

Best Practice

for the Administration
of Examinations and
Award Ceremonies in
Higher Education
Institutions

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Examination
Administrators
Forum

An Ethical Code of Conduct for Examination Administrators

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE CODE

- The purpose of this Code is to define the core values, principles, norms and standards which guide the Examination Administrator's ethical conduct in work activities and interactions with colleagues and students.
 - * Examination Administrator refers to any employee of the institution who is directly or indirectly involved with the management, organisation and administration of examinations.
- Through the application of this Code, the Examination Administrator shall increase the good reputation and standing of the institution within the community it serves. In addition, the trust of both colleagues and students shall be garnered through the Examination Administrator's work outputs. These include effective management of resources, sound decision-making and the maintenance of a high level of work ethics.

2. CORE VALUES

The following core values are relevant to the Examination Administrator's Code of Conduct:

- Treat all colleagues and students equally, fairly and with human dignity
- Show the proper respect for the leadership of the institution and for positions of appointed authority within the organisation
- Strive to deliver work outputs of excellence
- Always maintain the professional demeanour and job dedication expected of an Examination Administrator
- Have a vested knowledge of the statutory regulations, policies and procedures that govern the institution and abide thereto, or contribute to the improvement of them to the best interests of the institution

3. PRINCIPLES GUIDING CONDUCT

The Examination Administrator shall be guided by the following principles relating to conduct:

- Honesty and integrity
- Fairness
- Transparency
- A zero tolerance for corruption
- Ethical execution of duties
- A commitment to service excellence

4. STATEMENT OF ETHICS

"The Examination Administrator shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethics and morality in conducting and fulfilling the responsibilities and tasks inherent to the function of examination administration. The Examination Administrator further undertakes to report all incidences of unethical behaviour and/or misconduct to the institution's authorities."

5. APPLICATION OF THIS CODE

In application of this code, the Examination Administrator shall follow the principles of:

- Open communication
- Adherence to the policies, rules & regulations of the institution
- Best Practice for Examination Administration
- Clearly-defined responsibilities and job descriptions
- Well-defined lines of authority
- Expansion of personal knowledge of the work environment, and
- The development of skills that may contribute to improved performance within the function of examination administration

6. ADHERENCE TO THE CODE

This Code is underwritten by the Examination Administrators Forum [ExAF], an international forum for Examination Administrators. As such, all institutional members of ExAF support this Code of Ethical Conduct. They furthermore undertake to adhere to and promote this Code, within their institutions and their Executive Management as a norm for all Examination Administrators.

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preface

A first workshop was held in Pretoria on the 29 and 30 June 2006 with the objective to define best practice for Examination Administration in Higher and Further Education Institutions. Integrated Tertiary Software (Pty) Ltd [ITS] presented the workshop which was attended by 86 delegates representing 19 Higher and Further Education Institutions from Southern Africa. The result of that workshop was a draft document that reflected the best practice processes for Examination Administration in Higher and Further Education Institutions, as were defined in the workshop.

Due to a number of unresolved concerns in the first workshop, a follow-up workshop was held near the OR Tambo International Airport on 11 October 2007 to identify and address these concerns and to formulate a consensual view of **best practice** for Examination Administration. This follow-up workshop was again presented by ITS and was attended by 50 delegates representing 17 higher education institutions from Southern Africa.

At the end of the 2007 workshop, the delegates decided to form a permanent forum for Examination Administrators in Higher and Further Education Institutions, called the Examination Administrators Forum, abbreviated as ExAF. This Forum was responsible for overseeing the publication of the **best practice** document and would also be responsible for the review of it, to keep it aligned with the latest developments in Examination Administration.

The first edition "*Best Practice for Examination Administration in Higher & Further Education Institutions*" was published in August 2008 and released in hard copy at the 2008 Annual ExAF Conference held at the Pine Lodge Resort in Port Elizabeth.

In terms of the definition of '**best practice**', the document is dynamic and must be reviewed frequently to incorporate the latest implemented 'best practices'. Therefore, during the annual conference of ExAF in 2014 at the Fancourt Golf Estate and Conference Centre in George, Western Cape, six years after publication of the first edition, a workshop was held to review and align the second edition to the latest best practices. The title was changed to be more descriptive of the typical responsibilities of an Examinations Administration section in a higher education institution to also include the certification and award ceremonies, which is in general referred to as the graduation ceremonies in the case of universities. The revised title of the second edition is therefore "*Best Practice for the Administration of Examinations and Award Ceremonies in Higher Education Institutions*."

The concept of 'best practice' is defined as:

"The formulation of key process steps and/or events (strategies and tactics) and sub-steps in an organized, structured and chronological order as they take place in practice. The description of the events is clear and simple to understand by all levels of staff working in the particular function".

Defined and formulated '**best practice**' must adhere to the following requirements:

- It must set benchmarks towards which institutions strive to accomplish
- It is about implemented practices that work, rather than theoretical models and prescribed text
- It is about the leading practice that works best for a particular individual process, rather than an overall performance at one institution
- It is dynamic and must be reviewed from time to time to incorporate the latest implemented 'best practices'

Approach and focus

The initial two workshops focused on **best practice** processes of the **administration** of the assessments of students, examinations conducted and marks obtained. The intention was never to address the format and the educational or pedagogic merits of assessments and examinations. These are best left to the education specialists. However, it remains important that the supporting examination administration procedures are sufficiently flexible to accommodate new formats of assessment of candidates.

Other challenges discussed during the initial workshops and remained as challenges in 2014 were:

- The ever increasing student numbers at higher education institutions present the examination administrator with a complicated scheduling process that needs to provide examiners and markers, as well as moderators, sufficient time for marking papers in order to meet the deadlines set by the institution for the submission and publication of marks.
- During the study period, lecturers are continuously assessing students in various formats, including events such as class or semester tests. These continuous assessments and the marks obtained contribute on average a weight of 50% towards the final mark. This process takes place within faculties and largely under the control of the lecturer, and there are no stringent procedures of security controls that apply. Yet, when it comes to the final examination, there are the strictest centralised controls and security measures

over the submission and safeguarding of examination papers, invigilation, and distribution of scripts.

- The right of a student to write an examination and the subsequent right to be informed of the mark obtained, versus the right of an institution to either block the student from writing the examination or releasing the results, due to unpaid study fees.

Involvement of the TVET* College Sector

** Technical and Vocational Education and Training*

Since the TVET Colleges (formerly FET) were moved to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2012, these institutions became part of the post-school sector that includes universities, universities of technology and registered private higher education institutions.

It was then evident that the Colleges joined ExAF and should take part in defining **best practices** for examination administration. However, the examinations for the main stream qualifications of the TVET Colleges, namely the National Certificate Vocational (NCV), were still being administered nationally by the DHET with some responsibilities being delegated to the provincial departments of education. The policies and procedures are therefore largely prescribed by the DHET, with the Colleges having to execute these with very little room for defining best practices in examination administration at college level. Due to this structure, the revision of the best practice publication did not address best practices at Colleges in particular.

The College Members of ExAF have however indicated that their exposure to best practices at universities has indeed been very fruitful and that they wanted to remain part of the formulation of **best practice** for examination administration with an increasing local non-formal course compliment at Colleges and possible further decentralization of examination administration functions in the future. The White Paper on Post-School Education of 2013 emphasizes the development of the College sector and improved articulation between colleges and universities.

Institutional Members of ExAF

The following institutions were represented at the various workshops and annual conferences by staff members from the Academic and Examination Administration functions and are therefore institutional members of ExAF.

