
Role and Responsibilities in External Examining

This section should be read in conjunction with 3f Conduct and Operation of Assessment Boards.

1. The Role of the External Examiner

External Examiners are employed by the University to verify the standards of the University's awards and to ensure that the assessment process is sound and is fairly and consistently operated in line with its Regulations.

The University regards the securing of academic standards as a function of a partnership between the Chair of the Assessment Board and the External Examiner[s], the former using his/her discretion to seek guidance/advice from and to consult the External Examiner when appropriate.

2. There are **two types** of External Examiner

- **Subject External Examiners**
- **Award External Examiners**

2.1 **Subject External Examiners** are appointed within a modular system to comment on assessment practices at Module level. They will be involved in the following areas.

- at Part 2 (levels 5 & 6) of undergraduate degree programmes
- in the full programme for other awards [eg one year courses, postgraduate courses]
- at levels 3 and 4 only where target (not exit) awards are made unless Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies require External Examiner involvement

2.2 **Award External Examiners** are appointed by Faculties (normally 3 per Faculty) and will have a role in helping the institution to ensure that the assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line the institution's policies and regulations.

2.3 **Role of the Subject External Examiner**

The Subject External Examiner's role is to enable the University to ensure that:

- standards of awards are comparable with those across the HE sector in the United Kingdom;
- assessment requirements of modules leading to University awards meet learning aims and learning outcomes of those modules;
- standards across the modules for which external examiners are responsible are comparable;
- through the examination of modules, the achievement of programme aims and objectives contributes to the commercial, industrial and professional environment [as appropriate];
- assessment strategies and methods leading to University awards are in line with current best practice in the discipline concerned;
- work leading to University awards is assessed carefully, accurately and fairly by internal examiners with parity in the implementation of marking criteria to modules delivered on different sites/campuses;
- Assessment Boards give full and fair consideration to each student;

2.4 Expectations and responsibilities of the Subject External Examiner

2.4.1 The Subject External Examiner is responsible for a number of modules which may be used exclusively on one programme or span different programmes.

2.4.2 The Subject External Examiner is expected to:

- verify the implementation of the overall assessment strategy for the module/programme;
- **approve** all provisional examination questions and rubric, before publication, for the modules/programme assessments and re-assessments for which s/he is responsible
- scrutinise a representative sample (agreed with the External Examiner) of each grade or class of degree, cases of failure and cases identified by staff as being of particular interest for examination scripts or coursework/dissertations for the modules/programme assessments for which s/he is responsible and prior to the MAB confirm the standards of marking and that the assessment criteria and standards have been correctly and accurately applied. (See Appendix 3 b Section 2.2.2 Marking and Moderation Procedures);
- exceptionally, give an opinion on the marks of an individual student when asked to:
- attend Module Assessment Boards as required to:-
 - confirm that they operate according to the University and programme regulations and with consistency and fairness and according to normal practice in higher education in the United Kingdom
 - provide advice on decisions where necessary
 - agree the marks, recommendations and decisions signifying this by signing the relevant papers (See Appendix 3 f).
- provide an Annual Report on the particular modules to which they have been appointed, on assessment procedures and assessment standards in the context of the programme and the national scene, drawing the University's attention to any matters of serious concern which put the University's standards of the at risk. (See appendix 4e for the format of the Report.) They should also report on any good practice that they have identified.
- provide advice to course teams, on and approve proposed minor changes to course/module content or regulations to which the external examiner is appointed;
- communicate with Course/Subject Teams without lengthy delay on matters concerning examinations and assessment.

2.5 Role of the Award External Examiner

The Award External Examiner's role is **not** subject related and is to ensure that

- through the application of Regulations, standards are maintained at a level comparable with that achieved in similar awards elsewhere in the UK.

- the procedures are followed in a fair and proper manner with consistency in application of the Regulations and comparability of treatment for students in their interpretation across the University

2.6 Expectations and responsibilities of the Award External Examiner

The Award External Examiner is appointed to a specific Faculty and is expected to:

- attend all FABs;
- ensure there is an experienced and objective input into the exercise of discretion by the FAB through his/her understanding and knowledge of how comparable situations are dealt with elsewhere and through experience in applying Regulations;
- provide an Annual Report.

3. Responsibilities of University staff

3.1 The relevant **University Administrator** will provide the External Examiner with a copy of the current University Academic Regulations, academic calendar, External Examiner fees and expenses when s/he is appointed. The Administrator will also:-

- issue annual guidelines for the content, structure and submission of reports
- issue guidelines for the level and payment of fees and expenses
- issue revisions to University Academic Regulations
- invite external examiners to an External Examiners Induction Day

and draw attention where appropriate to significant issues raised in External Examiners' Annual Reports.

3.2 The **Head of Faculty Administration** is responsible for:

- sending External Examiners the dates of Module and Faculty Assessment Boards two years ahead and for confirming with the External Examiner the dates of the meetings he/she is required to attend
- for maintaining a system for monitoring of the internal moderation of coursework titles and briefs and the external approval of all examination papers including questions and rubric

3.3 The **Head of School/Division** is responsible for ensuring

- communication with the External Examiner by staff
- providing the current definitive document for the programme(s) for which the Subject External Examiner has responsibility;
- briefing the Subject External Examiner on the operation of the programme(s);
- agreeing with the External Examiner the timings for the despatching of materials throughout the academic year]
- consulting the Subject External Examiner on possible minor changes, if appropriate
- updating the information held by the Subject External Examiner on the current structure and content of the programme;
- ensuring that, where Subject External Examiners are required to scrutinise examination papers and scripts, this material is sent in reasonable time
- ensuring that all examination papers [questions and rubric] are approved by the Subject External Examiner before publication

- ensuring that there is internal moderation of coursework titles and briefs by sampling which is representative of the diversity of assessment items used
- 3.4 The **Dean of Faculty** is responsible for ensuring formal responses are made to issues raised by external examiners in their reports and for responding to essential issues raised by the Award External Examiner in FABs as part of the Annual Evaluatory Report for the Faculty. The **Head of School/Division** is responsible for responding to any essential issues raised in the Subject External Examiner's report as part of the Course/Programme Annual Evaluatory Report.
- 3.5 The **Dean of Faculty** is responsible for ensuring that:
- the Annual Monitoring process takes account of the views of external examiners as expressed in their reports;
 - an annual report is made to Academic Standards Committee on the operation of Assessment Boards.

4. **Review of the process**

The process will be reviewed on a regular basis, taking into account best practice and Sector policy.