ICA Assessment Boards

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Guidance on Assessment Boards at ICA

1. Introduction

1.1. The meeting of an Assessment Board to agree awards is an important occasion. For candidates it represents the culmination of their period of study that is an important foundation for their future career. For ICA it represents the opportunity to verify that academic standards are appropriate in the relevant subject, with the contribution of External Examiners.

1.2. The responsibility of the Assessment Board is to:

- determine outcomes of candidate assessment and to make awards of ICA qualification or reassessment arrangements
- determine the results of any allegation of unfair practice in relation to candidate assessment
- take into consideration any mitigating circumstances properly notified to the Board by a candidate
- discuss all borderline cases to decide on final grades.

1.3. This document determines the principles and guidance that help to acknowledge the importance of the occasion and extract the maximum benefit from it efficiently. These principles and guidance should be used with reference to the following:

- ICA Policy on Mitigating or Extenuating Circumstances
- External Examiner handbook
- The ICA Assessment Framework

2. Principles of the conduct of Assessment Boards

2.1. An Assessment Board must be quorate in order to take place (see Section 6)

2.2. An Assessment Board shall be established for each candidate cohort (or cognate cohorts as agreed with the Chair) leading to an ICA Advanced Certificate, Diploma or Post Graduate Diploma qualification award.

2.3. An Assessment Board has delegated powers to make final decisions about student outcomes and award in accordance with ICA policies and procedures.

2.4. External board members (including Chief Examiners and ICT Course Leaders) will not be eligible to chair Assessment Boards.
2.5. The Chair may reconvene the Board or a formally agreed sub-group with delegated powers in order to determine the results of candidates who could not be confirmed during the board. In these cases members of the full Board should normally approve in advance whether a meeting of a sub-group is appropriate.

2.6. The sub-group must, as a minimum, include the Chair of the Assessment Board, the Chief Examiner and an External Examiner plus the Secretary. Decisions of the sub-group will be formally noted and reported to the next full meeting of the Board.

2.7. The Assessment Board will produce a formal results list.

2.8. All meetings of Assessment Boards should be chaired by the designated member of ICA. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting is properly conducted and that appropriate decisions are reached.

2.9. All meetings of Assessment Boards should be serviced by ICA administrative staff. They are responsible for preparing for the meeting and producing the necessary documentation, advising on procedures, recording proceedings and transmitting decisions.

2.10. Minutes of meetings must be kept. These should record the names of those present (distinguishing full members of the Board from others in attendance). They should also record the decisions in summary form by candidate number on the marks list.

2.11. It is important to record clearly in the minutes the candidates for whom supplementary information was considered (e.g. mitigating circumstances) and the reason for the Board's decision. If a candidate subsequently submits an academic appeal, the person dealing with the appeal may request to see the minutes of the Board to clarify whether and how any mitigating circumstances were considered.

2.12. Meetings should always include general discussion with the Chief and External Examiner concerning their reflections on that cohort’s assessment performance, on the standards set in the examination and assignments, and the awards achieved by the candidates. These discussions must be recorded in the minutes of the Assessment Board.

2.13. The chair and secretary may wish to clarify statements made by External Examiners and must indicate in the minutes where action has already been taken by the assessment team or identify what action will need to be taken in response to those comments.

2.14. The minutes of the meeting should be written up promptly and circulated for approval by all members present.

2.15. Consistency of assessment between disciplines can be helped by grouping programmes together to form larger Boards and by having an over-arching Assessment Board.
3. Guidance on Assessment Board conduct

3.1. Assessment board structures must perform the following functions:

- a chaired and minuted forum for anonymous discussion of marks, with External Examiner input
- a chaired and minuted forum for the anonymous discussion of marks, leading to awards, with External Examiner input
- a chaired and minuted forum for the anonymous discussion of progression and reassessment, with External Examiner input.