Note: The individual institutions listed below have not underwritten the content of this publication and have not all participated in the various **best practice** workshops mentioned above.

Public Universities in RSA & Africa

Botswana International University of Science and Technology	University of Johannesburg
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Central University of Technology, FS	University of Limpopo
Durban University of Technology	University of Namibia
Mangosuthu University of Technology	University of Pretoria
National University of Lesotho	University of Stellenbosch
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	University of Swaziland
North-West University	University of the Free State
Polytechnic of Namibia	University of Venda
Rhodes University	University of Western Cape
Tshwane University of Technology	University of Zululand
University of Botswana	Vaal University of Technology
University of Fort Hare	Walter Sisulu University
University of Ibadan, Nigeria	

Public TVET Colleges in Southern Africa

Botswana College for Agriculture	Mopani
Capricorn	Motheo
Central Johannesburg College	Nkangala
College of Cape Town	Northern Cape Urban
Eastcape Midlands	Northlink
Ekurhuleni East	Orbit
Ekurhuleni West	Port Elizabeth
Elangeni	South Cape
Ikhala	Tshwane North
Ingwe	Umfolosi
King Hintsa	Umgungundlovu
Lephalale	Vhembe
Letaba	West Coast
Majuba	

Private HEI's and Other Members

Midrand Graduate Institute	ZMB Holdings (Pty) Ltd
Open Learning Group	

- Adapt IT (Pty) Ltd. initiated and presented the workshops and Mr. Peet du Plessis, the Adapt IT Administrator of ExAF, compiled the first edition of the best practice document in 2008 and again compiled this second edition after the 2014 workshop.

Definition of terminology

The following definitions of terms used in this document was compiled from submissions from institutions represented at the workshop, but it was evident from the workshop sessions that institutions differ in the use and interpretation of the terminology used in the examination administration function. The following glossary of terms is therefore not presented as a comprehensive list of terminologies used worldwide in institutions of higher learning, but rather an attempt to describe the general terms used in the compilation of this best practice document.

Aegrotat examination	means an examination granted by the dean, or other authorised official, to a candidate who was prohibited from writing the main examination through illness, death in the family or similar special circumstances.
Ancillary examination	means after an examination, the examiner may summons a student/learner for an ancillary examination on particular aspects of the work in a module, with a view to awarding a final examination mark.
Assessment	means the evaluation of a learner/student's achievement of the learning outcomes of a module, such assessment can be in the form of practical work, assignments, on-line, written or oral examinations.
Assessor	means the person who has been accredited to assess or evaluate the learning outcomes resulting from an assessment of a student for a specific module or field of learning
Bona fide student	means a student who has met the general entrance requirements of the institution and specific entrance requirements for the qualification that s/he has registered for full-time or part-time, where such registration is approved and recorded by the institution, and such student actively partakes in the academic activities required of the qualification. For the purpose of this document the terms of 'student' and 'learner' are deemed synonymous.
Credits	mean the relative value of modules, where each credit represents a quantified measure, (e.g. x number of notional hours spent by a learner / student) towards completing a module, course or qualification.
Continuous assessment mark	means the mark that a student obtains for course work, assignments, tests and other forms of assessment during the period of study for a particular module, whereas this mark carries a certain weight towards the full period mark.

Course	means a program of study or training in a particular field that leads to a qualification.
Curriculum	means the collective aggregation of all those modules / courses in the various subjects, which together are required to be completed as prescribed in the rules in order to comply with the requirements of the qualification.
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
Examination	means the act of examining a candidate's knowledge by means of written, on-line, oral or practical assessments at the end of the prescribed study period, and also includes any ensuing supplementary or special examination.
Examination mark	means the mark obtained by a student and awarded by the examiner in a particular examination.
Examiner	means the person who is appointed by the institution, normally from the full-time lecturing staff, to set an examination paper for a specific module and compile a marking memorandum for such a paper, and to mark all the scripts of the candidates who sat the examination.
External examiner	means a person of high academic standing who could be a full-time academic employee of the institution, or from another institution, who is appointed to evaluate the academic level of examinations, to audit the marking process and checks the fairness of marks awarded by the examiner. S/he is normally required to mark a particular sample of scripts.
Final mark	means the mark obtained at the end of each completed module, the composition and computation of which is determined by the rules for that particular program. The general rule is that the final mark is a combination of the semester / year mark also referred to as the 'full period mark', and the examination mark.
Full period mark	means the mark that a student obtains for various continuous assessment interventions (see definition for continuous assessment mark) during the period of study, which carries a particular weight towards the final mark.
Head of Department	means a person who heads an academic department at the institution, abbreviated in this document as 'HoD'.
Internal examiner	means the same as 'examiner', and will normally be the person who lectures at the institution in the subject for which s/he is appointed as examiner.
Main examination	means the examination that is scheduled at the end of the prescribed study period, normally each semester, which gives a student his/her first opportunity to be examined in a module that was offered in the preceding study period or semester.

Marking memorandum	means a detailed written explanation of the solutions to the questions in the paper and the proposed allocation of marks to each question or section thereof. In essay type questions the memorandum can take the form of an assessment guide.
Moderator	means a person of high academic standing, whether on the permanent staff of the institution (internal) or not (external), who has not been involved in the teaching of the module concerned, and who has not given any guidance to a post-graduate student on the module concerned, and who is responsible for establishing the extent to which the required outcomes have been achieved, and further to evaluate the academic standard of the assessment. In general the moderator does not have any examining responsibility.
Module	means a coherent, self-contained unit of learning, which is designed to achieve a set of specific learning outcomes that are assessed within that unit and allocated period of learning and which is the smallest unit for which a final mark is entered in the study record.
On-line examination	means an examination that is taken by a student through the medium of an e-mailed examination where a computerised program requires selection of answers by the candidate, and once completed the mark obtained is e-mailed back to the institution.
Programme	means a structured set of learning outcomes, which usually comprises a combination of modules to be completed within a course of study to fulfil the requirements for a specific qualification. In this document the term 'qualification' is used synonymous to 'programme'.
Programme leader	means a staff member from the academic personnel who are appointed to take responsibility for a particular programme regarding its content, curriculum, presentation and assessment.
Proof of participation	means that a student may be exempted from writing an examination in a particular module provided that he/ she has met certain specified participation requirements, e.g. assignments, practical sessions, etc. in order to be awarded a pass mark for the module.
Qualification	means the end product after all the modules / courses in the particular curriculum of the degree or diploma have been passed. In this document the term 'qualification' is used synonymous to 'programme'.
Re-calculation	means that a student may, in terms of the general rules of the particular institution, apply for the re-calculation of the mark awarded for an examination, which merely requires an arithmetical check of the correctness of the calculation of the mark awarded in the script by the examiner.

