Examiner(s) does not wish to audit reassessment work

External Examiner Document uploaded for module Film Making 3 (Dissertation)?

[Edit Section](#)

Online mark ratification

Sections

A) Confirmation of Module Leader check

Section complete ✓

B) Consideration of irregularities during the assessment process

Section complete ✓

C) Confirmation of External Examiner audit

Section complete ✓

Ratification confirmation

Please read through a summary of what you have ticked on the previous screens above, check this is all correct and then select the **Ratify** button which will ratify marks. After this is done the OSIS process is complete.

Back

Ratify

Online mark ratification

Confirm Ratification of Module Marks

Are you sure you want to Ratify the Marks for the following Module?

This is your final opportunity to check and confirm the accuracy of the marks. If a mark change is needed after you have ratified marks for this module, an assessment outcome change request (previously known as a Chair's Action) will be required.

Before selecting Ratify, please check that you have uploaded the correct document to the Confirmation of External Examiner Audit section. You can check the document you have uploaded by clicking the Cancel button below, then clicking the Section C heading to re-enter it.

BA4801 - Financial Accounting

Click **Ratify** to process or **Cancel** to go back

Cancel

Ratify

Confirmation of Module Mark Ratification

✓ Module BA4801 - Financial Accounting has been ratified

Next

Online mark ratification

GUIDANCE

Please select options from the parameters below and click **Next** or **Dashboard** buttons. It is not necessary to enter all criteria to retrieve.

Module	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Module Academic Year*	<input type="text" value="2023/4"/>
Module Leader	<input type="text" value="Please start typing Module Leader name or code"/>
Faculty	<input type="text" value="Choose an Option"/>
Department	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Domain	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Level (select all that apply)	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Occurrence	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Module Period (select all that apply)	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>
Location	<input type="text" value="Choose one or more options (multiple select)"/>

Dashboard

Next

Online mark ratification

Module Ratification Report

Year - 2023/4

You are able to export the report results to Excel by clicking the [Excel](#) button.

Excel

Search:

Module	Name	Year	Domain	Faculty	Department	Location	Level	Period	Mark Scheme	Occurrence	Module Leader	External examiner 1	Last Class	Status	Ratified?
BA4801	Financial Accounting	2023/4	BA	Faculty of Business and Social Sciences	Department of Accounting, Finance and Informatics	Kingston Hill	4	TY13	UG MODULE	A			19/04/2024	✓✓✓	Ratified
MW7021	Social and Political Context of Birth 2	2023/4	MW	Faculty of Health, Science, Social Care	Department of Midwifery	Kingston Hill	7	TY13	PG MOD L7	A			21/04/2024	✓✓✓	Ratified
NW6035	Applied Neonatal Pathophysiology	2023/4	NW	Faculty of Health, Science, Social Care and Education	Workforce Development	Kingston Hill	6	TB1	UG MODULE	A			15/12/2023	✓✓✓	Ratified
NW7032	Advanced clinical reasoning in health assessment	2023/4	NW	Faculty of Health, Science, Social Care and Education	Workforce Development	Kingston Hill	7	TB1	PG MOD L7	A			15/12/2023	✓✓✗	Started
CE4021	Navigate for the Professional Engineer	2023/4	EG	Faculty of Engineering, Computing and The Environment	Department of Civil Engineering, Surveying & Construction	Penrhyn Road	4	TB1	UG MODULE	B			15/12/2023	✗✓✗	Started
NW6033	Independent/ Supplementary Prescribing for Nurses and Midwives (V300)	2023/4	NW	Faculty of Health, Science, Social Care and Education	Workforce Development	Kingston Hill	6	SPAN1	UG MODULE	B			No Date	✗✓✗	Started

Challenges of a single tier

Challenge	Mitigated risk/ overcame by
Academic buy in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implemented for smaller board period first, time for 'lessons learned' by main summer period• User testing and engagement for online mark ratification area• Extensive comms and support• Interim and full evaluations• Time to embed
Module ratifications not complete by the final deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning meetings to agree escalation plans• Schedule of work for external examiners• Reminders in diaries (takes place of a meeting invite- visual reminder)• Enhanced reporting• 'Substitute' function initially limited then open to all following evaluation

Benefits of single tier



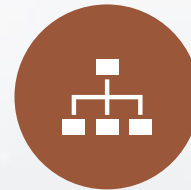
More flexibility in how core assessment activity is carried out



Significant academic time saved (reduced meeting burden)



Removal of duplication for mark approval processes



Reduced administrative burden



Contributions of Programme Assessment Board External Examiners



Benefits for quality assurance and enhancement processes

Lessons learned and takeaways



Allow time for project implementation and start with a smaller exam period first



Importance of single tier milestones and deadlines:

- Submission of marks
- Mark Scrutiny period
- Submission of External Examiner Confirmation of Audit Report
- Final deadline for Mark Ratification via OSIS
- Pre-PAB activity/ Pre-PABs
- PAB



More flexibility but not compressing timelines



Escalation plans for outstanding ratifications



Find ways to lessen the burden and bottlenecks of activity during main assessment periods

Questions

Contact details

Michaela Pittom, Kingston University

Michaela.Pittom@kingston.ac.uk

[LinkedIn](#)





Exploring the paperwork

Group Activity

Exam Board Paperwork (20 minutes)

- Agendas
- Student Profiles
- Minutes

In small groups, take some time to look at the examples of paperwork, and discuss.

Identify a note-taker and think about:

What is on there, **why** is it on there, **how** is it on there

What is **essential**, **different**, what questions arise

Final round up question – what have learned from this? What do we need to differently?