1. Purpose of this guidance

This guidance has been produced in response to enquiries from academic departments seeking clarification about the terms of reference, responsibilities and delegation of powers for Boards of Studies and Departmental Teaching Committees. Some of these queries also emerged during the preparations for QAA Institutional Review in 2011-12.

Information regarding the remits of these bodies is not set out in a single location, being distributed through various sections of the University’s Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations. The following guidance consolidates this material into a single reference document and adds some commentary on implementation in departments.

2. Location of the Board of Studies in the University’s governance structure for learning and teaching

Every department has a Board of Studies to meet the requirement, set out in section 18 of the University Statutes, for a body “to control the teaching, the curricula and the examination of subjects or groups of subjects…”, to consider the attendance, progress and conduct of students, and to make recommendations for the award of degrees. Ordinance 1.1 adds that ‘there shall be a Board of Studies for (a) each separate subject or combination of subjects in which students are admitted to follow any degree course …’

In discharging these responsibilities a BoS may have a range of sub-committees (see below for more information on the role of Departmental Teaching Committees).

The Board of Studies is the primary learning and teaching committee at departmental level. For some areas of business, such as the approval of certain modules, it is able to operate and make decisions under delegated powers. For other areas of business, such as the introduction of a new degree programme, the power of the Board is to agree a recommendation at departmental level for approval by a University-level body – the University Teaching Committee, or in some cases, directly by the Senate. The powers of the Board of Studies are explained in section 4 below.

Boards are approved by the Senate as a Single Board of Studies or a Combined Board of Studies. A Single Board may also govern a combined programme with the approval of Senate, where UTC is satisfied that the interests of all contributing departments for the management of quality assurance can be met.

The University Teaching Committee (UTC) is a sub-committee of the Senate. Its remit includes developing and monitoring the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, developing relevant academic policies, and (in conjunction with Planning
Committee) considering new programmes on the recommendation of Boards of Studies. Once again there are areas of business for which UTC has powers of approval and areas which require recommendation to the Senate. Information on the UTC is available at: http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/sub-committees/.

The University Senate is responsible for regulating and directing the academic work of the University. Details of its terms of reference, membership and minutes can be found at http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/.

3. Membership and conduct of business of Boards of Studies

The University’s Ordinances sets out the membership requirements within the constitution of Boards of Studies (Ordinance 1) and the frequency and quoracy of meetings (Ordinance 2).

Boards of Studies should receive minutes from their sub-committees. Large boards may include an on-line discussion forum and propose recommendations prior to the main board in order to streamline business. Such on-line discussions should be overseen by the Chair, all members should be able to contribute including student representatives and the purpose of any such meetings should be defined within the terms of reference.

4. Guidance on the remit and powers of Boards of Studies

The following guidance highlights the powers within the Statutes and Regulations and provides examples that underpin and support teaching and learning and curriculum development. This is not exhaustive and departments’ terms of reference may cover further activities that are required at a local level.

The purpose of the guidance is to enable Chairs and Secretaries to check that relevant activities are included in its business and thus ensure that the Board and/or its sub-committees consider items at an appropriate time to enable effective responses, actions and implementation and ensure that relevant proposals to central university committees are received in good time.

It is important that Boards provide an opportunity for open discussion and reflection on the quality of teaching and learning and that there is departmental ‘ownership’ of developments such as new degree programmes.

Programme development and revisions

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to Planning Committee and UTC, new programmes and major modifications to programmes (this may include the submission of a business plan for programmes
requiring specific resources e.g. Distance Learning Programmes) following the relevant guidance and completing the pro forma as set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/. This includes the consideration of external assessors’ comments on new programmes and advice from the UTC departmental contact.

- to UTC, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit rated modules as set out http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/programmes/approve/
- to Planning Committee, programme withdrawals (which are reported to UTC), providing a rationale in support as set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/programmes/withdraw/

Boards of Studies have powers to approve, without recommendation to a University committee;
- minor modifications to programmes and modules (for guidance and definitions see http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/programmes/modify/)
- non-credit rated CPD modules

In addition, Boards should:

- oversee the annual updating of the department’s programme specifications. (These must be forwarded to the ASO annually and are available centrally for staff and students at https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/manage/programmes/programme-specs/).
- ensure that subject benchmarks are considered when published or revised by the QAA (the Secretary of UTC will request a response when a benchmark is published).

**Collaborations**

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to Planning Committee and UTC, proposals for collaborations with new and current partners (within the UK and internationally) for programmes leading to awards as set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/collaboration/
- to Planning Committee and UTC, proposals to embark on validated programmes following University policy as set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/collaboration/validation/

**External accreditation**

Boards should:

- consider reports from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and agree and monitor recommendations resulting from such visits. (PSRB Reports
should be forwarded to the Secretary of UTC for UTC information. A register of accredited programmes is kept centrally by ASO).

