



8 Jones Street
Freetown
P.O. Box 67, Freetown
Telephone: 232 – 25-282290/ 25 237 616
(Email - tertiaryeducationcommission7@gmail.com)

POLICY ON EXAMINATION POLICY

SECTION A : BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

Sierra Leone Educational reputation and integrity is at stake as a result of weak processes and repeated reports of examination malpractices. The spate of examination malpractices in the country and especially in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is alarming and worrisome.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) by an Act of Parliament (2001) is mandated to promote quality assurance and ensure parity of the products of Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs). In line with its mandate, TEC, on the 4th December 2019 held a one-day consultative workshop with Heads, Registrars and Exam Officers of Private and Public Tertiary Education Institutions in a bid to discuss and propose standardized measures in its drive to minimize examination malpractices and ensure credible examination processes for quality education with a view to developing policy guidelines for examinations in Tertiary Education Institutions in the country.

The need for such a policy to be developed primarily to address the need for credible examination processes within TEI's in the country cannot be overemphasized. Hence, the TEC has developed this Policy in collaboration with key stakeholders in higher education in order to address the challenges.

This policy would serve as a guide to address the following:-

1. Standardize credible examination processes in TEI's
2. Minimize examination fraud and malpractices in TEI's
3. Serve as a framework for addressing examination complaints, challenges, and constraints in TEI's.

SECTION B: PRE-EXAMINATION PREPARATIONS

1. Pool of questions/Question Bank

- To minimize the possibility of leakage of question papers and avoid the mass participation in examination fraud in the institutions, the concept of question bank with random generation of question papers should be adopted. This will limit the possibility of leakages at the preparation of question papers.
- The concept of a question bank requiring lecturers to submit more than the required number of questions to the Head of Department will also help to ensure that syllabi are taught and completed during the semester.

- The questions in the banks should be moderated by a team of departmental staff, who will check the questions for correctness, rigor, equity and whether they address the learning outcomes.

2. Selection of External Examiners for final examinations

Reflecting the importance of this role, it is imperative that External Examiner:

- Must be well-qualified and experienced academics who are not associated or affiliated with the higher education institution(s) in question.
- Have an established reputation in the area of study as shown by relevant teaching and research profiles.

3. Moderation of questions by External Examiners, HODs and Deans

For final year examinations, questions should be sent well ahead of time to the external examiners for moderation/vetting.

For continuing year students, moderation/vetting of a pool of possible examination questions should be done by the departmental Heads and the Deans of the faculties.

4. Preparation of model answers and marking schemes for questions in the pool.

Course tutors shall prepare model answers and marking schemes for question drawn. Copies of the answers and marking schemes should be kept by the Heads of Departments and made available for team/double marking.

5. Selection of questions and design of question papers by HODs and Deans

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to select questions from the question bank for all examinations in the department.

6. Printing, safety and security of question papers and answer booklets.

- It is the responsibility of the Dean of Faculty to ensure examination question papers and serially numbered and signed answer booklets are properly secured in safe custody.
- Printing and copy printing of question papers should be done in the Dean's office under his or her supervision.
- Printed copies of examination papers should only be handled by the Dean to the HOD/Lead supervisors 15 minutes before the start of the examination

C. THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

1. The environment - Seating arrangements

- I. There shall be adequate supervision of well lit and aired examination halls.
- II. Supervisors and invigilators should ensure that seats are adequately spaced to minimize collusion and exchange of materials during examination.
- III. Seats should be arranged in rows and columns to facilitate easy movement by supervisors/invigilators.

- IV. Candidates should be directed to a specific seats. Candidates should not be allowed to choose their seats individually or in groups.
- V. Candidates must be present in the examination room at least 15 minutes before the start of the exam. No student shall be allowed to sit to an examination if more than 30 minutes late from the start of the examination. Extra time shall not be given for late coming.
- VI. Candidates must have a valid picture ID placed on their desk during the examination (e.g. student card, driver's license, passport, etc.). Without a valid picture ID, candidates should not be admitted to the examination.
- VII. Bags, mobile phones, calculators, rings, notes, textbooks, annotated pieces of paper and other items brought to the examination room must be deposited in designated areas of the rooms. No headwear will be allowed during the examination, except for religious purposes and this will be checked by suitably qualified personnel designated by the institution.
- VIII. Candidates will not be allowed to wear watches during the examination. All rooms will be fitted with clearly visible clocks on the walls.
- IX. Candidates whose names are not on the list of candidates provided by the institution must contact the main invigilator in the examination room. The main invigilator will then consult the Examination Office before authorizing the candidate to take the examination. The examination paper will not be assessed before it has been established that the criteria for taking the examination were fulfilled by the candidate.
- X. Candidates will not be allowed to leave the examination during the first 30 minutes of the examination. The candidate should inform the invigilator that they wish to withdraw from the examination. This should be recorded, signed and dated by both the supervisor/invigilator and the student. The candidate should then be allowed to leave the examination room.
- XI. Information on the duration of the examination will be displayed in advance, and should be stated on the examination paper. Candidates must stop writing when it is announced that the time is up. Candidates who do not stop writing when the time is up should not be allowed to hand in their papers. Candidates should have an additional 5 minutes to organize and hand in their answer booklets.

