

BLACKBURN COLLEGE PROCEDURES

APPENDICES TO LANCASTER UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS FOR ASSOCIATE COLLEGES

2018/19

The information denoted in these procedures is particular to Blackburn College and forms an appendix to the Lancaster University Undergraduate Assessment Regulations for Associate Colleges. Procedures are reviewed annually, taking note of any amendments, to ensure that they align with the Lancaster University regulations. Procedures are approved by the Collaborative Provision Teaching Committee in advance of the academic year to which they will apply.

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Appendix 1

Constitution, terms of reference and additional guidelines for Mitigating Circumstances Panels (Blackburn College)

NOTE: This Appendix is constituted from the relevant section of the College's *Academic Regulations*

MCP Membership and Terms of Reference

The membership and terms of reference of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel will be determined by the LTAC-HE.

The MCP may co-opt other voting and non-voting members at its own absolute discretion. It may also invite students and/or members of staff to appear to give evidence in person.

MCP meetings are formally minuted by the MCP Secretary, who informs the students and programme leaders individually of the outcome, and also informs the Chairs of Assessment/Award Boards.

MCP recommendations for the granting of concessions must be specific about the action(s) recommended, their scope (modules and assessments affected) and limitations (especially in terms of time). For example, the MCP may recommend that a student should be allowed to sit a missed examination at the next opportunity as a first attempt and it may recommend that a student should be reassessed in a particular module when a particular medical problem has passed. All recommendations must specify a date after which any concessions granted will expire.

In a case where the MCP considers that a student is fit to be assessed and that an alternative or adapted assessment might be appropriate, the board may refer the case to the Academic Registrar for consideration.

In the cases of students with problems of protracted nature the expiry date should be set shortly after a later MCP meeting. That meeting should consider the case again and, if appropriate, set a new expiry date. In such cases, the MCP should consider whether a further extension of concessions is academically sound and whether or not the student concerned is fit (or likely to become fit) to study before agreeing a new expiry date. The panel is under no obligation to extend concessions where a student is unfit to study and not likely to become fit within a reasonable period of time, or where to do so would be academically unsound.

The decisions of the MCP relating to validity of claims are taken by assessment and award boards without discussion and the information remains confidential. Recommendations relating to concessions are subject to assessment board approval.

In order to avoid unhelpful delays, staff and students will act on recommendations of the MCP so long as it is made clear to all parties that these recommendations are subject to assessment board approval and that the relevant assessment board may overturn recommendations and impose requirements of its own.

The MC process does not determine the precise timings or arrangements for affected assessments, merely extent of concessions to be granted. It is a matter for the relevant programme team to make the necessary arrangements which should be treated as extensions to due dates but without the need for further formal approval (see relevant section of Blackburn Academic Regulations for

details).

Mitigating Circumstances Criteria

The following details the grounds which will or may be considered by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel:

Examples of circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student:

- bereavement (near relative only)
- serious accident, illness or serious infectious disease
- burglary and theft
- jury service
- maternity/paternity or adoptive leave
- major financial problems leading to acute stress

Examples of situations which may be considered beyond the reasonable control of the student:

- medical operation (if approved prior to the point of assessment or an emergency)
- hospital tests (if approved prior to the point of assessment or an emergency)
- being taken ill during an examination
- significant accident, injury, acute ailment or condition
- unanticipated and unavoidable professional obligations
- private or public transport failure leading to significant delays
- accommodation difficulties

In every case it will be necessary for the student to show that the impact of these circumstances was significant, unavoidable and not known to him/her in advance, not reasonably foreseeable, and that any action(s) (s)he could have reasonably have been expected to have taken to limit their impact had been taken.

