

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO  
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES

## Guidelines for External Assessors of 400-level Student Work

As part of its quality assurance procedures, the University of Otago requires that papers at final year honours and postgraduate level should be moderated by external assessors. The following guidelines set out what is expected of an external assessor and outline the general procedures that are followed.

### **Role**

The primary purpose of external assessment is to monitor grades awarded for student performance to ensure that Otago honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas are not qualitatively inferior to those awarded by other Universities. The main responsibility of an external assessor is to check the standards applied in grading students, particularly at the pass-fail and B+/A- boundaries.

External assessors are not required to undertake detailed examination of individual student work. This is undertaken by the staff member(s) involved in teaching and supervising the students. The external assessors role is to moderate the examination by monitoring the provisional marks and grades awarded by internal examiners, and confirming that the standards applied are appropriate. In undertaking their assessment they may consult with colleagues in their own institution.

External assessors are required to provide a brief report on each set of student work that they assess. This may include recommendations concerning grades for individual students or groups of students, as well as more general comments concerning examination processes and standards. Cover sheets for each set of assessable work are provided to facilitate reporting.

### **What work is assessed?**

The range and quantity of 400-level student work that is made available for external assessment is determined by the Head of Department in the light of the following guidelines.

- All *major research exercises* (dissertations, research essays, projects and performances that count for 25% or more of the points requirements for a full-time year of study) must be externally assessed.
- 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 that contribute 20% or more to the final grade, whether assessed internally or by final examination.

In addition to the student work, the following information is also made available.

- All reports on major research exercises by examiners and the recommended provisional grades.
- 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.

## **Reporting**

External assessors are required to provide a brief report on each set of student work that they assess. For each set of work a cover sheet will be provided with a checklist of assessments requested along with space for the assessor to make a brief report. If required, additional sheets may be appended. Where an assessor wishes to comment on general matters, rather than a specific set of work, they may make an additional report to the Head of Department. Where there are serious matters of concern external assessors may make a confidential report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Humanities.

At the completion of the examination process, reports by external assessors are 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) on the external assessing exercise.

## **Examiners Meetings**

External assessor's are sometimes required to attend a Departmental examiners meeting at which the examination and assessment of 400-level student work will be discussed and results finalised. Where appropriate, an external assessor may finalise their report(s) after discussion at the examiners meeting. Arrangements for external assessors to attend examiners meetings are made by the Head of Department.