

# DIVISION OF HUMANITIES

## Policy on

### EXAMINATION AND EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT AT 400-LEVEL

#### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This document outlines procedures and guidelines for the examination, external assessment and confirmation of grades for student work at 400-level in the Division of Humanities.
- 1.2 Humanities Division policy on examination and assessment at 400-level is guided by the University's *Senate Policy on Assessment of Student Performance, Monitoring and Moderation Procedures* (<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/assessmentpolicy/otago006166.html>), in particular clause 10.7, which states:

*10.7 External assessing should normally be required for the papers (including research projects) that contribute to final year Honours, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters programmes. Exceptions should be approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and reported to the Divisional Board; in these cases, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor concerned should report annually to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) on the systems in place to confirm that standards are being maintained, and any outcomes. The main responsibility of external assessors should be to check the standards applied in grading students, particularly at the pass-fail and B+/A- boundaries. This requires close scrutiny of students judged by internal examiners to be at these boundaries. Each assessor's report should be sent, via the Head of Department or Programme Director, to the appropriate Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who will discuss any issues or recommendations with the head of department concerned. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors shall also report annually to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) on the external assessing exercise and, in particular, on the outcome of any recommendations of a general nature made by external assessors.*

- 1.3 The primary purpose of external assessment is to monitor grades awarded for student performance at Otago to ensure that Otago honours and postgraduate degrees are not qualitatively inferior to those awarded by other universities.

#### 2 Scope and Definitions

- 2.1 This policy applies to all work that counts towards the final grades of students taking 400-level papers in Humanities subjects for an Honours degree, Postgraduate Diploma or any other postgraduate qualification.
- 2.2 *Examination* refers to the evaluation of student work through course-work, research projects, research essays, dissertations, performance and formal examinations. Examination is normally conducted internally by the Departments involved in teaching and/or supervising the student work. All

marks and grades determined by examination are *provisional* until moderated by external assessment and subsequently confirmed by the Head of Department.

- 2.3 *External assessment* refers to the monitoring of provisional marks and grades by one or more assessor from outside the University of Otago, to confirm that the standards applied are appropriate and not qualitatively different from those in other universities. External assessors may make recommendations concerning grades for individual students or groups of students, as well as more general comments concerning examination processes and standards.
- 2.4 *Confirmation of grades* refers to the determination of final marks and grades in the light of comments and recommendations from external assessors. Grades are normally confirmed by the Head of Department in consultation with examiners.
- 2.5 A *major research exercise* is any single component of student work that involves supervised individual research or performance and which counts for 25% or more of the points requirements for one full-time year of 400-level study. These are typically dissertations (490), but in some subjects may be research essays (480) or other specified research papers.

### **3 Submission dates and extensions**

- 3.1 The final date for submission of any dissertation or research exercise prescribed for fourth stage honours is specified in the degree regulations as “1 June or 1 November of the semester in which the fourth stage is completed”. Any extension beyond this date requires approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (delegated to the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies). Departments may set their own deadlines in advance of the final submission date.
- 3.2 Final dates for the submission of internally assessed work will be set by Departments to allow sufficient time for both examination and external assessment prior to confirmation of grades. Heads of Department may approve extensions to Departmental deadlines up to the final date for submission of grades to Student Records. Extensions beyond this date require approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (delegated to the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies).
- 3.3 Students must be advised at the commencement of their 400-level courses of all submission dates and Departmental procedures concerning extensions.
- 3.4 Students must be advised that marks and grades awarded for internally assessed work and for examinations completed at the end of Semester 1 are provisional until moderated by external assessment and subsequently confirmed.

### **4 Examination Procedures**

- 4.1 All 400-level papers other than major research exercises (including research exercises which count for less than 25% of one full EFTS – see 2.5) shall be examined by standard University procedures, which normally involves the

academic staff member(s) teaching the paper acting as examiner(s).  
Departments may include an internal moderation process as part of their examination procedure.

- 4.2 All major research exercises shall be examined by two examiners, one of whom may be the supervisor of the student's research. Examiners may be members of academic staff of the student's home department, or from another Department, or another institution.
  - 4.2.1. Where a student's supervisor is not an examiner, they may submit a report on the student's work for the examiners and external assessor to consider.
  - 4.2.2. Where there is significant disagreement between examiners concerning the provisional grade for a major research exercise the Head of Department may seek the opinion of a third examiner and/or the advice of the external assessor before determining the grade.

## 5 External Assessment Procedures

- 5.1 External Assessors are nominated and approved by Heads of Department. They must have qualifications and experience that enable them to fulfill the primary purpose of external assessment (see 1.3). In cases where External Assessors are not members of a university community or higher education provider, approval is required by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities. Where a Department's 400-level teaching covers a range of disciplines, a number of external assessors may be appointed. Where several members of staff at one institution are assessors, one senior member may serve as the nominated external assessor.
- 5.2 The range and quantity of 400-level student work that is made available for external assessment shall be determined by the Head of Department in the light of Senate policy (see 1.2) and the following guidelines.
  - 5.2.1. All major research exercises shall be made available for external assessment.
  - 5.2.2. For each taught paper or smaller research exercise the *minimum requirement* is that work by a selection of students shall be made available for external assessment, and that this must include work by any students with provisional grades at the pass/fail and B+/A- boundaries. The work made available for external assessment should normally include all or most components, whether assessed internally or by final examination, that contribute 20% or more to the final grade.
- 5.3 In addition to the student work made available to the external assessor the following information shall also be made available.
  - 5.3.1. For each major research exercise:
    - all reports by examiners (and by supervisors who are not examiners)
    - the recommended provisional grades
    - an *External Assessment (Dissertation) Cover Sheet* detailing the assessment requested (available from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/>).

- 5.3.2. For each taught paper or smaller research exercise:
- an overview of course content and requirements (e.g. course outline)
  - specific details of requirements for each piece of work being assessed (e.g. essay topics, exam papers)
  - a summary of provisional marks/grades for all students taking the paper
  - an *External Assessment (Paper) Cover Sheet* detailing the assessment requested (available from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/>).
- 5.4 External assessors are not required to undertake detailed examination of individual student work. Their role is to monitor the provisional marks and grades awarded by internal examiners, and confirm that the standards applied are appropriate and not qualitatively different from those in other universities. In undertaking their assessment they may consult with colleagues in their own institution.
- 5.5 External assessors may make recommendations concerning grades for individual students or groups of students, as well as more general comments concerning examination processes and standards.
- 5.6 Guidelines to assist External Assessors in their task are available from the Humanities Division (<http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/>).

## **6 Reporting**

- 6.1 External assessors are required to make a brief report to the Head of Department concerning the work that they have assessed and, if appropriate, general matters concerning examination processes and standards. External assessors may complete the *External Assessment Cover Sheets* and submit these as their report, and/or may provide an additional report. Where there are serious matters of concern external assessors may make a confidential report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities.
- 6.2 At the completion of the examination process, reports by External Assessors shall be collated by the Head of Department and submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities, who is required to report annually to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) on the external assessment exercise.

## **7 Exceptions and Variations**

- 7.1 The requirement to undertake external assessment at 400-level is a Senate policy, and any exceptions to it require Senate approval.
- 7.2 The specific procedures by which external assessment at 400-level is carried out in the Division of Humanities, as outlined in this policy, may be varied, in exceptional circumstances, by approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities (delegated to the Associate Dean Academic).

Approved by Humanities Divisional Board  
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