The following circumstances will not normally be considered by the Board:

- accidents to friends or relatives (unless within 3 days prior to deadline or examination or where student is sole carer)
- family illness (except in an emergency (up to 3 days before a deadline or examination) or where the student is the sole carer)
- examination anxiety/nerves
- minor accidents or injuries
- pregnancy
- cold, cough, throat infection, unspecified viral infection (minor illness)
- childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- domestic problems (unless supported by independent evidence)
- mistaking the deadline, or time management problems (including alarm not going off)

- general financial problems
- legal problems (unless required to attend Court on the day of the assessment)
- holidays or booked travel arrangements
- house moves
- notes burned or stolen (unless supported by a fire or police report)
- intermittent or last minute computing equipment problems (discs, machines, printers, viruses)
- inclement weather (unless exceptional/severe conditions)
- ignorance of the Regulations or examination/assessment arrangement
- inadequate planning and time management
- having more than one examination on the same day
- any event that could reasonably have been expected or anticipated

Mitigating circumstances affecting groups of students

Particular conditions (e.g. disruption in an examination due to noise or computer problems, staff illness during the study period, procedural errors) may affect groups of students and their performance. Such problems should be identified by the Invigilator or other member of staff and reported to the relevant Assessment Board.

The nature of the event, the length of time it extended over, the students/module affected and action taken/recommended (for example adjustments to the marks following discussion in the moderation process) should be indicated. The board will then act en bloc to take action where justified. The Programme Leader should inform students that Blackburn College will initiate the relevant action so avoiding the need for multiple individual submissions by students.

Evidence required to support claims for mitigating circumstances

Students must keep their Programme Leader informed of any adverse personal circumstances. All claims for consideration of Mitigating Circumstances must be supported by documentary evidence.

If an examination is missed due to medical problems the student must attempt to seek medical attention as quickly as possible, and attach a medical certificate to the claim. Medical certificates dated days later may not be regarded as sufficient evidence. The certificate must relate specifically to the time of the illness and must contain a clear medical opinion that the student was unfit to take the examination.

Normally, the evidence supporting an application to the MCP should be provided from sources independent of the student and Blackburn College staff. Only in the most exceptional circumstances may the Board accept evidence that is not independently certified.

Decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel

Mitigating Circumstances Panel's decisions on the validity of students' MC claims, but not the detail of the claims, are reported to the relevant Assessment Board. MCP recommendations are subject to

assessment board approval and an assessment board may overturn recommendations and impose requirements of its own.

Notification of Outcome to Students

The MCP will report its decisions and any recommendations to the Student, Head of School and Programme Leader and relevant Assessment Board, normally within 3 days of the Panel meeting. The ultimate authority in relation to remedies lies with the Assessment Board.

Continuation of Study

A student whose case is under consideration by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel or who is appealing against an MCP decision shall have the right to continue with his/her current programme whether or not formal progression requirements have been met until such time as a final decision is reached, provided s/he is in good standing with Blackburn College. Students should be aware that there may be financial implications and that they could be liable for fees should their MC claim be unsuccessful.

Similarly, a student whose agreed MCP concession(s) have not yet expired shall have the right to continue with his/her current programme whether or not formal progression requirements have been met until the expiry of that/those concession(s), provided s/he is in good standing with Blackburn College.

This right is designed solely to ensure that a student whose MC appeal is upheld is not academically disadvantaged and it shall not be interpreted as acceptance of a failed student on a subsequent stage of the programme. Any continuation of study under these circumstances is at the student's own risk and failure to meet progression requirements after all MCP concessions have expired and any appeal has been decided may result in exclusion from the relevant programme.

Confidentiality

In applying to the MCP, students give their consent for their personal circumstances to be discussed by the panel. The MCP will keep this information confidential to its members and will not permit its use or disclosure outside the Board.

If a student's application involves a very sensitive personal matter or concerns a member of Blackburn College staff who may be a member of the MCP considering his/her case then the student should place his/her application in a sealed envelope marked 'for the personal attention of the Chair of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel'. The chair of the MCP will exercise his/her professional judgement on the extent of disclosure necessary for a fair decision to be made.

