

### Written Examination Papers

Course Co-ordinators are responsible, under the ultimate authority of their Head of School, for preparing written examination papers in consultation with those involved with the delivery of a course. While questions should relate to the course delivered, they may include reference to material not actually taught, provided that students have been told explicitly that a particular subject would form part of the course aims and learning outcomes and that students would be expected to undertake self-directed learning on such material.

In finalising the draft written paper, Course Co-ordinators should ensure:-

- that the material has not been assessed previously (e.g. by way of an in-course assignment, the mark for which contributes to the overall course mark);
- that the paper covers an adequate breadth of material and adheres to SCQF level descriptors
- that there is no overlap/similarity in material being assessed where more than one written paper is being set for a particular course;
- that questions at Levels 3, 4 and 5 in particular are designed to allow students to demonstrate independent critical awareness and understanding of the subject, analysis and judgement.

The External Examiner **must** be asked to approve the final paper and should be sent all relevant Course Handbooks to enable them to ascertain whether the draft questions are fair and appropriate in relation to the course aims and learning outcomes. Where all substantive changes requested by the External Examiner have been incorporated into an examination paper, the Head of School, or nominee, may ratify the final version. Where a School does not act on all changes required by the External Examiner, or makes additional substantive changes to the paper, it must be returned to the External Examiner for final approval.

Heads of School should ensure that details of the School's timetable for ensuring that all examination papers are approved by the External Examiner, and are submitted to the Registry ([academicservices@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:academicservices@abdn.ac.uk)) by 31 October each year.

It is good practice to draft a greater number of questions than required and to ask the External Examiner to select the questions to be set for a particular paper. External Examiners can also be asked if they wish to set any questions themselves. In such cases, the Course Co-ordinator must ensure that all questions relate to the course aims and learning outcomes.

Wherever possible, a model answer and/or marking scheme should be sent to the External Examiner with the draft questions, indicating how the total marks for the question could be achieved. [It is acknowledged that this will not be practicable for some subjects.]

If the question paper is structured and/or if a question is in several parts, the question paper should indicate the weighting that will be apportioned to each component: this will assist candidates in allocating an appropriate proportion of the examination time to answer a particular question.

## **In-Course Assignments and Projects/Dissertations**

Although it is not a requirement for External Examiners to approve in-course assignments and project/dissertation titles, Course Co-ordinators should consider whether to discuss these with the External Examiner(s) before being finalised in view of the fact that External Examiners are required to approve overall course marks and, in so doing, have the right to request any item of in-course assessment.

Notwithstanding the above, topics for in-course assignments and projects and dissertations should be selected having regard to the criteria for setting written examination questions.

## **Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined in the *Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)*. It is incumbent on those setting any type of assessment to ensure that the requirements of the assessment are clear and do not lend themselves to plagiarism.

It is also incumbent on Schools to ensure that students are given adequate advice on citation and referencing so as to avoid plagiarism. In so doing, Schools must provide the following information in their School/Course Handbooks:-

The University's definition of plagiarism guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in regard to particular types of assessment, which should include the following:-

- instructions on the correct methods of referencing sources (i.e. both in footnotes and in the bibliography), with examples;
- advice on when to use quotation marks;
- emphasising the importance of a student giving their own interpretation when using, quoting or paraphrasing the work of others (this would include the use of information down-loaded from Internet sites);
- guidance for those working in groups, to indicate whether or not an individual contribution was expected in regard to the assessment of the work (it is acknowledged that it may be impossible or undesirable to identify individual contributions for some group projects).

In addition, Schools are asked to make every effort to ensure that the design of an assessment does not promote the possibility of plagiarism but instead requires from the student individual and critical use of resources appropriate to their level of study.

TurnitinUK (plagiarism avoidance software) is an on-line facility which enables electronic comparison of students' work against electronic sources, including Internet material and work submitted by students at the University of Aberdeen and at other institutions. Further information can be provided by the [Centre for Academic Development](#).

## **Information to Candidates**

In regard to the information that might be provided to students concerning written examinations, staff must ensure:-

- that caution be exercised when informing students about the content (as opposed to the structure) of a written examination and should be sufficiently broad so as not to give students an unfair advantage in completing the examination;

- that any information which staff give to students in regard to the structure and/or content of an examination should be in writing and made available to all students (preferably in the Course Handbook);
- that the actual examination paper must comply with the above information provided to students;
- that written examinations (indeed, all assessments) must relate to the learning outcomes for a course, which should be indicated in the Course Handbook.

Course and Programme Handbooks should contain all relevant information for candidates in regard to assessments, including the deadlines for submission of in-course assignments and the consequences and penalties for late or non-submission of material for assessment.