Guidance Notes for Partner Institutions on OU Examination Board Documentation – 2023/24

Open University Validation Partnerships /November 2023

The Open University
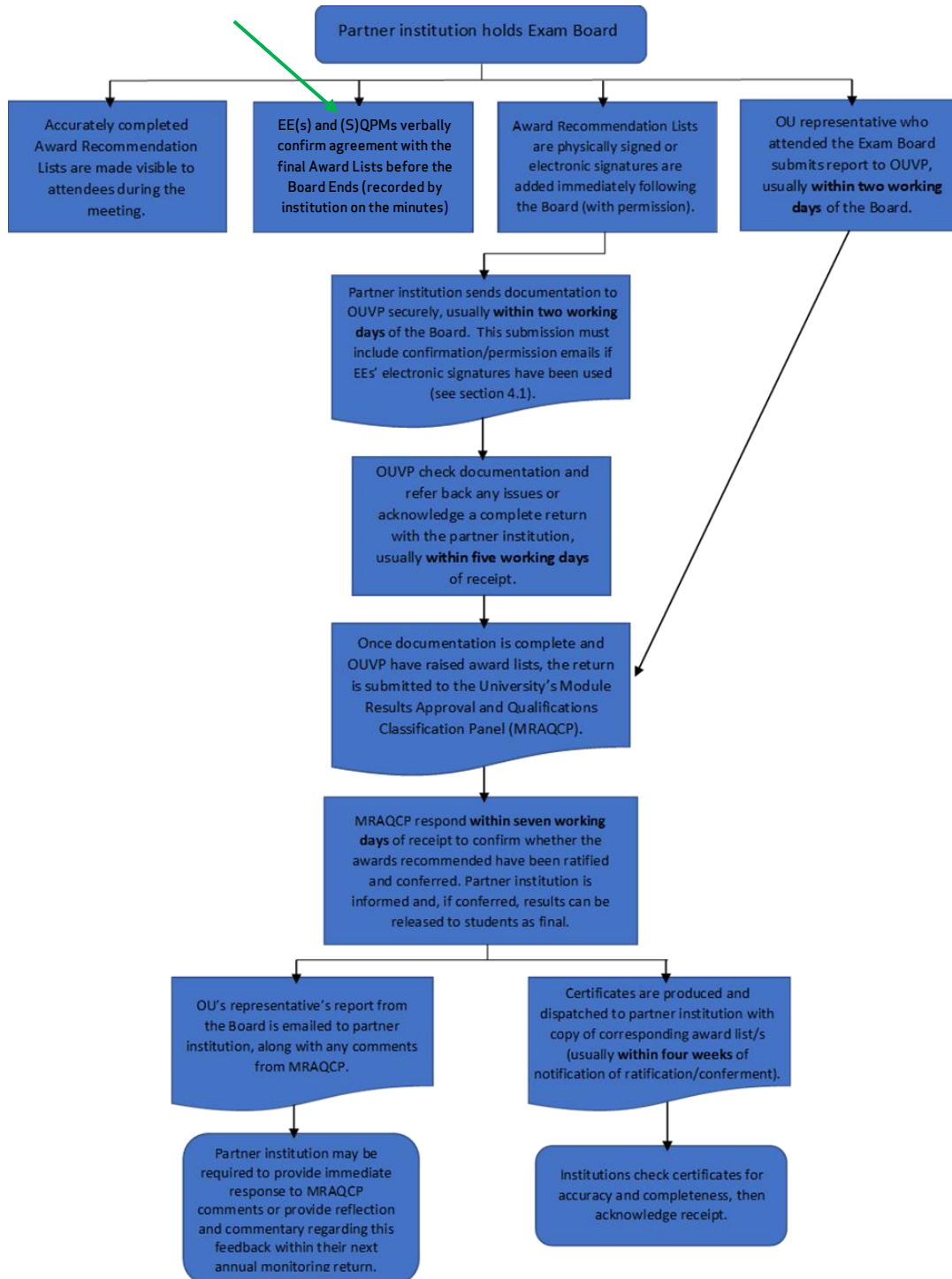
CONTENTS

1   Introduction

These guidance notes have been written to assist you, as a partner institution, in the preparation of the documentation required for the ratification and conferment of Open University (OU) validated awards and to provide more information on the steps involved in the process (as summarised below). Should you have any questions once you have read through these guidelines, please email OUVP-EXAMBOARDS@open.ac.uk.

