

Breakout Session

The future of exam boards

QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

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Workshop structure and goals

Objective: To use the collective insights of the participants to understand how systems can be used to support exam board processes.

Part 1

- Introduction to The Future of Exam Board Project
- Capture some initial insights through menti-meter
- Share some insights from survey analysis

Part 2

- Workshop Activity (25 minutes)
- Discuss impact & quick wins (10 mins)

Consent

- Data generated, through menti, discussion notes, will be anonymous to us as the researchers/facilitators.
- Participation is deemed to be consent – if you do not wish a specific comment to be captured as research data, please inform us immediately after the workshop.

Why run a project on exam boards?

- There is mixed practice, yet shared challenges across the UK sector
- Institutions are responding to challenges with exam boards in different ways
- There is a clear desire to want to improve this space
- There is no clear language to describe different models that exist or that are emerging
- There is no documented practice, or clear practice-sharing space in the sector
- The work to deliver exam boards is often invisible
- Making exam board decisions has become more operationally / logistically complex

QAA Project overview

Funded QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project (March 24 – Dec 25)

University of Bristol, Kingston University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of Leeds, University of Sunderland, London School of Economics, University of Bedfordshire

Goals

- Develop evidence base around exam board practice in the UK
- Create spaces for practice and knowledge-sharing
- Showcase innovative approaches to exam boards
- Collaboratively problem-solve – what is stopping us improving this space? How can we collectively work towards something 'better'?

Phases

Three phases: surveying practice (survey with over 60 HEIs responding), case summaries (aiming for 10 to be published), workshops (to generate insights, share practice and create discussions)

Who is here today?

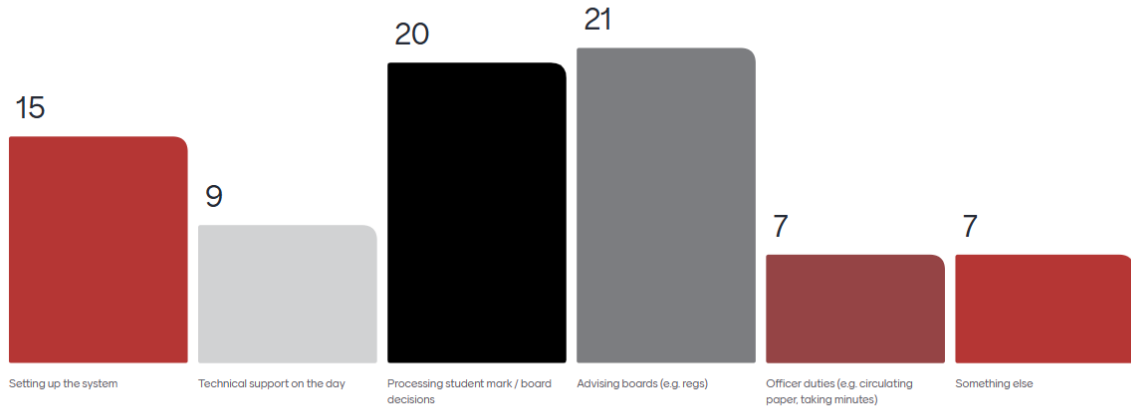
www.menti.com



bristol.ac.uk

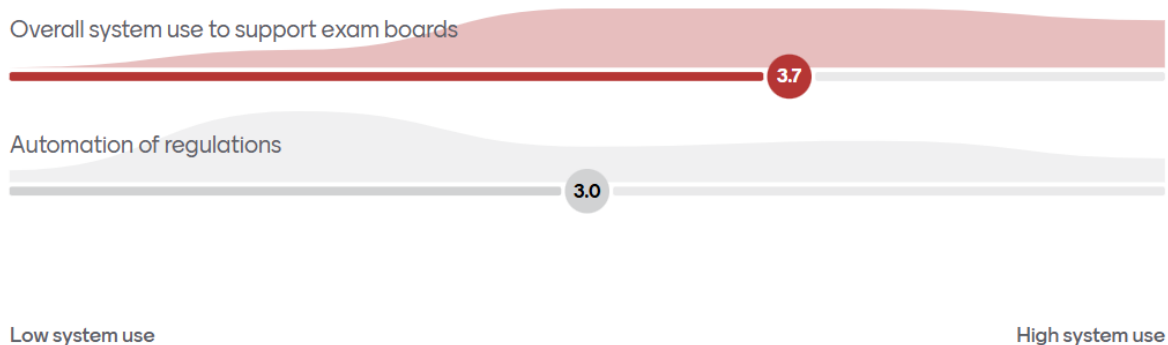
Who is here today?

