

## **The National School of Healthcare Science: Terms of Reference for Examination Boards**

This document sets out the terms of reference (ToRs) for the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) Examination Boards pertaining to the summative end point assessment (EPA) of all programmes under the School's management. It details the remit, purpose, responsibilities and governance of the Boards.

It is intended that the ToRs shall be reviewed annually by the Education and Assessment team to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Changes must be approved by the NSHCS Senior Management Meeting, approved by the HEE Programme Board and notified to the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS).

### **Remit of the Examination Board**

To ensure that a rigorous, consistent and fair approach is applied to arrive at a recommended pass or fail decision for each trainee for final ratification by the NSHCS Head of School and the Health Education England (HEE) Director of Education and Quality with responsibility for healthcare science, or their nominated representative.

### **Purpose of the Examination Board**

1. To discuss and review the data pertaining to the performance of trainees, assessment items, assessors and administration arrangements for the assessment.
2. To compare the performance of each assessment item in relation to the pass mark that is set using a predetermined standard setting method.
3. To agree any changes to pass marks where there is evidence of irregularity in the delivery of the assessment.
4. To agree the results for each assessment item and the pass or fail result for each trainee.
5. To confirm a series of recommendations for the Head of School and Director of Education and Quality pertaining to outcomes for each trainee and the healthcare science speciality.

### **Responsibilities of the Board**

- To review the summarised learning points collated from previous EPA boards and outcomes of any appeals received following the release of results to inform the conduct of the present Board.
- To review all sources of quantitative and qualitative evidence collated during the EPA pertaining to the performance of trainees, assessment items and assessors, plus incident reports and any applicable reasonable adjustments relevant to the trainee's outcome from the assessment.
- To consider the appropriateness of the pass mark for each assessment item in the light of all evidence pertaining to the intended and observed level of educational challenge of each assessment item.
- To confirm or moderate the pass mark for each assessment item based on the review of evidence.
- To review and agree the pass or fail result for each trainee.
- For failing trainees, to consider any received mitigating circumstances and complaints and compensate as deemed appropriate by the panel.

- To have noted any learning points elicited to inform and improve conduct of future examination boards.
- To have noted any recommendations and actions elicited from the Board's discussions that could improve the quality and provision of the EPA and its outcomes.

## **Outcomes**

The Examination Board will recommend the pass or fail outcomes from the EPA for trainees for the relevant specialty. Where the panel cannot agree the outcome for a trainee, the Chair will make the decision, annotated for detailed consideration by the final ratification panel (please refer to '*Final Ratification of outcomes*' section below).

The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that any recommendations/actions noted regarding the quality or provision of the EPA as provided above are forwarded to the appropriate responsible body. Any agreed learning points will be collated by the administrators, summarised and appended to the minutes to inform the conduct of future boards.

The Board may also recommend other points for consideration or action pertaining to the EPA. Any recommendations made by the Board, outside of the specified remit, must be escalated to the NSHCS Senior Management Team and, where appropriate, tabled for approval at the HEE Programme Board.

## **Examination Board Membership**

- Chair: Training Programme Director or nominated representative
- Lead specialist co-ordinator for EPA for specialty's assessment items
- Nominated assessors/assessment item writers as required for the EPA event – to be decided by the Lead specialist co-ordinator
- Professional body representation (where practicable)

The Academy for Healthcare Science may be present as observers. Members may propose additions to the panel to be approved by the Chair. Members may also propose guests where they will add value to discussions and decisions required such as a Lead specialist co-ordinator or examination board member from another healthcare science division to ensure cross-specialty consistency in decision making.

Any nominated panel member (including guests) must be requested to declare any conflicts of interest to be noted by the Chair who will ensure that the noted member is not included in discussions pertaining to the subject of the conflict of interest.

As part of the Examination Board, members will be assuring the quality of education and assessment of the NHS healthcare science workforce by ensuring a consistent and fair approach in arriving at the result for each trainee.