3.2. In addition the Assessment Board may provide:

- a chaired and minuted forum for the anonymous discussion of academic malpractice and/or mitigating circumstances and the means to apply the recommendations
- a forum for all partner organisations involved in the delivery of programmes to consider mitigating circumstances.

3.3. In preparation for the Board, the Chair and Secretary must ensure that:

- the membership is agreed and published prior to the Assessment Board taking place and that each member's contribution to the Assessment Board process is clearly defined in the Terms of Reference — the Board must not contain any candidates
- quoracy rules are set and adhered to
- agendas are produced in an appropriate format and available to all members
- those involved have the appropriate skills and knowledge to perform the required tasks
- new External Examiners have been fully briefed by the Chair (or his/her nominee) and referred to the ICA’s Code of Practice for External Examiners.

3.4. In the conduct of the Board, the Chair and Secretary must ensure that:

- reassessment is considered and takes place at the next appropriate opportunity
- minutes are produced, which are appropriate, available to all members and include all relevant comment from the External Examiner
- Boards are chaired by an ICA member of staff and supported by a Secretary.
- the Chair is an impartial facilitator for the proper conduct of the Board
- Boards are confidential and run in accordance with the Assessment Framework of ICA and other policies and procedures.

3.5. After the Assessment Board, the Chair and Secretary must ensure that:
minutes are produced promptly, normally within one working week and circulated for approval
results are published using the ICA website
that individuals do not keep assessment data and that only one record of candidates marks is retained after the Board at ICA.

4. Mitigating circumstances

4.1. Mitigating circumstances should be considered anonymously in line with ICA Policy.

4.2. It is understood that there may be some issues with total anonymity, but effort must be made to ensure that as few people as possible are aware of the identity of candidates supplying mitigating evidence.

5. Membership and quoracy

5.1. The composition of the assessment board(s) consists of the following voting members:

- Chief Examiner of the discipline in question
- Programme External Examiner
- Senior Representative of ICA Assessment team
- A member of ICA Senior Executive team
- Non-voting member — Secretary (member of the ICA assessment team, must be a different person to the Senior ICA representative)

5.2. Optional potential board members who are not part of the quorate requirements:

- Subject External Examiners (A member of ICT faculty)
- ICA Director of Quality Assurance
- ICA Assessment team staff

5.3. Details of membership, attendance and quoracy should be recorded within the minutes of Assessment Boards. All members should stay till the end of Boards to make sure that all candidates are ensured a comparable experience within the assessment process. Members are present to ensure an equality of decision making across every candidate. If members leave Boards, it is good practice to enter this in the minutes of the meeting.

5.4. Programme External Examiners are members of all Assessment Boards. Where in exceptional circumstances an External Examiner is unable to attend, he/she must be asked to provide written confirmation of his/her concurrence with the recommendations of the Board.

5.5. Where Subject External Examiners are unable to attend Boards they will be invited to provide a report to the Board.
6. Chairing and secretarial support of the board

6.1. The Chair and Secretary must work together to ensure a successful outcome of the assessment process. The Chair is considered the guardian of the relevant regulations and policies ensuring an equality of experience for each candidate, while the Secretary is considered the guardian of the official record of the assessment process. The Secretary should also have a good knowledge of the regulations and Assessment Framework in order to act as an adviser to the Chair if required.

6.2. In order to ensure impartiality, the Chair should normally not be involved in the delivery of the programme.

6.3. Chairs should be members of ICA staff with a detailed knowledge of the Assessment Framework, while the Secretary should be an experienced administrator with knowledge of the Assessment Framework, as well as report writing skills. The key responsibilities of the Chair and Secretary to the Board are listed below in section 7.

