

**UNIVERSITY of CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

**APPENDIX 4a**

**Roles and Responsibilities in External Examining**

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## Roles and Responsibilities in External Examining

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

### 1. The Role of the External Examiner

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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 their discretion to seek guidance/advice from and to consult the External Examiner when appropriate.
- 1.3 External Examining procedures for Collaborative Provision will be consistent with the University's normal practices and procedures, and the University retains ultimate responsibility for appointment and functions of external examining.

### 2. Types of External Examiner

- 2.1 There are **two types** of External Examiner
  - i. **Subject** External Examiners
  - ii. **Award** External Examiners
- 2.2 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.
  - i. Levels 5 & 6 of bachelors degree programmes
  - ii. in the full programme for other awards [eg one year courses, foundation degrees, target DipHEs and postgraduate courses]
  - iii. at levels 3 and 4 only where target (not exit) awards are made, and/or where Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies require External Examiner involvement
- 2.3 Award External Examiners are appointed by the University 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. Through Heads of Department and Programme Leaders reporting to University Assessment Boards, the Award Examiners are made aware of any issues raised by Subject External Examiners in relation to threshold academic standards or assessment processes.

### 3. Role and Responsibility of the Subject External Examiner

- 3.1 The Subject External Examiner's role is to enable the University to ensure that:
  - i. standards of awards are comparable with those across the HE sector in the United Kingdom
  - ii. assessment requirements of modules leading to University awards meet learning aims and learning outcomes of those modules

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- iii. standards across the modules for which external examiners are responsible are comparable
  - iv. through the examination of modules, the achievement of programme aims and objectives contributes to the commercial, industrial and professional environment [as appropriate]
  - v. assessment strategies and methods leading to University awards are in line with current best practice in the discipline concerned
  - vi. 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 and collaborative partner sites where applicable
  - vii. Assessment Boards give full and fair consideration to each student
- 3.2 The Subject External Examiner is responsible for a number of modules which may be used exclusively on one programme or span different programmes.
- 3.3 The Subject External Examiner is expected to:
- i. verify the implementation of the overall assessment strategy for the module/programme
  - ii. **approve** all provisional examination questions and rubric, before publication, for the modules/programme assessments and re-assessments for which they are responsible
  - iii. scrutinise a representative sample, including work for collaborative partners where applicable, (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 they are 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 3b, section 7, Marking and Moderation Procedures)
  - iv. exceptionally, give an opinion on the marks of an individual student when asked to
  - v. attend Module Assessment Boards as required (at least one each academic session) to:-
    - a. 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, (including procedures governing ECs, misconduct and borderline performance)
    - b. provide advice on decisions where necessary
    - c. agree the marks, recommendations and decisions signifying this by signing the relevant papers (See Appendix 3f)
    - d. comment as necessary on specific module performance

Note: In some cases, PSRB requirements necessitate the Subject Examiner also attending the University Assessment Board.
  - vi. provide an Annual Report on the particular modules to which they have been appointed, on the quality of learning opportunities afforded to students, the assessment procedures and assessment standards in the context of the programme and the national scene,

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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

- vii. provide advice to programme teams, on and approve proposed minor changes to programme/module content or regulations to which the external examiner is appointed
- viii. communicate with Programme/Subject Teams without lengthy delay on matters concerning examinations and assessment

### 4. Role and Responsibility of the Award External Examiner

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

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

4.2 The Award External Examiner is appointed to the University and is expected to:

- i. attend at least two UABs a year
- ii. ensure there is an experienced and objective input into the exercise of discretion by the UAB through their understanding and knowledge of how comparable situations are dealt with elsewhere and through experience in applying Regulations
- iii. provide an Annual Report

### 5 Responsibilities of University Staff

5.1 The **Academic Quality and Development Service** will provide the External Examiner with the current University Academic Regulations, and details on External Examiner fees and expenses when they are appointed. AQD will also: -

- i. issue annual guidelines for the content, structure and submission of reports
- ii. issue guidelines for the level and payment of fees and expenses
- iii. process external examiner expenses and claims
- iv. monitor receipt of External Examiner annual reports
- v. ensure that any confidential disclosures in External Examiner Reports are removed in the approved Blackboard publishable versions of such reports
- vi. issue revisions to University Academic Regulations
- vii. invite external examiners to an External Examiners Induction Day
- viii. draw attention where appropriate to significant issues raised in External Examiners' Annual Reports

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5.2 The **Director of Student and Academic Administration Service (SAAS)** is responsible for:

- i. setting the dates of Module and University Assessment Boards two years ahead and for confirming with the Subject and Award External Examiners the dates of the meetings they are required to attend
- ii. 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

5.3 The **Head of Department** (through appropriate delegation to **Programme and Module Leaders**), is responsible for ensuring:

- i. timely completion of proposals for new nominations for external examiners which meet the requirements detailed in Appendix 4b
- ii. effective and timely communication with the Subject External Examiner by staff
- iii. that the Subject External Examiner is provided with relevant definitive documents for the programme(s)
- iv. that the incoming External Examiner is provided with the last External Examiner's report
- v. timely and appropriate briefing of the Subject External Examiner (on appointment and throughout their term)
- vi. the early agreement of timings and arrangements for the despatching of materials to the Subject Examiner throughout the academic year;
- vii. appropriate consultation with Subject External Examiner on possible minor changes
- viii. that, where Subject External Examiners are required to scrutinise examination papers and scripts, this material is sent in reasonable time
- ix. that all examination papers [questions and rubric] are approved by the Subject External Examiner before publication
- x. the internal moderation of coursework titles and briefs through sampling by the programme team which is representative of the diversity of assessment items used
- xi. that timely and detailed responses are provided to External Examiner's reports, with detail of any actions resulting (or reasons for not taking action) and for ensuring that the response is shared within the Programme Team and forms part of the Programme Annual Evaluatory Report
- xii. to provide mid-year reports to Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC) responding to actions identified through the University's annual summary of External Examiner reports
- xiii. that the AOD approved version of relevant External Examiner reports are made available on programme-level Blackboard sites
- xiv. ensuring that the Annual Monitoring process takes account of the views of External Examiners as expressed in their reports.

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- 5.4 The **Director of Academic Quality and Development** is responsible for ensuring that formal responses are made to issues raised by Award Examiners in their reports and that where appropriate, issues are referred for appropriate action at Departmental or Service level and are reported on through the University's monitoring processes.
  - 5.5 **The Vice-Chancellor** is responsible for ensuring that responses are made to confidential reports to the Vice-Chancellor (see 4.3 of Section 4e).
- 6 Review of the process**
- 6.1 The process will be reviewed on a regular basis, taking into account best practice and Sector policy.