Re-mark	means that a student may, in terms of the general rules of the particular institution, apply for a re-mark of his / her examination script, which requires from the examiner (or the external examiner) to re-evaluate the entire script, and if applicable award a revised mark.
SAQA	means the South African Qualifications Authority, the body responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, established in terms of the SAQA Act no. 58 of 1995.
Semester mark	means the mark obtained by a candidate during a semester (or year mark if the course runs over an academic year) in a particular module in respect of assignments, class tests, class performance, practical work or other forms of formative assessments for the module. It means the same as 'full period mark' where the period has the duration of a semester.
Senate	means the highest academic structure of decision making of a university, and also includes any unit or person to whom the authority and / or powers in a specified area have been delegated by Senate. Note that in the case of TVET Colleges, the equivalent body of authority should be referred to.
Special examinations	mean examination opportunities that are granted to a student under special circumstances according to the stipulations of each individual institution's regulations, e.g. a student that requires only a limited number of modules to complete his / her degree. Common examples are the Chancellor's examination, Dean's examination, or other extra ordinary circumstances.
Supplementary assessment	means an extension of the initial work or examination, and are normally granted to a border line student who only needs a pass mark in the particular module to complete the qualification.
Supplementary examinations	mean examinations that are scheduled after the results of the main examination had been published and candidates who obtained a pre-determined sub minimum mark, but did not obtain a pass mark for the module, may then be admitted to write a supplementary examination.
Year mark	means the mark obtained by a candidate during a year in a particular module in respect of assignments, class tests, class performance, practical work or other forms of formative assessments for the module. It means the same as 'full period mark' where the period has the duration of a year.



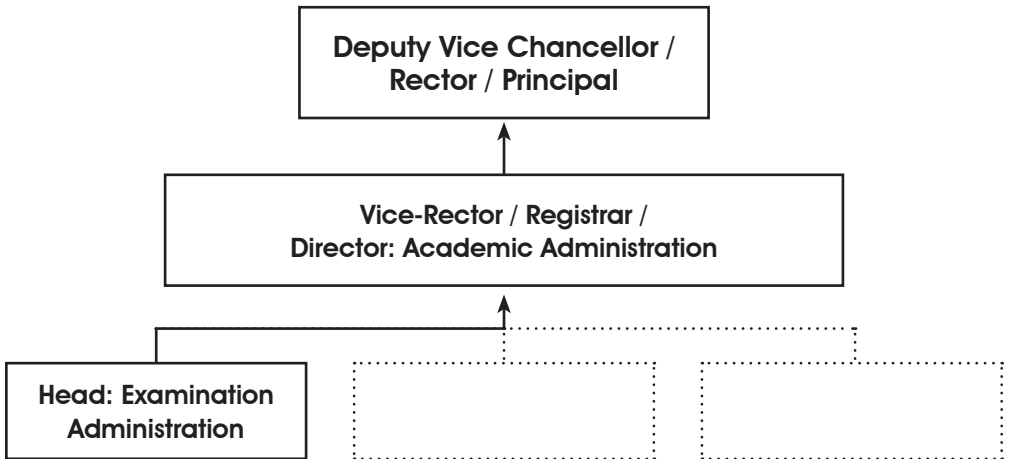
Focus area 1: Organization and policies

1.1 Organization fit, structure and responsibilities

1.1.1 The overall function of examination administration needs to be centrally coordinated to ensure a uniform standard of administration and application of institutional examination policies, procedures and regulations.

Best practice is therefore the overall responsibility and management of the examination administration and remains within the centralised academic administration function of the institution. Certain operational aspects of examination administration could be decentralised in larger institutions or institutions with multiple campuses.

1.1.2 Based on the centralised structure referred to in par. 1.1.1, the following diagram represents **an example** of such a structure with the specific reporting lines:



Clearly in this example, the structure depicts a direct line of reporting for the Head: Examination Administration to the Vice-rector / Registrar / Director: Academic Administration. There are usually various other academic administration function heads that also reports to the Registrar / Director: Academic Administration.

- 1.1.3 The responsibilities of the Head of Examination Administration include the following:
- i) Initiating and maintaining institutional policies that regulate the examination administration function. (See paragraph 1.6 below)
 - ii) Compiling and maintaining the general examination regulations and rules in line with institutional policies, as approved by the relevant academic body, and published in the institution's yearbook / calendar.
 - iii) Ensuring that faculty specific or program specific regulations and rules that are published in faculty brochures, are not in contradiction with the institutional policies and overall examination regulations and rules.
 - iv) Compilation and publishing of the central examinations timetable, based on data collected from the information system and from inputs from faculties.
 - v) Provision and reservation of appropriate examination venues aligned to the examination timetable and the assigning of invigilators accordingly.
 - vi) Overseeing the process of submission, security and flow of examination papers.
 - vii) Acquisition and provision of all examination materials required, as well as the production/ printing of the examination papers.
 - viii) Overseeing the flow of examination scripts after an examination i.e. distribution to examiners, external examiners, etc. until the storage of scripts for access purposes.
 - ix) Retention and disposal of scripts.
 - x) Taking custodianship of the completeness and accuracy of all marks data recorded on the study record of the student and maintaining the records of approved marks for as long as the policy determines that historic records must be kept.
 - xi) Overseeing the process of publication and release of final marks, and dealing with administrative queries from students regarding their marks released.
 - xii) Providing information to faculties/academic departments to identify students that completed their qualification, and to verify this information before the student is included on the list of graduates.
 - xiii) Responsible for all the underlying administrative processes, as well as the organizational aspects of the graduation ceremonies, which could include the finalisation of the grandaunts list, list of all invitees, guest list, ceremony program, venue, seating allocation, recording of graduation certificates issued, etc.

1.2 Staffing

- 1.2.1 Due to the cyclic nature of the Examinations Administration function, the resources capacity needs to be carefully planned. The planning is affected by a certain fixed element of work to be performed, and a number of variables, e.g. student numbers,

number of qualifications/programmes offered and examinations to be scheduled, number of administrative queries handled after release of marks, extend of involvement of the lecturing staff in processes such as submission of examination papers and marking memoranda, invigilation, etc. and the extend of centralisation or decentralisation.

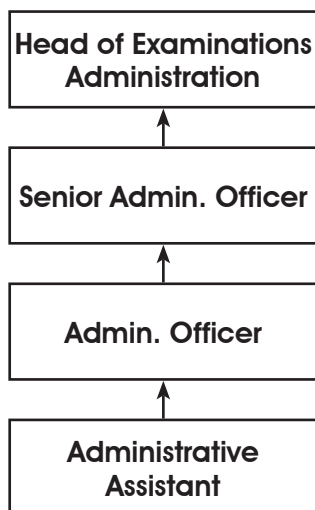
Best practice is to determine the resource capacity for the Examinations Administration department based on the above-mentioned fixed and variable elements of work.

1.2.2 The levels of posts in the examination administration department will be aligned to the number of posts.

It is **best practice** that there is a Head of Examinations Administration post and that this person takes responsibility for the operational management of this department. It is also sound management practice that succession planning applies within the department.

1.3 Designations and career path

The following are the most generally used designations for the various post levels in the function of examination administration. It is **best practice** that post levels are differentiated by increased responsibilities, as well as a required higher level of skills and experience and that this is indicated in the naming of the positions.



1.4 Profile: Knowledge & Skills

For each post level in Examination Administration, the knowledge, skills and qualification requirements will obviously be different. However, the following general requirements of staff in the Examinations Administration function are in accordance with **best practice**:

- 1.4.1 A good working knowledge of the following is required:
- The higher and further education environment

- Legislation that pertains to higher education
- Institutional policies, regulations and procedures
- Applicable government departments and accreditation and quality assurance bodies
- Institutional governance
- Academic calendar and examinations timetabling
- Management information system

1.4.2 The following skills are required:

- Interpersonal
- Spoken and written communication
- Organisational
- Computer literate
- Ability to work against deadlines
- Accuracy
- Attention to detail
- Problem solving

1.5 Accountability and responsibilities: Examination Administration & Faculties

Due to the close involvement between the Examinations Administration department and the faculties, it is **best practice** to ensure that these responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined as follows:

Faculties	Examinations Administration
1.5.1 Accountable and responsible for the academic process of setting examination papers and memoranda and to submit it according to the pre-determined dates to the examinations administration.	Accountable and responsible for all the administrative and logistical processes of the examinations and for accurate and complete information on students' study records and for the supply of this information to the faculties.
1.5.2 Accountable for the degrees, diplomas and certificates that are issued in the name of the institution, and should therefore ensure that a student has indeed met the requirements of the qualification to be conferred at the graduation ceremony, before informing the Examinations Administration accordingly	Responsible for the administrative processes to cross check the study records and for the production of the hard copy certificate of the qualification.