## **Confidentiality and Code of Conduct**

The EPA Examination Board is bound to maintain confidentiality of all data and discussions shared at the meetings including but not exclusively:

- not distributing or sharing with anyone in any format (hard copy, electronically or verbally) any EPA related data;
- returning all Board associated papers to the NSHCS team facilitator at the end of a face to face meeting;
- deleting all shared electronic data from members' computers immediately following the Board meeting;
- shredding any Board associated information printed for the meeting or notes made during the meeting.

The EPA Examination Board shall be conducted professionally adhering to NHS principles and values.

## **Facilitation**

The Examination Board shall be convened by the Education and Assessment Team which will also provide a data analyst and minute taker.

De-identified data including key statistical indicators and key review points from end point assessments will be shared with the Board panel to review and inform discussions.

## **Meetings**

Meeting quorum requires attendance by the Chair (or nominated representative), Lead specialist co-ordinator (or experienced representative) and two other specialist advisors; one of which may be a member of the NSHCS senior management team. Meetings shall run to the standard agenda found in Appendix A.

The Examination Board meeting for each specialty or scientific theme will be held within three weeks of the EPA. There may be instances when an exam Board is convened immediately following the assessment; however, Board recommended outcomes will remain pending for two working days in case of any complaints submitted by trainees. In these cases, if the submission is within scope of the EPA complaints and appeals policy, the Board will be contacted to review the complaint and impact on outcome. Meetings will be held using an appropriate format such as a face to face or online platform. If meetings are held face to face, appropriate expenses will be reimbursed according to the NSHCS non-staff expenses guidance. The duration of the meeting will be scheduled as appropriate for the requirement of each Board.

## **Board minutes**

The meeting minutes shall be accurately recorded with appropriate anonymisation. They shall be circulated, appropriately protected for security, to members for approval with final sign off by the Chair. An appendix outlining details and actions from any complaints processed shall be added for review and learning by the panel.

They shall be saved, distributed and stored at the NSHCS adhering to the principles of information governance. Appropriately redacted minutes will be made available to trainees who may request them for the purpose of lodging an appeal related to their outcome from the assessment in accordance with the EPA complaints and appeals policy.

## **Governance**

The EPA Examination Board operates under the governance of:

- HEE NSHCS Programme Board; and the
- Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) which is responsible for assuring the quality of the work carried out by the NSHCS

## **Security of data**

The NSHCS is bound by the principles of information governance and shall be responsible for the secure transfer and storage plus appropriate shredding and deletion of Examination Board associated data.

## **Final ratification of outcomes**

The Head of School and HEE Director of Education and Quality shall consider and ratify the recommended outcomes from the NSHCS Examination Boards.

## **Release of ratified outcomes from EPA**

The NSHCS shall be responsible for ensuring that the ratified outcomes are released to trainees in accordance with the policy approved by its governing bodies.

END

These EPA Examination Boards' Terms of Reference are intended to ensure equity and fairness. They will be reviewed annually, and, in the light of experience, revision may need to be made. The relevant cohort of trainees will be alerted to any substantive changes as appropriate.

**Appendix A**

**Standard Examination Board meeting agenda**

Item		Lead
1	Welcome, introductions plus aims and intended outcomes of meeting. Reiterate that members are bound to observe confidentiality and adhere to the code of conduct as set out in these ToRs.	Chair
2	Review and summary of the previous exam board outcomes including outcomes of appeals and complaints received and recommendations/ actions; key learning points.	Chair
3	General comments on performance of trainees, assessment items, and assessors: examples and instances of good or poor performance	*EA
4	Review data for each assessment item: passes and fails, difficulty, scores, global judgements, and assessor comments	All
5	Ratify pass mark for each assessment item	All
6	Review and confirm all pass recommendations	All
7	Review and confirm all fail recommendations including consideration of any pertaining Incident Reports, mitigating circumstances, applicable reasonable adjustments and post-EPA complaints	All
8	Review Pass/Fail outcomes across scientific theme, where applicable	All
9	Comments and observations on Board decisions from external and guest members	Lay/guest members
10	Summarise and record key learning points to inform the conduct of future examination boards	Chair
11	Concluding comments and next steps e.g. possible resit assessment required	Chair

\*member of the NSHCS Education and Assessment Team