7. Key responsibilities of ICA staff

7.1. The main responsibilities of the Chair of an Assessment Board are:

a) to appoint the internal members of the Assessment Board.
b) to ensure all members of the Board are properly briefed.
c) to liaise closely with the Secretary to the Board to ensure that the marks presented are full and correct.
d) to ensure that the Programme External Examiner has seen an appropriate sample of the assessed work of the candidates.
e) to ensure full and frank discussion about the performance of candidates takes place, taking into account the views of the Chief and External Examiner, mitigating circumstances (where relevant) and to guide the Board towards clear recommendations/decisions.
f) to consider and initiate such actions as he/she thinks necessary on advice given by the Chief and External Examiners.
g) in close collaboration with the Secretary, ensure that marks and award recommendations as confirmed by the Board are prepared and checked.
h) following the Board to check and approve the minutes as a true record of the proceedings.
i) to ensure that the candidates receive appropriate notification of the results.

7.2. The main responsibilities of the Secretary are:

a) to establish the dates of meetings in advance at the start of each year, arrange the meetings and inform the members.
b) to make all administrative arrangements for the Boards they are responsible for, this includes liaison with the External Examiner(s).
c) prepare and provide the Board documentation.
d) to provide advice on examination and assessment practice within the Assessment Framework during the meeting.
e) to produce full and accurate minutes
f) to record the conditions of re-assessment.

7.3. The Chair and Secretary have an opportunity to minimise the occurrences of appeals by ensuring appropriate application of the relevant policy and regulations through the Assessment Board structures.

8. Agendas and minutes

8.1. Agendas and minutes are important to guide and record the business of the Assessment Board. Minutes should clearly record the decisions in summary form by candidate number on the marks list.

8.2. It is important to record clearly in the minutes the candidates for whom supplementary information was considered (e.g. mitigating circumstances or viva voce examination by an External Examiner) and the reason for the Board’s decision. If a candidate subsequently submits an academic appeal, the person dealing with the appeal may request to see the minutes of the Board to clarify whether and how any mitigating circumstances were considered.

8.3. Each member of the Board (including External Examiners) should receive a notice of the meeting, well in advance, an agenda and finally minutes, approved by the Chair as an accurate record. Non-members of the Board may be included in the distribution of agendas and minutes, for information. However, non-members must be staff and treat the minutes as confidential.

8.4. ICA’s report template for Programme External Examiner relies on the Programme External Examiner having the opportunity to comment on the individual assessments and process during the Assessment Board process. The report template has a ‘tick box’ style with voluntary free text which means the agenda and minutes of Assessment Boards must allow for and record comments from the Programme External Examiner. This will ensure that adequate feedback is received and recorded from Programme External Examiners on all aspects of the assessment process.

8.5. The report of the Programme External Examiner and the Assessment Board minutes can then be considered together as the assessment record of external input.
9. **Annual monitoring and the assessment process**

9.1. It is good practice to consider Assessment Board minutes as part of the Annual Monitoring process. This allows discipline level comments from External Examiners and results to be considered. This is especially relevant as Annual Monitoring is a continual cycle of monitoring and review which allows feedback on assessment to be received and considered at any time throughout the year.

10. **The record of the Assessment Board**

10.1. The records of the Assessment Board include the following: the agenda, minutes, results record, Chief Examiner report and External Examiner report. The Chair and Secretary must ensure that these records are full, accurate and complete within a short period of time after the Board. Minutes should be available to the members within one working week.

10.2. It is important that there is only one record of the assessment process and that individuals delete assessment records from their own PCs after an Assessment Board has taken place. It is the responsibility of the Chair and Secretary to ensure that all actions as a result of the Board are followed up and completed.

11. **The Issuing of results**

11.1. Results are published online via the ICA website.

11.2. Results must not be divulged over the telephone neither should they be communicated via a third party except as an in-house contractual requirement.
Appendix A — Assessment Board Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of Quoracy and Membership
3. Confidentiality statement
4. Matters arising from the previous meeting of this level programme and discipline
6. Report from Chief Examiner
7. Report from Programme External Examiner
8. Candidates performance
9. Review of Candidates Action Points
10. Proposed arrangements for re-assessment of an assessment component
11. AOB