1.6 Contractual relationship

- 1.6.1 On registering with an institution a student commits to a contractual relationship between the institution and the student. It is standard practice at institutions that the signatures on the registration form of a student, or his/her legal guardian in the case of a minor, and an authorized representative of the institution, constitutes the contractual agreement between the institution and the student.
- 1.6.2 On signing of the registration form which constitutes the contractual agreement the student accepts the examination rules and regulations of the institution as published in the yearbook, before the commencement of an examination session.
- 1.6.3 The Registrar or appointed official of the institution is responsible for the good governance of this contractual agreement and must take all reasonable steps to ensure that all students registering at the institution have had free access to the published rules and regulations. In this role of Chief Governance Officer it is **best practice** that s/he has clearly defined the responsibilities and accountability of both parties to this contractual agreement.

1.7 Institutional policies and regulations – Compilation and publication

- 1.7.1 There are a number of policies and regulations that govern the institution's examination process. Although the approval of these policies and regulations remain with the institution's relevant academic body, it is the Examinations Administration's responsibility to make the necessary inputs in the formulation of such policies and regulations and to maintain it. The person responsible for compiling the regulations must also ensure that it does not contradict the policy.
- 1.7.2 The Examinations Administration also acts as a 'watchdog' to ensure that these policies and regulations are communicated and followed throughout the institution. All policies and related regulations pertaining to students (see par. 1.8) must be in writing and published in the institution's yearbook/calendar, which in turn must be available to all students and staff of the institution, and to prospective students and the general public on request. Although it is also good practice to publish it on the institution's web site, it should not be the only means of publication.
- 1.7.3 There are internal policies and regulations that apply to the institution's employees (both full time and part time employed) and their responsibilities in respect of the examination process (See par. 1.9). These employees should have an employment

contract with the institution which stipulates that the employee must adhere to the institutional policies and regulations that govern examinations, and that also specifies their duties. These specific policies and regulations will not be published in the institution's yearbook / calendar as it is not necessary for students and or the public to have insight into it.

- 1.7.4 Faculty and / or course specific regulations must also be published in the faculty or course brochures that must be available to all students and staff. Examinations Administration must ensure that faculty and/or course specific regulations are not in contradiction of the institutional policies and general regulations for examinations.

1.8 Institutional policies and regulations for students – Checklist

The following institutional policies and related regulations are identified as a generally comprehensive list that applies to the examinations function, though not exhaustive. It is deemed as **best practice** that an institution should use this list as a checklist to evaluate its own policies and regulations.

1.8.1 Examinations/Assessment policy for graduate studies

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Assessment formats, e.g. written examinations, oral examinations, tests, essays, portfolios of work, assignments, practical/laboratory sessions, etc.
- ii) Conducting and governance of electronic assessments.
- iii) Examination entry requirements, e.g. minimum full period or continuous assessment (ca) mark, minimum lecture/laboratory session attendance, etc.
- iv) Minimum (sub-minimum) examination mark required.
- v) Pass requirements for a subject/module/program, e.g. final mark of at least 50%.
- vi) Distinction mark, e.g. final mark of at least 75%.

1.8.2 Supplementary examinations policy

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) When a student qualifies for a supplementary examination.
- ii) Pass requirements for supplementary examinations.
- iii) When the supplementary examinations will take place.

1.8.3 Special/ancillary/aegrotat examinations policy

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Stating when a student will be granted such an examination and when it will take place.
- ii) Informs the student of what s/he needs to submit, e.g. sick note, etc.

- iii) That this policy could also be applied as a measure to assist a final year student that may only need a few percentage points in one or two modules to complete his/her qualification.

1.8.4 **Examinations policy for post-graduate studies**

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Format of assessments, e.g. written examination, master's dissertation, doctoral thesis, etc., and the procedure of conducting these assessments.
- ii) Examining procedures and appointment of supervisors and/or study leaders.
- iii) Awarding requirements/marks to be obtained for post-graduate qualifications.

1.8.5 **Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

This policy will normally not be formulated by the examination administration section, as it requires specialised knowledge. However the examination administration will be involved with the application of the policy and the underlying procedures of exemption from examination/assessment granted for specific modules/subjects or parts thereof based on the RPL evaluation that was done on an applicant.

1.8.6 **Examination session policy**

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Invigilation and duties of the invigilator. This is not for publication to students, but for invigilation staff. The examination administration should have a duty description sheet that must be available to all staff involved with invigilation.
- ii) Invigilation duties of lecturing staff. (Not for publication to students)
- iii) Control over access of candidates to the session, identification and eligibility to participate in the particular examination session.
- iv) Communication of the rules of conduct to candidates, application of the rules during the session, and measures that will be taken in the case of transgression of the rules. The student disciplinary code must include irregularities during examination sessions.
- v) Special needs for students with disabilities during examination sessions, e.g. extra time allowed for pre-approved cases.
- vi) Attendance control and control over the submission of scripts by candidates, and distribution of examination scripts to examiners.

1.8.7 **Policy on publishing of results**

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Where and when students will be able to access their results.
- ii) The current **best practice** is that results are released on the institution's web site as soon as the marks are approved and finalised. Students can then access the

web site under certain access control procedures, to obtain their marks. SMS technology is also increasingly used to inform students about their marks as soon as a mark becomes available. (Refer to focus area 4 on the actual processes and procedures).

- iii) Final dates for the publishing of all results after an examination period. State the policy on fairness to students that the results will be released to them well in time to enable them to participate in any supplementary examinations that were scheduled, or in time to plan their studies for the next academic year.
- iv) Distribution of hard copy reports of results that a student obtained.
- v) Protection of the rights of an individual student's result information.
- vi) Feedback to students regarding the framework used by examiners during the marking of the scripts.
- vii) Appeals against results. How and where students should lodge such appeals.
- viii) Application for a re-mark. How and where students must apply and the fee applicable, as well as the rules that apply for a re-mark.
- ix) Application by a student for insight into his / her marked script. Under which circumstances it will be allowed, the fixed period when this will be allowed, the supervision required and the fee applicable if any. Strict rules should apply to prevent debates between students and examiners regarding a mark awarded for a particular question in a paper.

1.9 Institutional policies and regulations for staff – Checklist

The following institutional policies and regulations are identified as a generally comprehensive, but not exhaustive list to be used by institutions as a **best practice** checklist. These policies and regulations are in respect of the internal operational aspects according to which academic staff and examiners, as well as examinations administration, should execute their responsibilities, and therefore should not necessarily be published in the yearbook/calendar of the institution. It must however still be in writing and accessible for all staff.

1.9.1 Examiner and moderator policy

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Responsibilities of examiners and moderators.
- ii) A standard 'duty sheet for examiners' should be handed to all examiners.
- iii) Appointments and approvals of appointments of examiners, external examiners and moderators. The administration and remuneration must be the responsibility of the Human Resources section and the Payroll office.
- iv) Pre-determined dates and locality for the submission of examination papers.
- v) Marking turn-around time.