Partner institution holds Exam Board

Accurately completed Award Recommendation Lists are made visible to attendees during the meeting.

EE(s) and (S)QPMs verbally confirm agreement with the final Award Lists before the Board Ends (recorded by institution on the minutes)

Award Recommendation Lists are physically signed or electronic signatures are added immediately following the Board (with permission).

OU representative who attended the Exam Board submits report to OUVP, usually **within two working days** of the Board.

Partner institution sends documentation to OUVP securely, usually **within two working days** of the Board. This submission must include confirmation/permission emails if EEs' electronic signatures have been used (see section 4.1).

OUVP check documentation and refer back any issues or acknowledge a complete return with the partner institution, usually **within five working days** of receipt.

Once documentation is complete and OUVP have raised award lists, the return is submitted to the University's Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (MRAQCP).

MRAQCP respond **within seven working days** of receipt to confirm whether the awards recommended have been ratified and conferred. Partner institution is informed and, if conferred, results can be released to students as final.

OU's representative's report from the Board is emailed to partner institution, along with any comments from MRAQCP.

Certificates are produced and dispatched to partner institution with copy of corresponding award list/s (usually **within four weeks** of notification of ratification/conferment).

Partner institution may be required to provide immediate response to MRAQCP comments or provide reflection and commentary regarding this feedback within their next annual monitoring return.

Institutions check certificates for accuracy and completeness, then acknowledge receipt.

2 Prior to the Exam Board

2.1 Exam Board dates should be agreed at the earliest opportunity which should be before the beginning of the academic year'. A request for dates is sent out by OUVP each year. We suggest that if you do not already do so, the dates should be available to share with your (S)QPM at your End of Year planning meeting.

2.2 If an External Examiner (EE) is unable to attend an Exam Board, please contact your Quality Partnership Manager (QPM) or Senior Quality & Partnerships Manager (SQPM) or as a matter of priority (in advance of the meeting) and provide full details on the circumstances. Guidance will then be given on how you should proceed.

2.3 It is your responsibility to provide the required documentation following completion of an Exam Board. With effect from 1 January 2024, the required documentation is:

- Completed and signed **Award Recommendation List** for each final or exit award title recommended. (This is a **new** (single) template, which replaces the F7, Award Recommendation List and Exam Board Data sheet templates used previously.)
  Please see Appendix 1 for detailed guidance on how to complete this document.
- Email confirmations from EEs where electronic signatures have been added to the documentation (see section 4.1).

2.4 Award Recommendation Lists **must** be prepared prior to the Exam Board (based on the recommendations being made) and made visible to attendees during the meeting.

2.5 **Information on the Award Recommendation Lists must be accurate** as it will determine the information which is input by OUVP on the award lists for conferment and certificates which are later produced. Award titles must be correctly entered on the documentation and the date of the Exam Board should be accurate and consistent.

2.6 It is important that you accurately record your students' details at the point of registration. **This must include the student's full legal name**. We recommend that you then conduct an exercise whereby you check that student names are still accurately recorded in advance of the final Exam Board. Any changes made to your own student record system should also be made to the OUVP database, Valencia.

2.7 We will accept the student names provided on Award Recommendation Lists as the definitive names to be printed on the certificates. These must be the students' full legal names at the time of the Exam Board. **Your students should be made aware that certificates cannot be reissued post-conferment, except in the most exceptional of circumstances.**

3 <u>During the Exam Board</u>

3.1 **It is essential that the Award Recommendation Lists are pre-prepared and made visible to attendees during the Exam Board.** We appreciate that changes may occasionally need to be made and, if this is the case, an Award Recommendation List can be amended during the Board meeting with agreement from the relevant EE(s). For physically held Boards, the changes should be handwritten on the documentation in clear, legible writing and the EE should sign or initial next to the amendments as confirmation of their approval.