2. Adequacy of Invigilation

- I. Appointment of Invigilators: The Head of the Examination Office should liaise with Deans of Faculties/Schools and Heads of Departments/Units to select staff suitable to invigilate an examination. Adequate numbers of academic staff drawn from any faculty or department will be assigned to an examination room based on the number of students involved. Academic Invigilators may be supported by nonacademic invigilators to ensure the smooth running of the examinations.
- II. The ratio of invigilators to candidates in an examination room should be 1:40. Where classes are smaller and below 40, there should be at least two supervisors/invigilators in the room.

- III. There should be a senior invigilator with overall responsibility for the conduct of the examination and invigilation process in the examination room where he/she is assigned.

3. Collection of answer booklets after examinations and their safety.

- Students should be instructed to remain seated in silent while papers are collected, collated and verified. Students will not be dismissed until all scripts are accounted for. The Chief Invigilator is responsible to ensure that all collected scripts is returned to the relevant authority for safe keeping and marking.
- All examination materials and documents, both used and unused should be collected and accounted for and immediately are turned to the HOD or Dean of Faculty for safe keeping.
- Counting of scripts to ensure the numbers corresponds with the names on the examination attendance register is the responsibility of the main invigilator. Counting eliminates scenarios where the attendance register shows a student attended an examination but his or her script is not available.

SECTION D MARKING AND GRADING OF EXAMINATION SCRIPTS

➤ Double/second and team/conference marking of examination scripts for award of examination grades.

- In pursuit of assessment practices that are fair, valid and reliable, the Institutions should introduce double-marking (preferably "blind" where the first mark is not made known to the second marker).
- Or better still the answers are marked by two markers independently using the marking scheme provided by the tutor. They should then agree a final mark for the assessment.

➤ All authenticated examination records are to be securely stored in triplicates in the Departments, the Deans office and the Institutions Registry.

➤ Duration for keeping examination scripts

Marked examination scripts shall be kept for a minimum of 5 years in the Department.

➤ Students' complaints on unfair awards of grades and their remedies.

Where a student believes that marks have been awarded unfairly and a resolution with the first and second markers is not possible, the student may request for a review of script in a letter addressed to the Dean of Faculty/school and copied to the Head of Department/Unit. The Dean or Head of School or their appointed nominee, will appoint a senior member of staff, who has not acted as either a First Marker or a Second Marker for the disputed assessment, to review the script(s) of the whole cohort. The marks awarded will be those to be submitted to the Board of Examiners.

Informal Mediation. If a student believes that the final grade in a course is unfair, the following informal mediation procedure represents the first course of action.

- Within two weeks following the issuance of final grades, the student shall meet with the lecturer/tutor/instructor to seek a review of his/her grade awarded in a course.
- If the student remains dissatisfied after meeting with the lecturer/tutor/instructor, the student shall submit to the Head of Department a formal written complaint and request for a review of his/her examination scripts with a view to reassessing the grade awarded.
- The Head of Department shall serve as a mediator, attempting to resolve the conflict between the student and the lecturer/tutor/instructor. (In the event that the Head of Department is the accused, a committee of three lecturers in the faculty put in place by the Dean shall serve as arbiter.)

The Formal Appeal

- If the dispute over the course grade cannot be resolved through informal mediation, the student may request in writing that the Head of Department initiate a formal appeal in conjunction with the Dean and/or other appellate committee members.
- The student shall bear the full cost of the review.
- Where the complaint is deemed to be frivolous, a fine or penalty shall be inflicted on the student.

E. EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND WAYS OF MINIMIZING THEM

The problem of Examination malpractices have eaten deeply into the fabric of the education system over the past decades and students now think it is their right to spy and cheat in examinations.

WAYS OF MINIMISING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

- a) **Enforcement of examination malpractice laws:** The Tertiary Education Commission would encourage a national position on penalty for various examination malpractice. Penalty for Examination Malpractice must be formulated with an option of years of imprisonment for convicted culprits without the option of fines. If this is fully implemented, it will serve as deterrent to students, invigilators, security agents and other collaborators in the malpractice enterprise who have constituted themselves into a criminal cabal. Notwithstanding, institutions should develop stringent examination malpractices penalties for defaulting students.
- b) **Installation of CCTV:** CCTV should be installed in all halls where examinations are taken as a norm.
- c) **Adequate and proportionate number of qualified invigilators:** There should be adequate number of invigilators in every room/hall where examination are conducted. The minimum ration of 40:1 students: invigilator should strictly be adhered to. A minimum of two invigilators shall be assigned to examinations with less than 40 students.

- d) Strict adherence of the eligible personnel handling examination papers:** Junior staff should not be allowed to handle examination papers. They may under strict supervision assist in providing services before and during the examination. Junior staff should not be given question papers and answer booklets/sheets for transit and/custody.
- e) Security during examination:** Each institution should ensure adequate security during examinations.
- f) Less emphasis on paper qualifications:** The educational system and workplace are largely certificate oriented. Excessive value placed on paper qualifications is a major contributing urge to commit examination malpractices.
- g) The use of effective continuous assessment technique:** The use of several teaching methods to ensure assimilation of the course taught and to meet the learning outcome of the course is desired. Students should be subjected to diverse forms of assessment which would ensure that the students earn continuous assessment marks.