How does your work support exam boards?

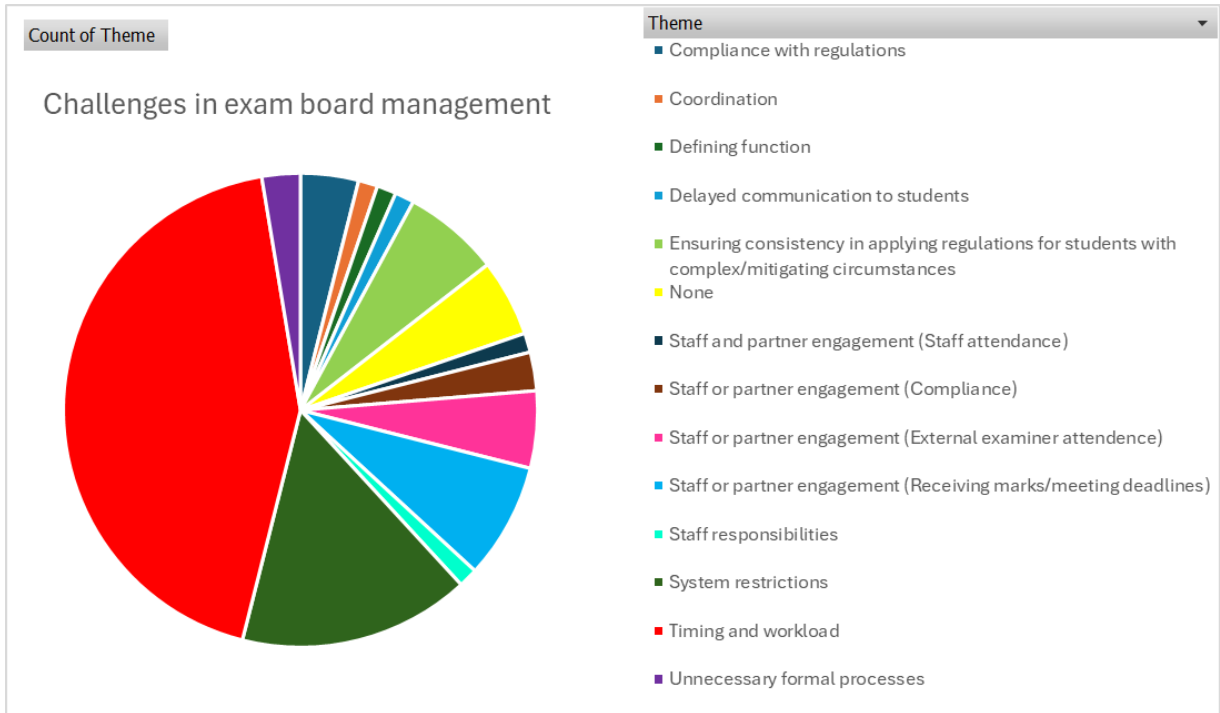


Who is here today?

How well do you think you currently use your systems to support the exam board process?



Survey Insights: timing, workload and systems are biggest challenges



Survey Insights: institutional changes to exam boards

Change delivered 2020-2024

- **Exc. Circs. – 37%**
- **Regulations – 31%**
- **Timing – 25%**
- **Systems – 19%**
- **Reassessment – 16%**
- **Model – 10%**
- **Externals – 8%**
- **Partner boards – 2%**

Change actively being considered or delivered 2024/25

- **Model – 31%**
- **Systems – 29%**
- **Timing – 23%**
- **Regulations – 21%**
- **Reassessment – 20%**
- **Externals – 18%**
- **Partner boards – 18%**
- **Exc. Circs – 18%**

