GUIDANCE NOTE ON
BOARDS OF STUDIES

Purpose

1. This guidance note is intended to support staff and students in the operation of Boards of Studies (BoS) and should be read in conjunction with the policies on:
   - Quality management and enhancement processes at the University of Reading;
   - Student Academic Representation.

Role and reporting structure

2. Boards of Studies are responsible for quality management and enhancement at programme level, as described in the University’s policy Quality management and enhancement processes at the University of Reading.

3. The core functions of Boards of Studies include considering, and referring to the School Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (SBTLSE) as appropriate, matters relating to: the potential development of new programmes; the revision and withdrawal of existing programmes; the inclusion of relevant modules in new and existing programmes; resourcing of programmes, and co-ordination of all the teaching and learning activities associated with the programmes. The SBTLSE receives reports from the Boards of Studies and is required to address any matters which have not been resolved by the Board of Studies.

4. Boards of Studies receive minutes from Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) within their purview. Any discussions in relation to, and any actions taken as a result of, reports from SSLCs should be reported back to SSLCs and onwards to the SBTLSE as appropriate.

5. Boards of Studies also play an important role in the University’s Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) processes; further information can be found in the AQAR guidelines.

Setting up and running the meetings

6. Each Board of Studies meets at least once every academic year. The University publishes standard two-week windows for meetings of SBTLSEs; Boards of Studies and SSLCs should meet sufficiently in advance of SBTLSEs in order to facilitate reporting across the committees.

7. The standard membership and terms of reference of a Board of Studies can be found in Appendix 4 of Quality management and enhancement processes at the University of Reading.
8. A sample agenda for Boards of Studies meetings can be found in Section 2a of the Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning and sets out the matters which should normally be considered by Boards of Studies over the course of the academic session. It is not intended to be restrictive or a barrier to engagement and enhancement, and should be adapted and expanded as appropriate. A good practice guide for servicing committees is available on the Governance Zone webpage (under Committees/Reference Documents) and includes guidance on preparing agendas and writing minutes after the meeting.

9. Unreserved minutes of Boards of Studies should usually be made available to all Board members within two weeks of the meeting. Unreserved Minutes should also be published on the relevant School’s Blackboard site to facilitate communication with the wider student body.

Student representation

10. All Boards of Studies should include one or more Course Reps in their membership. Boards of Studies may wish to consider different models for the appointment of student members. In doing so, Boards of Studies should take into account: the need to demonstrate transparency in the nomination/election process; the need to engage students from the full range of the student community, and the need to promote continuity between SSLCs and Boards of Studies. For example, SSLCs might be asked to nominate one Course Rep per year group from amongst their membership to sit on the relevant Board of Studies. Student Support Co-ordinators and the Henley Dean’s Office should notify the Academic Representation Coordinator in the Students’ Union of the names of student representatives on Boards of Studies.

11. The Board of Studies should be fully accessible and Schools/Departments should consider measures to facilitate part-time, distance/flexible learning and placement students’ attendance at, or contribution to, meetings, including attendance on a virtual basis or contribution via electronic discussion boards. Appropriately trained co-opted students or alternates should be permitted to attend Boards of Studies.

12. As members of the committee, the Course Rep (s) will contribute fully to the business of the Board of Studies, put forward suggestions to the Board and provide immediate feedback from a student perspective on matters under discussion.

13. Boards of Studies are responsible for considering, and responding to, student evaluation, which will include reports from External Examiners, results of module and programme evaluations, reports from SSLCs, the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, and careers/employability data as appropriate. The perspective of the Course Rep (s) will be invaluable in driving forward these discussions and identifying appropriate actions.

14. Boards of Studies may discuss confidential or potentially sensitive issues that it would not be appropriate for a student to be party to; for example, information relating to the progress of individual students. Any such matters should be included under a ‘Reserved Business’ section on the agenda and subsequent minutes. Course Reps will be asked to leave the meeting while Reserved Business is discussed.