3.2 The EE(s) for each programme and (S)QPM should verbally confirm that they agree with the final Award Recommendation List before the Board ends and this should be recorded by the institution in the minutes of the Board.

3.3 For remotely held Boards, an email will then be required from each EE (during or shortly after the Board) stating, *"I hereby give permission for the use of my electronic signature and confirm that the information on the Award Recommendation List is correct."* If the Board has been held in person, the EE(s) should sign the paperwork before they depart.

4 <u>Completing the Paperwork</u>

Please see Appendices 1 for specific guidance on how to complete the OU template.

Obtaining Signatures

4.1 It is imperative that the necessary signatures are obtained/added at the conclusion of or shortly after the Exam Board. Any Award Recommendation Lists which are not properly signed will be returned by OUVP to be amended.

- For remotely held Boards, each EE should be fully aware that their electronic signature is being added to the relevant Award Recommendation List to confirm that they were present at the meeting and that they agreed with the recommendations made.

- For each case where an EE's electronic signature has been added, you will need to forward us an email from the EE stating, *"I hereby give my permission for the use of my electronic signature and confirm that the information on the Award Recommendation List is correct*." These emails must be sent to OUVP with your submission.

Avoiding delays

4.2 (S)QPMs are required to submit their Exam Board Report to OUVP-EXAMBOARDS@open.ac.uk within **2 working** days as this is necessary for the ratification process. The Award Recommendation Lists, Signatory confirmation emails (where boards are held remotely) and any supporting Minutes (when required) should be sent via secure electronic transfer to OUVP-EXAMBOARDS@open.ac.uk as soon as possible after the Board, and ideally within **2 working** days. You may use your own method of secure file transfer or the OU's system, ZendTo (https://filetransfer.open.ac.uk/). Alternatively, password-protected files can be emailed (provided the password is sent in a separate email).

- If there is going to be a significant delay in sending the documentation (i.e. more than 5 working days), please inform us by e-mail to the above address, telling us when it is likely to arrive.

- If you supply the documentation late and do not inform us as requested, MRAQCP may not be able to ratify/confer the awards within the normal timeframe, which will cause additional delay.

- Delay may also occur if the documentation is not completed correctly or if the required signatures are not in place and we need to send them back to you for correction or collection of signatures.

The aim is to prevent delays to the approval of the awards recommended at your Exam Board, and the issuing of the final marks to students.

4.3 Once the documentation has been received, it will be thoroughly checked, and any errors found will be referred back to you. We will aim to complete our checks of your Exam Board submission **within five working days** of receipt, but this process may take longer for particularly large Exam Boards or during busy periods. Assuming all is in order, we will produce the award lists for conferment, the submission will then be sent to MRAQCP for ratification and conferment of the awards.

4.4 You must not issue results to students (or send Diploma Supplements/transcripts) until the awards have been ratified/conferred by MRAQCP and formal notice has been received from the University

that the results can be released. If for any reason you feel you need to release the results, you must ensure that students are aware that they are <u>provisional and may be subject to change</u>.

5 <u>The Ratification/Conferment Process</u>

5.1 The University's Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (MRAQCP) is responsible for the ratification of awards both for the University's direct provision and for OU validated programmes.

5.2 MRAQCP has the authority of the University Senate to ratify the recommendations of all Examination Award Boards after satisfying itself that the recommendations have been made with due regard to the approved regulations, that the correct procedures have been followed and the appropriate academic standards have been met. MRAQCP has the authority of the University Senate to overrule any result recommendation which is contrary to approved regulations. In practice they would normally refer any concern back to us in the first instance so that we can arrange with you for the Board of Examiners to reconsider the results.

5.3 MRAQCP requires specific quantitative and qualitative information to discharge its duties appropriately. In addition to the paperwork provided by you, the member of OU staff in attendance at the Board is required to submit a short report on its conduct (which will be sent on to you for your reference and follow-up).

5.4 OUVP will arrange for MRAQCP to consider the recommendations (comprising the Award Recommendation List, EE confirmation emails, report of the OU member of staff who attended the Board and conferment award lists) and respond **within seven working days** of receipt. We will then send you notification of the ratification/conferment of the awards (or otherwise) in the form of an email to the staff member who submitted the Exam Board documentation.