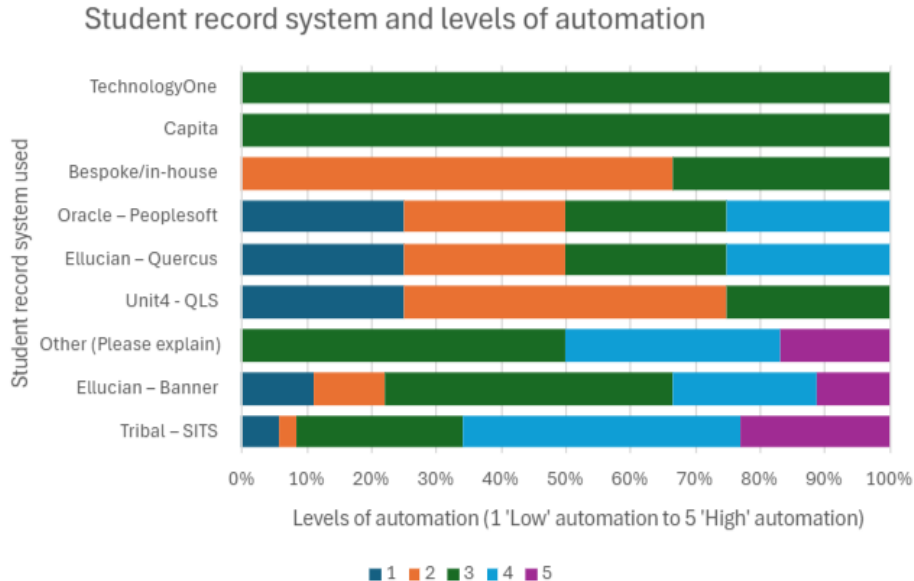
Survey Insights: systems use to apply regulations

Your current use of systems to apply regulations? (1 not much system automation, 5 high level of system automation)

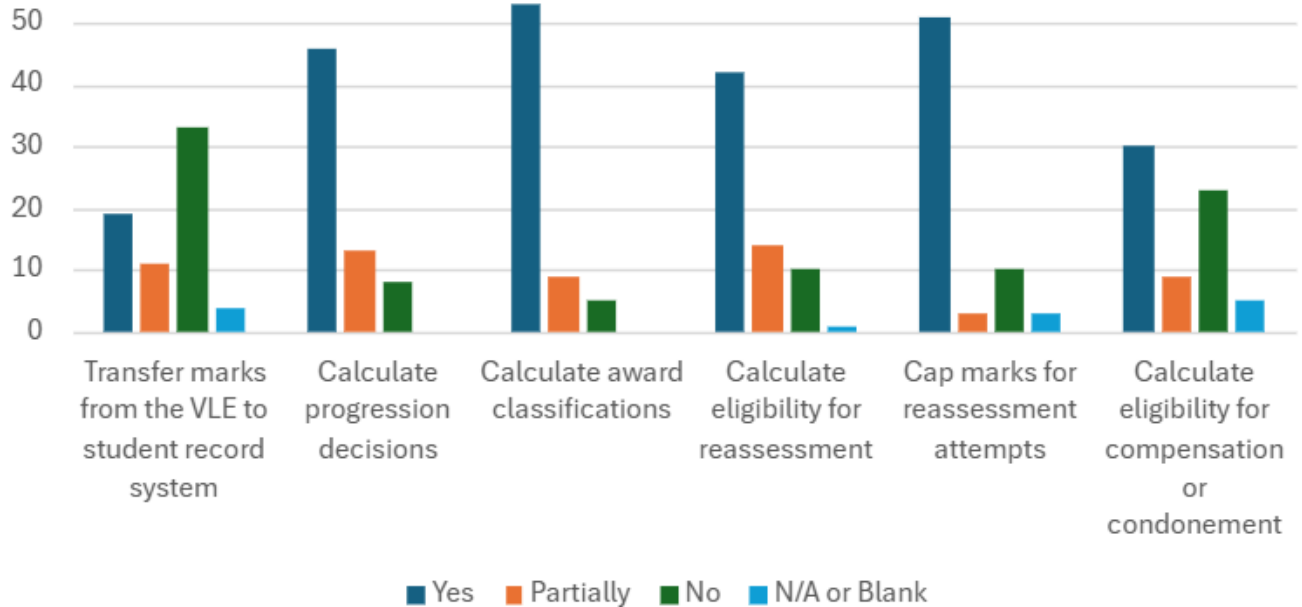


Survey Insights: student record system and automation

NOTE: data skewed because of high volume of responded using SITS (51%)