Appendix 2

Constitution, terms of reference and additional guidelines for Examination Boards (Blackburn College)

NOTE: This Appendix is constituted from the relevant section of the College's *Academic Regulations*

Examination Boards

The process leading to the formal approval of module marks, the achievement of awards and their classification is managed through a hierarchy of formal boards.

Module Boards

Module Boards will be held in advance of Assessment Boards, normally within the School in which the relevant programme is run. Preparation for the Module Board will include discussions with the External Examiner to discuss scaling and low/high aggregation scores.

The purpose of Module Boards is to collate and moderate student module results, to consider the progression and awarding decisions and to make clear, reasoned and concise recommendations to Assessment Boards.

As part of the moderation process, the Module Board should satisfy itself for each individual assessment that:

The assessment was correctly set and internally or externally validated as required.

The first and second marking processes were carried out correctly.

Having done so, the board should consider and decide any cases where the first and second markers were unable to agree a final mark.

In any case where the board is not satisfied that due process has been carried out or where disputes between markers indicate the possibility of wider problems with the assessment or its marking, the board may make whatever arrangements it considers necessary to ensure the efficacy of the assessment process. Such arrangements may include partial or complete re-marking of the assessment(s) in question and/or engagement with the external examiner to resolve problems.

If, after application of all other methods of moderation, the overall mean aggregation score for any module lies outside the range 13.5 to 17.0 (or 55% to 66.7% for quantitative results) then examiners must consider whether or not there is a case for the marks to be scaled. Scaling may be of the overall mark for the module or of any assessment therein. The method of scaling to be used should be discussed and should reflect both the nature of the assessment and the size of the cohort. Both the reason for scaling and the method used must be justified within the minutes of the Board of Examiners. If scaling is discussed and not used, the reason for not scaling will be recorded in the

minutes. In all cases both the original and the scaled marks will be permanently recorded.

Where the board considers, on the basis of this reflection, that the marks awarded in a particular assessment or module are likely to have been affected by assessment being too easy, too difficult or failing to distinguish adequately between different levels of performance the board may propose adjustment of the marks for that module or assessment.

The adjustment proposed should be the least necessary to correct the problem and should normally take the form of a simple raising or lowering of all students' marks by a fixed amount or a linear scaling of the students' score of the form

$\text{NewScore} = (\text{OriginalScore} \pm \text{Offset}) * \text{Factor}.$

In cases where the effect of proposed moderation would be to reduce students' marks **and** the effect of such moderation on any classification of the award would be small then the board should not normally change marks but should comment on its findings so that these can form part of the review process for the affected module.

Moderation Board meetings will be formal and need not be minuted. However, any changes made to individual students' module marks must be recorded and the reasons detailed on the relevant assessment documentation. Changes will be subject to the consent of the relevant external examiner if (s)he was not present at the board.

Assessment/Award Boards

The purpose of the Assessment/Award Boards is to receive the recommendations of the School Module Boards and to make recommendations for:

- the conferment of awards
- the classification of awards
- progression decisions at level 5 and above
- recommendations for students to exit with a contained award
- accepting the reports of the external examiner(s) and programme consultant(s)

In addition, Assessment/Award Boards will:

- agree student module marks
- accept the decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel and determine the remedies to be applied. Only in exceptional circumstances should a board overturn or disregard a recommendation of the MCP. All such decisions must be minuted and must be reported to the Academic Board where the student's target is a Blackburn College award or to the relevant authority of the external awarding body where it is not.
- determine arrangements for re-sits, re-assessment and re-takes of individual assessments

- determine whether or not a student should be permitted to retake individual failed modules or a failed year. This capacity is restricted to a first retake of any module or year. Any further concessions requested must be referred to the appropriate Assessment/Award Board for decision.

Assessment/Award boards will be supplied with the following information relating to all students being considered.