- vi) Measures that will be instituted against examiners that do not keep to deadline dates as communicated.
- vii) Responsibilities of external examiners. A standard 'duty sheet for external examiners' should be handed to all appointed external examiners.
- viii) Responsibilities of moderators. A standard 'duty sheet for moderators' should be handed to all moderators.
- ix) Measures that will apply in the case of sickness or unavailability of an examiner during an examination.
- x) Use of examination assistants.

1.9.2 Examination question paper policy

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Formats of question papers and marking memoranda to be compiled by examiners.
- ii) Security of examination question papers during the process flow.
- iii) Moderation of question papers.
- iv) Production, printing and safekeeping of question papers until the official examination session.

1.9.3 Examination scripts policy

- i) Dealing with the printing of scripts and the format and layout thereof.
- ii) Dealing with blank and unused scripts.
- iii) Period of retention and disposal of marked scripts after the examination.

Note: Examination scripts remain the property of the institution.

1.9.4 Marking policy

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Process flow of scripts from examination venue to examiners and to external examiners or moderators, and back to examinations administration.
- ii) Indication of remarks made by the examiner on specific answers in the script.
- iii) Submission of module-, year marks or continuous assessment marks and dates.
- iv) Submission of examination marks and dates, as well as the calculation of final marks.

1.9.5 Policy on staff enrolled at the institution

This policy should address aspects such as:

- i) Securing examination papers from staff enrolled at the institution.
- ii) Declarations by staff regarding their enrolment and participation in examinations in order to ensure that they do not get insight into examination papers.
- iii) Declarations by staff involved with examinations regarding close family that will be writing examinations.

2

Focus area 2: Planning and preceding processes

2.1 Inputs to the institution's academic calendar

The Examination Administration department plays a crucial role in the planning of the academic calendar of the institution. It is therefore **best practice** that the Examination Administration department makes the necessary inputs in the annual planning and compilation of the academic calendar to ensure that the published dates for examinations and supplementary examinations are in accordance with the institutional policies and as agreed with all faculties and approved by the appropriate academic body.

2.2 Planning of the examination operational processes

In order to plan for the various processes that need to take place during the actual scheduled examinations as per the academic calendar, the following are **best practice** processes and procedures necessary for effective planning:

2.2.1 Registration process

The registration process has a major impact on the effectiveness of the examination process.

- i) It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department obtains all the relevant student registration statistics from the information system to plan the examinations process.
- ii) Student information, e.g. number of students per subject, etc. on the system must be validated against the existing parameters by running all the available validation reports to ensure that the examination planning is based on accurate data.
- iii) It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department provides students at registration with proper guidelines and requirements for their examinations at the end of the study period, e.g. identification requirements for entry to the examinations venue, minimum module / year mark requirements for examinations, etc.

- iv) The person/s responsible for the correctness and completeness of the academic structure on the system, normally faculty administration, should be sensitized on the impact of an incorrect structure on the Examinations Department.

2.2.2 It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department in cooperation with Faculty Administration communicate to all students how important it is that they ensure that they are registered correctly. Institutions should for this purpose allow a window period after registration for students to evaluate the correctness of their registration information. After this period they should not be allowed to change their subject registration information.

2.2.3 Due dates

As an essential part of the planning process, the examinations administration has to determine and communicate various due dates:

- i) Due dates must be set realistically for all parties involved. It may require that dates that are set, allows for a limited contingency, but there must for all events be an ultimate final date.
- ii) It is **best practice** to agree on dates for the submission of examination papers and submission of marks through representation of the Examination Administration Department on the academic staff bodies, such as faculties.
- iii) It is **best practice** for the Examination Administration department to send out reminders to parties involved at regular intervals before a particular due date.
- iv) Due dates should be determined in such a way that it makes provision for flexibility and for staggering of the work.
- v) Meeting of due dates must be monitored by Examinations Administration and where necessary it should be enforced by the institution's senior management. A member of the executive management must be appointed as sponsor of the process and should also have final accountability for the examinations function.

2.2.4 Venue planning

It is **best practice** that Examinations Administration obtains comprehensive information on examination venues that includes availability, location, capacity, seating, security arrangements, and provision for students with disabilities, etc. to plan for the examination.

2.2.5 Publication of results

It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department, in accordance with the planning, communicates to students how and when the results will be released and published. Student awareness of this process will eliminate a major amount of unnecessary enquiries.

2.3 Examination timetable

The Examination Administration department is responsible to plan and compile the examination timetable.

- 2.3.1 It is **best practice** to ensure that the latest available software solution is used to optimise the timetable regarding spread of subjects, even spread of student numbers, avoidance of any clashes, use of examination venues, etc.
- 2.3.2 It is **best practice** to compile a provisional examination timetable before the registration of students for a specific study period. The purpose is to assist in the planning of the final examination timetable in that clashes are already flagged during registration. The provisional timetable can be based on changes in the academic structure i.e. qualifications and subjects, for the next academic period, and on the projections of student numbers from year on to year.
- 2.3.3 It is **best practice** that a draft of the examination timetable is circulated to all faculties and lecturing staff members for comments and inputs, before the final examination timetable is published. In essence it must be through a process of collaboration and communication between the faculties and the Examinations Administration department that the examination timetable is finalised.
- 2.3.4 It is **best practice** to assign one staff member in Examinations Administration to take ownership of the centralised timetable.
- 2.3.5 Examination administration must ensure that the data that is used to schedule the timetable is accurate and complete, e.g. papers per subject, duration of each paper, type / format of assessment, available times for sessions, availability of venues (see par.2.2.4 above), etc.
- 2.3.6 Invigilators must be assigned for each of the sessions scheduled in the timetable. It is **best practice** that once the allocation of invigilators is done, that the examination administration department distributes the invigilation roster to all members of staff involved, both full-time (internal invigilators) and part-time (external invigilators).
- 2.3.7 In the final instance it is **best practice** that the examination timetable is accessible to all students and staff, but due to the flexible nature of the examination timetable, it is **best practice** to keep an updated version on the intranet or website of the institution.

2.4 Planning of the logistics

2.4.1 Workflow planning

- i) It is **best practice** for the examinations department to compile a chronological step-by-step workflow document that can serve as a checklist during the examinations to ensure that all aspects for an examination were covered.
- ii) The workflow document should cover aspects such as the timetable, submission of examination papers and memoranda, printing of examination papers, provision of answer books and other special materials required, attendance slips, venue booking, invigilators assigned, duties specified, etc.

2.4.2 It is deemed **best practice** that there must be the necessary security measures in place in respect of the typing of the examination papers by the lecturer/examiner, proofreading of examination papers, the format of submission of the papers to the examination administration (electronically and/or hard copy) and the actual duplication/copying of the papers. The measures must ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken in the process to prevent the leaking of a paper including the following:

- i) Examiners and Examination Administrators should sign an oath of security.
- ii) Examination papers should only be printed in a secured venue within the Examination Administration, and such printers should have secured passwords.

2.4.3 Documentation required

The planning should include the following:

- i) Number of answer books
- ii) Attendance slips (For matching with student identification)
- iii) Invigilation instructions
- iv) Incident reports
- v) Invigilation reports
- vi) Special instructions
- vii) Examination rules and regulations (should also be printed in the answer books)

2.4.4 Venues and seating (Refer par. 2.2.4 above)

- i) Identify suitable examination venues and limit the venues as far as possible
- ii) The less venues used, the fewer invigilators required.
- iii) **Note:** It is deemed **best practice** to have a pre-determined number of invigilators required per number of candidates, e.g. minimum of 2 invigilators, one male and one female, for the first 50 candidates, and one for every further 50 candidates
- iv) Ideally examination venues to be used should have loose seating in order that invigilators can move in between rows, and it is further recommended to use rooms without a sloped floor. When planning building projects, these requirements should be considered.