Survey Insights: configuring regulations in systems



Survey Insights: systems use in exam board management

Emerging analysis

Benefits

- Improved efficiency
- Improved decision-making / consistency
- Reduced workload
- Quicker processing

Challenges

- Complex regulations or student circumstances
- Decision-making structures
- External factors
- Resources – financial & time
- Manual workload
- Staff culture
- IT systems development & support
- System constraints
- Technical knowledge

Survey Insights: Systems challenges (specific)

Emerging analysis - highlights

- **IT systems development & support**

- Competing demands
- Slow Progress
- Bugs

- **Systems constraints**

- Integrations complicated
- Reporting capabilities
- Configuring complex regulations

- **Technical knowledge**

- Translation of policy & systems
- Technical expertise
- Microsoft Excel

Group Activity _ How can we use our systems better?

Before Exam Boards

During Exam Boards

After Exam Boards

In your groups, discuss and capture on the flipchart:



Areas where system-use works well & why



Ideas for how system-use could enhance the process

Think about:

- How do current systems support your role in exam boards?
- What inefficiencies or gaps do you experience? How could they be improved?
- If you could design an ideal system, what features would it have?

Feedback, impact & quick wins Group

Thinking about your own institution, which new idea (or practice shared from elsewhere) do you think:

- Could have the biggest impact on improving the process?
- Could be implemented as a quick win?

Each group to feedback something interesting – 1 minute

- Was there a particular phase of the process you discussed most?
- Were there any majority areas for the biggest impact?
- Any clusters of quick wins?
- Did anyone find an area that was a biggest impact and quick win?

BEFORE

Small interview & questionnaires for all exam boards
Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience

Small interview & questionnaires for all exam boards
Review of staff & previous experience

call in system

Error reporting

Automated US progression decisions

Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience

DURING

Challenges made
How algorithm has changed the process
Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience

call in system

AFTER

Review of staff & previous experience

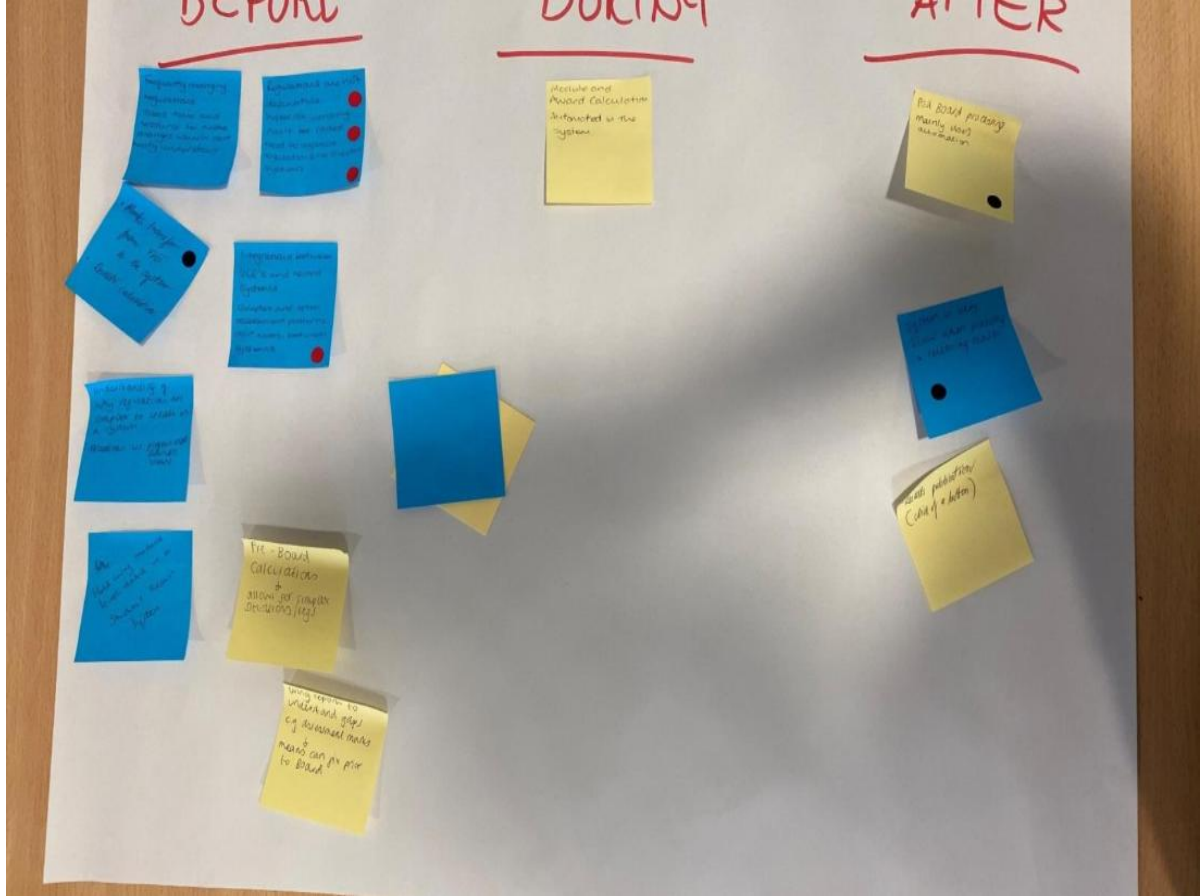
call in system

Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience

Review of staff & previous experience







SROC Insights: Using systems

Before exam boards

Good use

- Calculating overall marks and outcomes
- Automated capping
- Single system
- Online exceptional circumstances
- Generating exam board paperwork
- Error reports to flag gaps in data
- Data entry
- Integration with the VLE

Future use

- All of the good things!
- Penalties
- Reassessment

During exam boards

Good use

- Presentation of data
- Predicted outcomes
- Data sorted by predicted outcomes
- System has replaced exam board meetings

Future use

- Manual recording / annotation of reports
- More links to related activities (EC / AC / Appeals)
- Single process
- Update system during the board

After exam boards

Good use

- Results publication process
- Results releasing in one system
- Automated outcomes letters
- Grade change audit
- Error reporting

Future use

- Changes to decisions
- Automated communications
- Non-happy student pathway

SROC insights: which changes could be quick wins for you?

- Direct data feed of marks from VLE***
- Confirm decisions during the board on the system***
- Better system for changes to marks/chairs actions**
- Error reporting*
- Restrict changes after mark entry deadline*
- System to match the student's achievement against available exit awards in priority order*
- Automation of exceptional circumstances deferrals*
- Options for appropriate outcomes*
- Automation for alternative degree algorithm*
- Clear student profile in exam board report*
- Better reporting for the board*
- Post-board processing using automation*
- Continuous improvement approach*
- Faster processing when releasing results*

SROC insights: which changes could have the biggest impact?

- Integration of the student record system with the VLE to transfer marks*****
 - (noting component level more difficult and complex assessment patterns)
- Train, embed and explain the why, the how to academics too****
- Regulations are not definitive / too complicated / change regularly. Imprecise wording can't be coded. Need to improve regulations to support system.****
- Results sent directly from the system/same system/improved communication/move away from all-or-nothing****
- Using system to calculate recommended outcomes / better algorithms**
- Removal of module results board**
- Standardised programme/school boards*
- Systems development to keep up with changes*
- Reporting system performances needs to be better*

We hope you have enjoyed this session and we value your feedback, please take the time to rate this session in the conference app.

You can find a guide in the app FAQs.

You can follow us online:

[The future of exam boards](#)

[Dr Charlotte Verney | LinkedIn](#)

[Michaela Pittom | LinkedIn](#)

[Joanne Wake | LinkedIn](#)

**Coming up next: Refreshments in the Business School South
Foyer**