- Module results data relating to students being considered for a final award or for progression at level 5 or above
- Mitigating Circumstances Panel decisions and recommendations
- requests to leave the programme with a contained award
- minutes of relevant previous assessment and award board meetings

Assessment/Award Boards will not make time for general discussion of students' individual circumstances.

Assessment/Award Boards must make recommendations in line with the awarding regulations in force at the time, exercising no more discretion than those regulations explicitly permit. Should a board feel that the strict decision would be inappropriate then it may request that the Award Board considers an alternative outcome. Any such request must be minuted and the Assessment/Award Board's preferred outcome stated.

The recommendations of the Assessment/Award Board are final.

Minutes of the award board meeting will be passed to the LTAC-HE for information and to the Academic Board for approval. The Academic Board may refer matters of concern back to the LTAC-HE for action.

Where an Assessment/Award Board at Blackburn College is acting as, or in lieu of, the award board of an external awarding body then the report of the will also act as a recommendation to the relevant committee of that awarding body.

Membership of Boards

No student may be a member of any moderation, assessment/award board or attend any meeting of these boards other than as a student for assessment. However, where a person who would normally be a member of a board is also registered as a student on an award (s)he may act in his/her normal capacity subject to the provisions below.

Module Boards

Director of Quality and Standards and Executive Dean (Chairs)

Secretary (Director of Quality and Standards to appoint)

Programme Leader(s)

Programme Team(s)

Academic Registrar (or his/her nominee)

The relevant Head of School will be invited

External Examiners and/or Programme Consultants may attend

A member of the administration team may attend to record decisions

Assessment/Award Boards

Vice Principal (or his/her appointee) (Chair)

Secretary (Vice Principal to appoint)

Director of Quality and Standards

Executive Dean

Relevant Heads of School

Academic Registrar (or his/her nominee)

Programme Leaders for all programmes involved (or appointee if unavailable)

Representatives of all External Awarding Bodies involved

Relevant External Examiners and Programme Consultants will be invited

Appendix 3

Administration of University examinations (Blackburn College)

UCBC examinations are held at times agreed by the Examinations Departments and Course Leaders liaising via the HE Examinations Officer.

The Examination Department will be responsible for producing the weekly examination timetable; however, tutors must inform students in advance of their examination dates and times.

Course Leaders shall be responsible for providing the Examination Department, on request and by specified dates, details of modules for which there is to be an examination. The number of written and practical papers to be taken by categories of students shall be specified, as shall the title and duration of each paper, the sequence in which papers are to be taken (if relevant), and any special requirements (e.g. the provision of graph paper, calculators, statistical tables). The Examination Department is responsible for drawing up examination timetables which take account of student module enrolments and examination registrations and schools' requirements.

The Examination Department shall be responsible for consulting schools over any discrepancies or examination clashes and for resolving them. Once finalised, the exam timetable will be publicised promptly via tutors and will be made available via Moodle. Copies of the timetable will be posted in the UCBC Atrium on Friday afternoons for the following week.

Schools wishing to hold University examinations at any time other than the normal examination periods shall so inform the Examinations Department at least one month in advance.

There shall be at least one invigilator present for each group of thirty candidates or fewer sitting written examinations. When one invigilator is present, he or she must be able to get help easily, without leaving the examination room and without disturbing the candidates. N.B. for most examinations with over 10 students 2 invigilators at least will be present.

For standard examinations invigilators shall arrive at the examination room not less than thirty minutes before the start of the examination. These persons shall be responsible for the preparation in and outside of the examination room. They shall also ensure that notices covering conduct in the examination venue shall be displayed outside each examination room. Prior to the examination the invigilators shall ensure candidates deposit their belongings in a designated place.

The Examination Department shall be responsible for arranging venues, recruiting and training invigilators, making the necessary physical arrangements for University examinations, and providing examination stationery and for administering all examinations. In such a case that a central examination room cannot be sourced within 2 weeks of the examination date then UCBC shall provide their own venue.