- v) Where possible, seat numbers should be allocated to students for ease of reference in the case where it is required to locate an individual student, but if this is not possible, at least rows should be allocated per subject/group.

2.4.5 Large groups

In some instances there are a large number of students enrolling for a particular subject. It is deemed **best practice** that these students are allocated to groups and assigned to more than one lecturer/examiner in order to alleviate the marking duties. It is then also easier for the examinations planning to allocate such groups to different examination venues.

2.4.6 Invigilation

- i) The Examination Administration department is responsible for appointment of external part-time invigilators.
- ii) The Examination Administration department must ensure that all persons acting as invigilators meet the criteria to act in this capacity, and that they are fully updated on their responsibilities and that they know the invigilator's manual.
- iii) Where more invigilators are required from the lecturing staff, the Examinations Administration department must request the faculties to nominate lecturers for invigilation duty.
- iv) Apart from the invigilation duties referred to in the previous point, it must be the policy, according to **best practice**, that the examiner (subject lecturer) is present together with the invigilators, for the first 30 minutes of the session where his/her examination is conducted. The examiner must then remain available within reasonable reach to be contacted for in case there is a substantial problem in the paper.

2.5 Communication

Effective communication is crucial by the Examinations Administration department with all parties involved.

- 2.5.1 It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department clearly defines the structure and method of all channels of communication that will be followed both with internal parties, e.g. staff and students, and external parties, e.g. external examiners.

- 2.5.2 Effective communication ensures effective management, and therefore it is **best practice** that the management of the Examinations Administration department takes responsibility and accountability for continuous effective communication with all parties concerned, including communicating to the executive management of the institution, and to the faculties.

2.5.3 Communication can only be effective if it reaches its target audience, and it is therefore **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department exhausts all possible media of communication available, which include the institutional calendar/yearbook, faculty and course brochures, the publishing of information on notice boards, the student newspaper, etc. Electronic media as a means of communicating is however essential and to a large extent it is also more cost effective. The institutional website, intranet, bulk e-mailing, SMS-messaging, etc. should be used extensively.

2.6 Recording of full period / continuous assessment (ca) marks

Preceding the formal examination, there are various assessment processes during the semester/year that results in a full period mark awarded to a student that carries a certain weight towards the final mark. (Refer to list of terminologies)

2.6.1 It is **best practice** that the ownership of full period marks that students obtain during the semester/year for the various continuous assessment interventions vests with the subject lecturer, including the capturing of such marks on a central student administration information system. Capturing of full period marks on a central system, which eventually combines with an examination mark that is also captured on the system, reduces the chance of human error in the calculation of the final mark.

2.6.2 It is not only **best practice**, but also fair to students that they know what the full period mark is they obtained before the examination of the module. It is therefore necessary that the Examinations Administration department set timeframes approved by the appropriate academic body for the capturing and release of full period marks (semester/year marks) by academic staff before the examination.

2.6.3 It is **best practice** that all queries from students relating to the full period marks are dealt with at the particular academic department.

2.7 Appointment of examiners and moderators

(Refer par. 1.8.1 above regarding the 'Examiner policy')

2.7.1 The appointment of a lecturer for a particular module normally also entails that he/she will fulfil the duties of examiner for that module, unless otherwise stipulated in the job description. Where it is applicable in terms of the institutional policies to

appoint external examiners and moderators, it is **best practice** that such persons are nominated by the Head of Department for approval by the appropriate academic body.

- 2.7.2 The Head of Department should review appointments of external examiners and moderators as per the institutional policy.
- 2.7.3 It is **best practice** that persons appointed as examiners and moderators receive a document that clearly defines their duties and responsibilities, as well as timelines and process flow of examination papers and marked scripts.
- 2.7.4 Where the appointees mentioned in 2.7.3 are remunerated for their services, it is **best practice** that such appointments, claims and payments are the responsibility of the Human Resources and Payroll sections.

2.8 Setting, submission and administration of examination papers

- 2.8.1 It is general an accepted practice that the examination paper is set by the examiner. It is furthermore **best practice** that the examiner takes ownership for the academic standard, correctness (without typo errors), security thereof (prevent leaks to students), and the submission of the paper for copying to the Examinations Administration department on or before the set deadlines and in accordance with the institutional policies.
- 2.8.2 It is **best practice** that a paper receives a control form when the examiner submits it to the Examinations Administration department. Such a control form makes provision for information required, e.g. date of examination, venue, and number of candidates, external examiner or moderator where applicable, etc. It furthermore contains a sequential workflow providing for sign-off by every person that will be handling the paper before the examination, and the answer books/scripts after the examination.
- 2.8.3 The Examinations Administration department is responsible for the submission controls, copying/printing of the papers, security and safe-keeping, and delivery to the examination venue. Control over the submission entails that, where an examination paper is not submitted on the due date, there is a follow-up procedure in place. All such incidents should be escalated to the pre-determined authority that deals with it.

2.9 Post-graduate procedure

In general, institutions will have a separate policy and supporting procedures that govern the assessments of post-graduate qualifications, i.e. masters and doctorate degrees. Due to the substantial differences in practices and procedures from institution to institution based on various factors such as the size of the institution, numbers of post-graduate students, degree of centralization or decentralization, etc. it was decided to exclude post-graduate qualifications from the under-graduate examinations administration best practice.

In 2012 a small voluntary workgroup of ExAF was established to formulate best practice for assessments of post-graduate qualifications, but again this workgroup could not reach consensus on what best practice should be due to the factors mentioned above.

It was therefore decided to merely include the administrative procedures identified by the workgroup that institutions should consider when formulating policies, processes and procedures for post-graduate examination administration. These have been included in this publication as **Annexure A** on page 27.

3 Focus area 3: The Examination process

Introduction

To a large extent, the preceding focus area of planning and processes that precede the examinations, would have covered the procedure during the examinations. The management principle that applies here is sound and states that *'if the planning was done very thoroughly, the execution will run smoothly'*. The approach in compiling this document is therefore not to repeat best practice procedures that have already been addressed in the preceding two focus areas, but to rather just cross reference to the paragraphs applicable.

3.1 Copying of papers and security

(Refer par. 1.9.2 and 2.8)

- 3.1.1 The copying of the examination papers should take place in a secured environment within the Examinations Administration department and must be done by staff with proper security clearance. Nothing should be taken for granted and special responsibilities must be clearly assigned to individuals. Papers should be kept in a secure safe after copying.
- 3.1.2 It is **best practice** to limit the movement and handling of papers to a minimum.
- 3.1.3 The submission of examination papers to the Examinations Administration department by the examiners should be done electronically to limit movement of hard copies. It is however **best practice** that this process should be password protected.
- 3.1.4 It is **best practice** for the institution to perform random audits of the security measures pertaining to the setting and copying of examination papers.

3.2 Invigilators and their role in an examination session

(Refer par. 1.8.6 and 2.4.6)

- 3.2.1 Invigilators should be executing their duties as specified in an 'Invigilator's manual'. The Examinations Administration department should keep a record of incidents that are linked to invigilators, and where it becomes necessary, conduct an investigation.

