

Independent observer on Boards of Examiners

1. The independent observer role has been established to strengthen the consistency of the operation and practice of assessment across the University. Where possible observers should be drawn from outside the faculty/school so that good practice might be shared and externality strengthened.
2. The independent observer will normally be an Assistant Registrar (Faculties/School) or a person jointly nominated by the Assistant Registrars (Faculties/School) and the Director of Administration from among the appropriately trained administrative staff; or, if an Assistant Registrar or equivalent is not available, a member of Academic Registry. Normally, independent observers will be members of administrative/professional services staff independent of the Faculty/School holding the BEU/BEP in question.
3. The independent observer will observe the meeting and report on practice. As an observer/reporter, the independent observer will complete a simple standard report form (see appendix 1B) verifying key aspects of the operation of the BEU/BEP, noting any particular issues that arise, and any examples of good practice. These reports will be submitted to and retained by the Assistant Registrars in the relevant Faculties/School. They will inform annual evaluations of the operation of assessment processes.
4. BEUs/BEPs will be attended by an Independent Observer in accordance with a schedule drawn up by the Assistant Registrar (Faculties/School) and the Director of Administration in consultation with the Dean and, where appropriate, Academic Registry. A risk-based approach will be taken in drawing up the schedule. An independent observer must attend any BEUs/BEPs where the Dean has identified potential risk factors to be monitored, for example where complex cases will be considered. Boards that have a new Chair will normally be observed. Random sampling of Boards or spot checks may also take place. A broader sample of observations would also normally be instigated following the introduction of changes to relevant University regulations or processes.
5. The conduct of, and documentation for, the BEU/BEP will have been prepared by the Chair and the Secretary, both of whom are required to have been appropriately trained on procedural and regulatory matters. Independent Observers are not expected to provide advice during the meeting.
6. Academic Registry will provide training on the assessment regulations and the role of the BEUs/BEPs to independent observers. The Faculties and School will advise independent observers on local procedures. The Academic Registry will also ensure that, during BEU/BEP periods, a colleague is available centrally to deal with any queries that may need to be referred by Chairs, Secretaries and/or independent observers attending Boards.