The Examination Department may request that an appropriate member of the relevant academic School acts as an invigilator and/or to attend for the first 10 minutes of an examination. Where this is not done, the Examinations Department and the relevant academic School must ensure that an appropriate member of the academic staff is contactable by telephone throughout the examination.

Security and confidentiality of examination papers and scripts

It is the responsibility of the UCBC Examinations Officer:

- to publicise the submissions deadlines for draft papers;
- to request examination papers from academic schools at due times;
- to give guidance as to layout;
- to check papers for undue similarity to recent papers in the same subject;

And

- to ensure that the relevant external examiner and programme consultant have received copies of draft papers, that their comments have been considered appropriately and that draft papers have the approval of the relevant external examiner.

The UCBC Examinations Officer will produce all examination papers and deposit securely in the Secure Examination Store by agreed dates.

The content of questions in examination papers is both restricted and reserved material (i.e. not to be disclosed to or discussed with students or to be discussed until after the examinations have been held). Where a paper contains materials that are to be released to students prior to the examination it is the responsibility of the relevant academic School to ensure that each student receives the correct pre-released information in a timely manner. The normal non-disclosure requirements apply to all materials not explicitly designated for pre-release.

Examination papers, but not model answers and/or marking schemes, will be published on the relevant Moodle page once the examination to which they relate is over.

Since revision classes and other preparatory work for examinations will inevitably provide some guidance as to the areas of a subject which may be examined, schools are required to prescribe the extent of such guidance and so inform external examiners. Schools must then ensure that no disclosures beyond the prescribed boundaries are made. Where guidance is provided to candidates, schools must ensure that it is provided consistently for all those to be examined on the course concerned.

All examination scripts, and other assessed work not returned by schools to the originating student, should be retained by the school(s) in which the student is registered for a period of three years (36 months) after the mark has been confirmed.

Scripts and other assessed material should be held securely and clearly labelled, and disposal should be in accordance with the College's procedures for the disposal of confidential waste.

In the case of a review, appeal or complaint by the candidate, any examination scripts or other assessed work relevant to the case should be sent to the Academic Registrar to be held on an indefinite basis or until such appeal or complaint has been resolved.

Alternative examination arrangements for students with disabilities

Adapted examination arrangements shall be provided where necessary for students with physical and sensory disabilities, with specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia), with psychological problems or with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma or M.E.).

In cases where there is no clear physical or sensory disability, the candidate shall provide a doctor's letter or psychologist's report to support his or her request for adapted arrangements.

Students are required to make request for access arrangements for examinations in the first semester by a date specified in November. There is no requirement for a second application to be made for examinations in the second semester, however a date will be published by which new or revised applications must be made if they are to be considered for second semester examinations. The College cannot guarantee to process requests unless they are made by the relevant deadline. (see Access Arrangement Policy for further details)

Details of the arrangements for any individual shall be agreed by the Access Arrangement Panel in accordance with guidelines approved by the Academic Council.

Appendix 4

Academic Appeals (Blackburn College)

NOTE: This Appendix is constituted from the relevant section of the College's *Academic Regulations*

Academic Appeals

This section applies to appeals on academic matters only. Appeals relating to decisions on other matters, such as for example student discipline or malpractice are provided for under other policies.

For the purposes of this section the word 'appeal' refers to appeals against examination board decisions, requests to review academic decisions and student challenges on academic matters.

Students have no right of appeal in matters of academic judgement such as marking, grading, awarding or classification. Appeals on this basis will be ruled invalid.

Valid grounds for appeal for First or Second Stage

A request for an appeal against a Board decision may only be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- material administrative error or irregularity in conduct of assessment which has affected the student's results.
- the production of significant new evidence concerning extenuating or mitigating circumstances, which for good reason had not been available to boards of examiners.
- other grounds where unfair treatment or discrimination is alleged which is outside the exercise of academic judgement and which for good reason had not been brought to the attention of the boards of examiners.