5.5 Any MRAQCP comments or feedback will be passed on to the OU Representative who attended the Exam Board (usually the SQPM) to record in their report. This report will then be emailed to the Institution for action as required. Where MRAQCP have made comments, the Institution may be required to either respond immediately within 6 weeks or respond within the next Annual/Institutional and Programme Monitoring submission.

6 Certification

6.1 Formal award lists are prepared upon receipt of award recommendation documentation which determine the awards to be conferred and certificates subsequently produced.

- One award list will be produced for each Award Recommendation List and will be submitted, along with the other documentation, to MRAQCP
- Following MRAQCP approval, an award certificate will be prepared for each student appearing on the award list
- Certificates are sent to you with a copy of the corresponding award list

Certificates will normally be dispatched **within 4 weeks** of us notifying you that the awards have been ratified/conferred.

6.2 Please check the contents of each package of certificates on arrival to ensure that they have not been damaged in the post. It is important that you also check (against your own records) that a certificate has been received for every award expected from the Exam Board and that they are accurate and correct. Please notify OUVP immediately if you believe that any certificates are missing or incorrect.

6.3 Please ensure that when certificates are mailed on to students, they are well-packaged and sent by a recorded delivery method.

6.4 Corrections to certificates/award lists will be charged at the rate for a replacement certificate. All cases of misreporting of award recommendations will be treated as serious quality assurance issues and will be investigated. OUVP must also seek MRAQCP approval of any amendments to conferred awards.

7 Posthumous and Aegrotat Awards

7.1 If you would like to seek conferment of a posthumous or aegrotat award, then this should be clearly labelled as such on the appropriate Award Recommendation List. We will also require a copy of the confirmed minutes from the Board showing where the posthumous or aegrotat award recommendation was discussed and agreed. We recommend that you consult with your SQPM prior to the Board of Examiners for advice in each instance.

Appendix 1: Completing the Award Recommendation List

A copy of the template Award Recommendation List can be obtained at:

https://www.open.ac.uk/about/validation-partnerships/supporting-information/partners/exam-boards

Remember to complete a <u>separate Award Recommendation List for each final or exit award title</u>.

Institution:	e.g The MK College of Arts and Sciences
Programme:	e.g BA (Hons) Graphic Design
Award:	e.g DipHe Graphic Design
Award Date:	Date of Exam Board

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Language of instruction and assessment where either of these is not English:

1. the entries on this list are the final or exit award recommendations made to Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP) at the meeting of the Progression and Award Board of Examiners on the above date.

2. all students who are recommended for awards have completed the requirements of the course (as approved by or on behalf of OUVP), including satisfactory completion of any applicable supervised work experience.

3. all External Examiners with responsibility for this award/programme are listed below and agree with the award recommendations on this list.

OUVS ID	Surname	Forename	Other Names	Date of Birth (DD/MM/YY)	Award Type CertHE, DipHE, BA, BA Hons, etc.	Classification Pass/Distinction/First Class Honours etc	Exit Award (Indicate if Yes)
e.g 123456	e.g. Smith	e.g. Thomas	e.g Peter Clifford	e.g.27/10/19	DipHE	Pass	Yes

> Only enter 'Yes' if the student is accepting

> Enter the details of students here **(full legal names).**

Total Number of Students Recommended for Awards:	e.g. 1

Name of External Examiner:		Name of Chair:
Signature of External Examiner:		Signature of Chair:
Name of External Examiner:		Name of Academic Registrar:
Signature of External Examiner:		Signature of Academic Registrar:
		Name of OU Staff Member:
		Signature of OU Staff Member:

> Name and signature of the OU staff member in attendance

Enter the name of the EE(s) and add/obtain their signature(s) following the Board (with permission)

Where an EE's electronic signature has been added, you will need to forward us an email from the EE stating, *"I hereby give my permission for the use of my electronic signature and confirm that the information on the Award Recommendation List is correct."*
These emails must be sent to OUVP with your submission.

Name and signature of the Academic Registrar (or if you do not have an Academic Registrar

Name and signature of the Chair of the Exam Board

9