



Guidance notes for international partner institutions on Open University examination board documentation 2026/27

Open University Validation Partnerships

September 2026

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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.



2: Prior to the exam board

2.1 Exam board dates

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 External Examiner attendance

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 Exam board documentation

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

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 Award recommendation list accuracy

Information on the Award Recommendation Lists must be accurate as it will determine the information which is input by OUVF 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 Student registration details

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 OUVF database, Salesforce.

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: During the exam board

3.1 Sharing award recommendation lists

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 Verbal agreement

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 Remote attendance

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: Completing the paperwork

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

4.1 Obtaining signatures

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.

4.2 Avoiding delays

(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, it may not be possible to complete ratification/conferment 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 Documentation checking

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, OUPV will prepare the required award lists and progress the submission through the appropriate ratification route. Where the OU Chief Academic Reviewer attends the final award board, the final board

documentation and the Chief Academic Reviewer-approved report/confirmation will provide the basis for ratification/conferment.

4.4 Issuing results

You may issue results to students (or send Diploma Supplements/transcripts) considering the Chief Academic Reviewer is in attendance of the exam board.

5: The ratification / conferment process

Awards will normally be ratified at the final award board through the attendance of an OU Academic Reviewer. The Chief Academic Reviewer will attend alongside the External Examiner and OUVP's Senior Quality Partnerships Manager, providing academic oversight so that awards can be recommended and ratified at the meeting.

Where the OU Chief Academic Reviewer attends the final award board, the board will both recommend and ratify the awards at the meeting. OUVP will confirm the outcome following receipt of the completed board documentation and the Academic Reviewer-approved report.

6: Certification

6.1 Award processing

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

- The award list will be considered as part of the final award board documentation where an OU Academic Reviewer attends and ratifies the awards at the meeting.
- Following confirmation that awards have been ratified/conferred, an award certificate will be prepared for each student appearing on the relevant 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 Checking received certificates

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 OUPV immediately if you believe that any certificates are missing or incorrect.

6.3 Certificate packaging

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

6.4 Certificate amendments

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. OUVF must also seek approval of any amendments to conferred awards through the appropriate ratification route. This will be managed through the relevant Academic Reviewer ratification arrangements.

7: Posthumous and aegrotat awards

7.1 Requesting a posthumous or aegrotat award

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 and must be in line with the guidance outlined in section 21 of the OU Regulations for Validated Awards.

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

The [Award Recommendation List](#) template is available on the OUVP website here: [Partner resources | Validation Partnerships](#).

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

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