Process

The process for of Academic Appeals is evidence-based, therefore appropriate supporting documentation must be provided in order for the appeal to be heard. Appeals that are submitted without evidence will be rejected without being heard by the panel.

First Stage Appeal

The student must appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar of Blackburn College stating the precise ground(s) for the appeal within 28 days of the original notification. Appeals received outside this timescale will be ruled invalid. Any relevant documentary evidence should be provided.

First stage appeals will be heard by an Academic Appeals Panel appointed by the LTAC-HE for this purpose. The LTAC-HE will determine the membership and quorum of the panel and may provide guidelines for it to follow.

Students' applications for consideration by the panel will be checked on receipt to ensure that they fall within the remit of the panel, are complete and are supported by prima facie evidence where relevant. If an application is judged at this stage not to be within the panel remit, to be incomplete or not supported by prima facie evidence, where relevant, the application will be rejected without being considered by the panel. Such rejection will be deemed to be the decision of the panel meeting that would otherwise have considered the application and will be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

The Academic Registrar will convene panels to hear appeals and is responsible for arranging times for hearings with students. Students have a right to be accompanied by a representative or friend at any hearings in the Appeals process.

The Academic Registrar is responsible for ensuring the student is informed both verbally (at the meeting) and in writing of the outcome of the appeal which may be:

- The appeal is upheld and referred back to the relevant Board for reconsideration
- The appeal is upheld and the Academic Registrar takes immediate action on behalf of the Assessment Board
- The appeal is turned down

Where a first stage appeal is turned down, the student has a right to a second stage appeal if (s)he is dissatisfied with the outcome.

Second Stage Appeal

A second stage appeal will not be called if a first stage appeal has not been held. Requests for second stage appeals must be made in writing to the LTAC-HE within 14 days of the first stage appeal hearing. Any relevant documentary evidence must be provided.

Extenuating circumstances that were not declared either at the time of the relevant assessment board meeting or at the first stage appeal will be ruled invalid unless it can be shown that the evidence was for good reason not available earlier.

Stage two appeals will be heard by a panel appointed by the LTAC-HE.

The powers of an Appeal Panel are:

- to determine the validity of the grounds for the appeal. The appeal will not proceed if the panel does not deem the grounds to be valid;
- to uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented and to refer the matter back to the relevant Board;
- to turn down the appeal and to uphold the original decision of the relevant Board.

The Academic Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the appellant and the Chair of the relevant Board are informed in writing of the decision of the Appeal Panel and the reasons for the decision, normally within 5 working days of the appeal being held.

Third Stage appeal

Where an appeal is turned down at the second stage the student may have a final right to resort to the appeals processes of an external body. In such cases it is a strict requirement of these regulations that any such appeal must pass through the Blackburn College appeals process before proceeding to any external body.

A student whose case is under consideration via an appeal shall have the right to continue with his/her current programme (provided s/he is in good standing with Blackburn College) until such time as a final decision is reached. Such a student will not be permitted to enrol for any programme, stage or module for which their entitlement to enrol rests on the outcome of the appeal, but may be permitted to attend classes while the appeal is being considered. This right is designed solely to ensure that a student whose appeal is upheld is not academically disadvantaged and it shall not be interpreted as acceptance of a failed student on a subsequent stage of the programme.

Students should be aware that there may be financial implications and that they could be liable for fees should their appeal be unsuccessful.

In the case of second stage appeals students will be supplied with a Completion of Proceedings letter and would have the right to take the matter to the relevant awarding body and/or to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Details of methods, timescales and institutional contacts are supplied to students in the emails by which all appellants receive formal notification of Panel decisions.

Appendix 5

Modules approved for percentage marking

As at September 2018:

Currently there are no Blackburn College modules for which the College has requested percentage marking.