

## Oral Examinations and Interviews

1. Oral examinations are where the Examiners ask a student questions relating to the student's programme of study, the answers to which can influence a student's overall grade for a course or programme. There are two types of oral examination: compulsory and discretionary.
2. Oral examinations, where held, must take place within the published dates of term<sup>1</sup> and must be conducted by at least two (and no more than three) Examiners: normally, one External Examiner and one (or two) internal examiner(s).
3. An External Examiner may request to interview students, either individually or in a group, in the absence of any internal examiners in order to allow the External Examiner to discharge his/her responsibilities (paragraph 9 below refers).

### **Compulsory oral examinations**

4. Where an oral examination is to be a compulsory component of the assessment for a course or programme that all candidates would be expected to take, with the marks contributing a stated proportion of the overall result for a course or programme, the prior permission of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) must be obtained (normally via the relevant Course or Programme proposal form).
5. Schools must make the following explicit to students in Course or Programme Handbooks in regard to compulsory oral examinations:-
  - the percentage contribution of the oral examination to the overall course or programme grade and result;
  - the timing of the oral examination;
  - the range of material that could be covered in the oral examination;
  - the criteria for the award of grades for the oral examination.

### **Discretionary oral examinations**

6. If Schools, exceptionally, want the right to hold discretionary oral examinations for some candidates only, details for the selection of candidates and the purpose of the examination must be submitted to the QAC, as part of the process for approving the assessment arrangements for courses and programmes.
7. Heads of School should clarify with External Examiners, on their appointment, whether or not they might wish to invite some candidates to attend a discretionary oral examination, subject to paragraph 2 above. Where discretionary oral examinations are requested, Heads of School should agree the principles for the selection of such candidates, including whether a candidate may request an oral examination, and the purpose of the examination with the External Examiner: these should be submitted to the QAC for approval and, if approved, they should be made explicit to students via Course/School Handbooks.

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<sup>1</sup> For postgraduate taught programmes, oral examinations should be held by the end of week 50 of the programme.

8. Under no circumstances shall the outcome of a discretionary oral examination be used to lower a grade or result that has been provisionally awarded to a candidate prior to such an examination: i.e. candidates can only benefit from a discretionary oral examination. Students invited to attend a discretionary oral examination should be informed of the purpose of the examination and that their provisional mark would become their confirmed mark if they declined to attend a discretionary oral examination.

### **Interviews**

9. External Examiners, in addition to participating in the assessment process, are required to report on the academic standards of student performance and the University's awards. In order to fulfil these responsibilities, an External Examiner may invite students, either individually or as a group, to attend for an interview (paragraph 3 refers). An interview with an individual student is likely to be requested where an External Examiner wishes to ask a student questions on their programme in order to judge whether the standard of the award that was to be made to the student (which had been determined prior to the interview and could not be altered as a consequence of the interview) was appropriate. Interviews with groups of students are likely to be where the External Examiner wishes to obtain views from a representative group of students on their educational experience at the University, which may include their comments on the quality of the learning resources available.
10. Students who are invited to attend for interview with the External Examiner should be informed of the purpose of the interview and that it would not be part of the student assessment process.