Policy and Procedural developments

Boards should:

- provide an opportunity to contribute to University consultations on policy developments;
- note new or revised University policy/guidance, ensure its effective communication and implementation across the department and approve departmental action in response (if required);
- develop and approve departmental-level policy/procedure and guidance when necessary and approve revisions when appropriate

(for example, the Peer Support for Teaching Policy, VLE Policy, Employability Plan, Staff Student Forum Policy, Guidance for Student Handbooks)

Monitoring and reporting and overseeing improvement and enhancement activities

Boards should:

- monitor and, where appropriate, report on the outcomes from the implementation of university policy/procedure and guidance where necessary;
- monitor and, where appropriate, report on departmental policy and procedures relating to teaching and learning activities;

(for example, assessment policy and procedures, Peer Support for Teaching, arrangements for PGWTs, TAPs, Open Days, disability issues, placements and Study Abroad etc)
- report to UTC the department’s reflections and actions from the Annual Programme Review (APR) meeting as per guidance set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/monitoring-and-review/apr/
- consider reports from advisory boards;
- consider and action recommendations from internal reviews including Periodic Review. Guidance is set out at http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/monitoring-and-review/periodic-review/;
- consider the outcomes of student opinion surveys, both internal and national, and respond accordingly;
- consider and approve responses to External Examiner comments and complete an action log;
- report on prizes awarded
**Degree Awards**

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to Senate for the granting of awards, under Regulation 3 and Ordinance 6.7. Students are required to meet the award requirements as set out in (a) to (g) of this regulation.

**Examiners**

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- the appointment of Internal and External Examiners to the Senate (Ordinance 6)

**Assessment**

The Board should:

- consider and monitor the modes and effectiveness of assessment;
- ensure that assessment requirements under the new modular scheme are detailed in programme specifications and that modules for which compensation and/or re-assessment opportunities are not available are identified in programme specifications (subject to UTC approval);
- ensure that departmental rules governing the old modular scheme are adhered to until the final cohorts (Category 1 students) have completed the relevant programmes.

Regulation 5 refers to the powers in relation to regulations on assessment. For details of assessment policies and procedures refer to the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback at [http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/](http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/)

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend to the Special Cases Committee the award of an aegrotat degree.

**Academic Misconduct**

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to the Special Cases Committee for the termination of a student’s enrolment or candidature for award in cases of severe or repeated cases of academic misconduct (Regulation 5.7)

The powers of Boards of Studies and examiners in relation to the marking of assessments and the application of any penalties are set out in Academic Misconduct: Policies, guidelines and procedures for all programmes of study. See [http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/mitigation/](http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/mitigation/)
General academic regulations for taught programmes

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to the Senate enrolment requirements for students on taught programmes, including for the accreditation of prior learning and any exceptions (Regulation 6.2). See University APL policy at http://www.york.ac.uk/media/staffhome/learningandteaching/documents/programmedevelopment/APL%20Guidance%20FINAL%202009%202010.pdf

Boards of Studies have powers to approve, without recommendation to a University committee:

- entry requirements for taught programmes (Regulation 6.1)

Student supervision

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

- to Senate programme level exceptions to supervisory requirements (Regulation 6.3).

Boards of Studies have powers to approve, without recommendation to a University committee:

- alternatives to face to face meetings e.g. for distance learners (Regulation 6.3).

All departments are required to have a supervision policy based on the University Policy. See http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/sources/supervisors/ (Regulation 6.3)

Residence and attendance

Boards of Studies have powers to approve, without recommendation to a University committee (Regulation 6.4), the definitions of:

- designated places of instruction;
- designated periods of study where these do not correspond with University terms;
- the academic engagements required for programmes of study;
- exceptions to residence and attendance requirements in programme documentation, as approved by Senate;
- exemptions or recommend exemptions to residence or attendance requirements to Senate in accordance with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy

Ordinance 9 refers to responsibilities concerning the admission of visiting students.

Progress and programme transfers

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend (Regulation 6.5):

- to the Standing Committee on Assessment on programme progression requirements (considered by the SCA which makes recommendations to UTC);
• to the Special Cases Committee that a student’s enrolment be terminated on the basis that the student is academically unsatisfactory;

• to the Special Cases Committee for student programme transfers, where a transfer of enrolment requires exemption from attendance requirement or a repeat of programme elements already studied;

• to the Special Cases Committee for repeat study of more than one term.

Boards of Studies have powers to approve:

• all other programme transfers

Suspension of enrolment

Boards of Studies have powers to approve:

• suspensions of enrolment of up to one year at a time, to a maximum of two years, provided there is no more than one term of repeat study and the start date of leave of absence does not predate the start of the current term (Regulation 6.5)

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

• using the relevant documentation, to Special Cases Committee regarding suspension of enrolment for individual students (Regulation 6.6)

Academic Appeals

• As a result of a student being found to have grounds for academic appeal by the Chair of the Special Cases Committee or as a result of an appeal hearing, Boards of Studies may be asked to reconsider an original decision (Regulation 6.7)

Readmission

Boards of Studies have powers to recommend:

• to the Special Cases Committee, applications for re-admission (Regulation 6.8)

Research degrees

• Powers relating to research degrees are listed in Appendix 1.

