

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/BEC 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 Board of Examiners for Units (BEU)/Board of Examiners for Courses (BEC), 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. A risk-based approach will be taken in determining attendance of Independent Observers at any BEUs or BECs. Potential risk factors may include, for example where complex cases will be considered, those Boards that have a new Chair or following the introduction of changes to relevant University regulations or processes. At the discretion of the Dean, or as agreed in consultation with Academic Registry, random sampling of Boards or spot checks may also be implemented.
5. The conduct of, and documentation for, the BEU/BEC 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/BECs to independent observers. The Faculties and School will advise independent observers on local procedures. The Academic Registry will also ensure that, during BEU/BEC 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.