- 3.2.2 It is deemed **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department appoints one of its staff members to make up a sealable container for each examination session according to a checklist to ensure that the correct papers, number of answer books, other examination material, session documentation, etc. are ready for collection by the chief invigilator.
- 3.2.3 The chief invigilator's duties should also include a pre-check of the venue before the candidates are allowed access. These should include aspects such as cleanliness of the venue, seating arrangements, security aspects, special arrangements for disabled candidates, etc.
- 3.2.4 The Chief Invigilator that oversees the examination session must complete an invigilator's report for the session that must be submitted to the Examinations Administration department for control purposes and follow up where necessary.

3.3 Examination fraud

(Refer par. 1.8.6)

- 3.3.1 The rules and regulations for examinations are communicated to students through various channels. (Refer par. 2.5), but it should also be published in the official examination answer book in order for candidates to acknowledge it by their signature. (Refer. par. 1.6.2 and par. 2.4.3. vii).
- 3.3.2 The disciplinary code for students which is widely published, should contain the disciplinary steps to be followed and actions that can be taken against a candidate who transgressed the examination rules or who has committed an act of examination fraud.
- 3.3.3 Where an invigilator encounters an incident of fraud or possible fraud during an examination session, the steps to be followed must be clearly specified in the 'Invigilator's manual'.
- 3.3.4 It is **best practice** that invigilators are instructed that where the evidence is clear that an incident of fraud or transgression of the rules has taken place, immediate action is taken in accordance with the governing rules. Care should however be taken not to disturb other candidates through these actions.
- 3.3.5 The student disciplinary code should describe the step-by-step process that will be followed when the institution conducts a disciplinary hearing, for, in this case, examination fraud. It is always **best practice** that this process is in accordance with sound institutional governance.

3.4 Admission to examinations

(Refer par. 1.8.6)

- 3.4.1 Rules for academic admission to allow a student to write a particular examination, are determined by the faculties and/or departments, and may differ from qualification to qualification, e.g. in a course where there is an extensive practical or laboratory component which is assessed during the study period, and for which the student must obtain a certain minimum full period mark to meet the competency level required, before s/he may sit the examination. It is **best practice** that these rules are accessible for all students, and well communicated to students at the commencement of a course.
- 3.4.2 In the case where there are general rules for the institution regarding the academic admission to an examination, the Examinations Administration must ensure that it is communicated to all students according to the requirements in par. 2.5 above.
- 3.4.3 It is **best practice** that rules for academic admission to an examination, where these exist, are applied consistently and that there should be no exceptions allowed.
- 3.4.4 It is **best practice** that the invigilators receive a list of candidates that are eligible to write a particular examination in a particular session and venue, for control purposes. Candidates that are referred to in point 3.4.1 above, who did not meet the academic admission, should not appear on the attendance list. In the case where a student does not appear on the examination attendance list, but pitches for the examination, and there should be a dispute regarding the academic admission, there must be a clear procedure on how the invigilator must deal with such a dispute in a swift and efficient manner. The principle should be that the student should always receive the benefit of the doubt, if the dispute cannot be resolved quickly, i.e. the student should be allowed to write the examination and resolve the dispute afterwards.
- 3.4.5 The physical entrance to the examination venue must be controlled. As stipulated in point 3.4.4 above, candidates must be able to identify themselves with preferably their student identification card (alternatively personal identification card), and their attendance slips must be controlled against the attendance list. Under no circumstances should a student be allowed entrance to the examination room without positive identification.

3.5 Communication during the examination process

The examination timetable (refer. Par 2.3) is undoubtedly the most important instrument of communication on examinations to all parties concerned. In essence the timetable precedes the examination process, and if the timetable is accurate, containing sufficient detail and is accessible to all parties concerned, communication during the examination period will be limited. The points of communication during the examinations have largely been covered, but the following points need to be highlighted:

- 3.5.1 All candidates must take notice of, and acknowledge the rules and regulations of the examinations (Ref. par.3.3.1) in the examination session.
- 3.5.2 Invigilators must communicate the process that will be followed should there be a case of transgression of the rules or examination fraud. (Ref. par. 3.3)

3.6 Distribution of scripts

(Refer par. 1.8.6. vi)

- 3.6.1 It is **best practice** that the examination answer books or scripts are checked against the attendance slips to ensure that all candidates have indeed submitted their scripts before leaving the venue.
- 3.6.2 It is furthermore **best practice** that the scripts are sealed in some or other format, and linked to a control form that should indicate the distribution of the scripts to the examiner, and external examiner or moderator, where applicable. The control form must make provision for sign-off by the different parties involved with the handing out of the scripts to the examiner for marking, and further distribution where applicable. The approach must however be to distribute the scripts for marking to the examiner as soon as possible after the examination.
- 3.6.3 Where scripts are held at the Examinations Administration department, they should be stored in a safe or strong room, until the examiner collects them.

4 Focus area 4: The results process & study records administration

4.1 Submission of marked scripts and examination marks

(Refer par. 1.9.1 and 1.9.4)

- 4.1.1 Marked scripts must be held for the period as specified in the institutional policy in this regard. The Examinations Administration department should be responsible for the control over marked scripts and the storage and traceable access system. In the case of a decentralised structure, the departmental administration will take on this responsibility.
- 4.1.2 Together with the scripts, the examiner must submit the marks list that indicates the marks that candidates obtained in the examination to the Examinations department. As the marks list was generated from the system, the examiner must report all cases of students who wrote the examination, but do not appear on the marks list, to either the faculty administration or central registration. It clearly indicates a problem at registration.
- 4.1.3 The list should be double checked against the mark on the script before capturing it on the system. It is **best practice** that the mark is captured on the student information system, nearest to the point of generation, i.e. the examiner should have access to the student information system to capture the marks. The process can be made even easier for examiners if the student information system is linked to the institutional website. Through password control access on the website, examiners can capture the mark directly on the student's record.
- 4.1.4 It is **best practice** that there is a secondary capturing of the examination marks on the student information system, i.e. the marks are all captured again at either the faculty / departmental administration or the Examinations Administration department, and any difference between the primary captured mark and the secondary captured mark is followed up to the origin, i.e. the script.
- 4.1.5 It is **best practice** that the examiner (lecturer) takes the ownership of the marks, and therefore also the capturing of the marks on the information system. The HoD/ Dean is responsible for the control over the marks submitted by examiners from that Department/Faculty.

4.2 External examination and moderation

(Refer to par. 1.9.1; 1.9.4; 2.7)

- 4.2.1 Due to the extreme time pressures for external examiners and moderators to fulfil their duties after the examiner has marked the scripts, it is **best practice** to establish the shortest and least time consuming routes for the marked scripts, and other applicable documentation, that must go to the external examiner and/or moderator.
- 4.2.2 It is **best practice** that any changes to marks by the external examiner or the moderator should not be captured by the examiner, but rather at the Examinations Administration department with the feedback report from the external examiner or moderator as evidence.

4.3 Final approval of marks

- 4.3.1 The final approval of marks before releasing it to students or publication thereof remains an academic process exercised within the faculties through the mechanisms of the Faculty Boards and/or its Examination Committee or other appropriate academic body.
- 4.3.2 It is **best practice** that the lists with marks that serve at the Faculty/Departmental Examination Committees are produced directly from the student information system by the faculty administration.
- 4.3.3 It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department put the necessary access control on the information system before the process of capturing of marks. The objective is to give, for example, examiners a cut-off date to get their marks captured, and once these marks are captured, that it is blocked for further changes unless approved by a higher authority.

4.4 Publication of marks

(Refer par. 1.8.7)

- 4.4.1 Par. 1.8.7 states that the **best practice** is that institutions are increasingly moving away from the traditional pre-determined date of publishing results with marks lists being put up on the notice boards on campus. In stead marks are released electronically on the institution's website or intranet once finalised, and students can then access the website using a password control to obtain their marks. This media enables institutions to release marks as and when they become available.