5. Guidance on Terms of Reference of Departmental Teaching Committees

Most departments have sub-committees to support their Board of Studies. This is particularly the case in larger departments where there is a considerable volume of learning and teaching business. The structure varies by department and is mostly an internal matter for the department’s management. (There are specific requirements regarding a separate Board of Examiners, Combined Executive Committee and Staff/Student Forum which are not covered in this paper).
Most departments have established a separate Teaching Committee to ensure that proper consideration can be given to curriculum development and other aspects of quality enhancement, where the Board of Studies has a busy agenda of more formal business.

There are no specific university regulations governing the remit and conduct of Departmental Teaching Committees. Boards of Studies’ terms of reference should therefore articulate clearly the relationship with the DTC as a supporting sub-committee. Likewise, the Terms of Reference of the DTC should explain clearly the remit of this sub-committee and the areas of business for which recommendations must be made to the BoS for approval before actions can proceed.

Departmental Teaching Committees should inform and support the work of the Board of Studies. Their terms of reference should make clear the areas of business relating to, for example:

- Curriculum, programme and module developments and updates
- Teaching
- Marking
- Assessments
- Student support and engagement
- Student evaluation
- Projects commissioned by DTC or BoS
- University strategy and policy responses

The DTC should discharge its duties taking note of any relevant university policy. For example, a programme team’s new programme proposal may be considered by the DTC but must be recommended for approval by BoS prior to consideration by Planning Committee and UTC. Decisions on academic matters which have financial or resource implications should be subject to approval by BoS (and Planning Committee where necessary).

Both Chairs of BoS and DTC (or similar) should have a productive working relationship to enable the department’s business to run smoothly, delegated powers to be effectively discharged and relevant business to be forwarded to BoS when necessary, in line with university policy.

5. **Administration**

Committee Chairs, Secretaries and members should undergo induction after appointed. It is good practice to have a thorough handover when Chairs and Secretaries finish their terms of office to ensure business is carried forward, the schedule of standing items is continued and the remit of the board and the relationship with central committees is fully understood. If possible the incoming Chair should shadow the outgoing Chair in the run up to taking over in order to become familiar with their responsibilities.
Clear and concise minute taking should provide auditable records of decisions and, where appropriate, their supporting discussion/rationale. Training is available through http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/training/ and generic information for committee secretaries is provided at http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/members-secretaries/

Appendix 1: Board of Studies powers relating to research degrees

Regulation 1 refers to responsibilities for Higher Doctorates.

Regulation 2 refers to responsibilities for Research Degree Awards.

- To make recommendations to Senate for the award of research degrees
- To make recommendations to Senate for any exceptions to these requirements
- To recommend to Senate candidates for admission to research degree programmes
- To recommend to Senate research degree programme requirements for approval
- To recommend to Special Cases Committee any exceptions to the specified enrolment requirements, including the reduction of periods of enrolment
- To recommend to Senate exceptions regarding paid employment.
- To recommend to Senate programme-level exceptions to supervisory requirements
- To approve the appointment of supervisors for individual students
- To specify acceptable alternatives to face-to-face supervisory meetings (for example, in the case of distance learning programmes).
- To define designated places of instruction and/or placements
- To define designated periods of study, where these do not correspond with University terms
- To define the academic engagements required for programmes of study
- To define exceptions to attendance requirements in programme documentation
- To approve exemptions or recommend exemptions to attendance requirements to Senate in accordance with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.
- To specify programme progression requirements for approval by the Senate
- To recommend to Senate the termination of enrolment of a research student.
- To consider requests for transfers of enrolment.
- To prescribe word limits for theses and dissertations.
- To make recommendations to Senate regarding early submission or the extension of the submission deadline for the thesis
• To make recommendations to Special Cases Committee regarding the late submission of theses and dissertations where mitigating circumstances apply.

• To make recommendations to Senate on the appointment of internal and external examiners.

• To determine whether students have fulfilled award and programme requirements to permit entry to University assessments and make recommendations to Senate.

• To make recommendations to Senate on exemptions or exceptions to such arrangements.

• To follow the requirements of Boards of Studies and examiners in relation to the marking of assessments and the application of any further penalties as set out in *Academic Misconduct: Policies, guidelines and procedures for all programmes of study*.

• To make recommendations to the Senate for the termination of a student’s enrolment or candidature for award in cases of severe or repeated cases of academic misconduct.

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Nigel Dandy/Liz Stead  
ASO