- 4.4.2 Where institutions release the marks as and when they become available, there must still be a final date agreed and approved by the appropriate academic body, when all marks must be published. It is **best practice** and also fair practice to set and communicate such a date that it leaves students sufficient time to prepare for and participate in any supplementary or special examinations, and also to enable them to plan their studies for the next academic period.
- 4.4.3 Using the website as media to publish marks, could eliminate the sending of hard copy reports by post to students, provided that a student is able to print a hard copy of his/her marks report or study record from the website. It is also a lot more cost effective. The fact remains however, that it is **best practice** to provide students with an official hard copy of the study record and marks obtained on request, to enable them to apply for bursaries or employment.
- 4.4.4 It is **best practice** to ensure that students are fully informed on the policies and procedures regarding queries on marks, appeals against marks and application for a re-mark. Appeals and or applications for re-marks are administrative procedures according to published policy, and should be dealt with by the Examinations Administration department.
- 4.4.5 It is **best practice** that the student must go to the faculty/department first to query a mark, provided that it is the arrangement that examination scripts are kept at the faculty for a specified period of time after the examination, as the script is the source document to be referred to if there is a query.
- 4.4.6 It is **best practice** that all marks that are published, have a results code key to clearly indicate to the student the outcome of his/her effort, e.g. pass, fail, repeat, supplementary examination, etc. Abbreviated result codes must have an accompanying key on the study record or marks report.
- 4.4.7 For the procedure on the viewing/perusal of his/her script by a student, refer to par. 1.8.7 viii).

4.5 Supplementary and special examinations

(Refer par. 1.8.2 and 1.8.3)

- 4.5.1 In addition to what is formulated in the above referred policies, it is **best practice** to schedule all supplementary and special examinations to commence directly after the marks for the main examination have been released.

- 4.5.2 It is **best practice** that the marks of these examinations are released before the commencement of registration for the next semester/year.

4.6 Role of the Examinations Administration department in the Graduation

The Examinations Administration department are the *custodians* of the marks and study records, whereas the examiners and the faculties take *ownership* for the correctness and accuracy of the data captured on the system.

- 4.6.1 It is **best practice** that there are mechanisms in place that indicate at the beginning of the study period to Examinations Administration and faculties/departments when a student is in the final study year of the qualification, and a possible graduation candidate.
- 4.6.2 After the finalisation and release of marks, the Examinations Administration department generates a list from the system of graduation candidates who have met the requirements for the qualification as specified in the student information system. It is then **best practice** that there is a secure electronic process of verification of the list of graduates by the faculties/departments who are responsible for the accuracy of the data on the system.
- 4.6.3 It is **best practice** that the process mentioned above have sufficient controls in place for auditing purposes.
- 4.6.4 This list is the source used to generate the graduation certificates and to compile the graduation program. The Examinations Administration department plays an important role in the graduation process in the finalisation of the grandaunts list, list of all invitees, guest list, ceremony program, venue, seating allocation, issuing of the degree certificates, etc. Larger institutions have a separate graduation section or unit that takes responsibility for all the arrangements pertaining to the graduation ceremony.
- 4.6.5 It is **best practice** that the Examinations Administration department takes the responsibility for the printing of the graduation certificates on authenticated certificate forms and to record all certificates that are to be issued at the graduation, in a central register in both electronic and hard copy format, in accordance with the internal control measures to be in place for auditing purposes.

A Annexure A

Guidelines for the administration of Post-graduate Assessments

Referring to par. 2.9, the following processes and procedures are merely guidelines to institutions for the administration of post-graduate assessments, i.e. dissertations and theses, and not formulated as best practice due to the diverse practices followed by institutions as a result of factors mentioned.

These guidelines were compiled from the inputs of a small ExAF workgroup as well as from inputs by other members that supplied the workgroup with their institutional policies and procedures on post-graduate assessments. These guidelines focus on the administrative procedures whereas the post-graduate policies and procedures of institutions that were received as inputs largely focus on the academic policy, rules and regulations that govern the post-graduate qualifications, i.e. masters and doctorate degrees.

1. Objective

The objective of this annexure is to provide administrative guidelines that are aligned to the institution's policies and regulations for postgraduate assessments. It requires a continuous cycle of quality assurance that entails planning, action, evaluation of, and improvement on administrative procedures of post-graduate assessments.

2. Organisational structure

- 2.1 The reporting structure in the institution on postgraduate assessments should be documented and clear to all parties involved, and the functions and responsibilities of each position and each official body, e.g. the Faculty Research Committee, should be properly defined and communicated.
- 2.2 Smaller universities with a limited number of masters and doctoral students, where the administration of these postgraduate studies is centralised, should appoint a postgraduate Examinations Administration officer within the centralised examinations department for coordinating the processes and procedures across all faculties.
- 2.3 Where there are a large number of postgraduate students in one faculty, it could be justified to create the position of a postgraduate examinations officer to administer

all the assessment processes related to masters and doctoral studies in a uniform manner. This position should then report to the Dean of the faculty and fulfil the secretarial function for the Faculty Research Committee.

3. Responsibilities of a postgraduate examinations office

Referring to par. 2 above, whether it is a centralised office or decentralised to faculty, the following should apply:

- 3.1 The postgraduate examinations office must make input to, and maintain the policies and subsequent regulations that govern the postgraduate examinations of the institution.
- 3.2 The general procedures for the assessment and/or examination on post-graduate level must be clearly communicated to all parties concerned through the communication media already mentioned in par. 2.5.
- 3.3 The postgraduate examinations office should be responsible for:
 - The administration of the appointments and remuneration of the approved external examiners in cooperation with the Human Resources section and the Payroll office.
 - Distribution of thesis and dissertations to the internal and external examiners,
 - Following up with the examiners to ensure that reports are submitted on time,
 - Distribution of the examiners' reports to the academic departments and administering the marks that must be submitted to the Examinations Committee of the faculty/institution.
- 3.4 The postgraduate examinations office should be the custodian of the examination procedures and regulations and should ensure that all parties involved adhere to the procedures. Where there is a breach in the process, the postgraduate examinations office must report it to the appropriate authorities.
- 3.5 The postgraduate examinations office should ensure that when a thesis/dissertation is sent to the examiners, that it is accompanied by a letter of consent from the supervisor/promoter that the work may be examined, together with the assessment instructions and due date/s for return of the examiners' reports.
- 3.6 In the case where doctoral candidates need to attend an oral with an assessment panel of examiners, it is the responsibility of the postgraduate examinations office to arrange the interviews with all the individuals involved.

4. Documentation flow

- 4.1 The postgraduate examinations office should be responsible for the collection and acknowledgement of receipt of the thesis/dissertations from the external examiners, and that the confidentiality of the reports and results are maintained until the finalisation of the mark by an examining panel or other appointed body within the university, before any marks or results are released.
- 4.2 There should be a documented process flow of the reports from the examiners and the supervisor / promoter, and that the postgraduate examinations office keeps a log of the flow of the documents.

5. Recording and release of results

- 5.1 The postgraduate examinations office should verify that the release of final and approved marks to the candidates is according to the prescribed procedures, that the marks were recorded on the information system and to control that all the information required by the graduation office for the inclusion into the graduation program, is provided in time.
- 5.2 There should exist clear and documented procedures where there are substantial differences in the marks awarded by the examiners, and if consensus cannot be reached between them, how to deal with the dispute.



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