EXTERNAL EXAMINER NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 2026

Welcome to the first edition of our quarterly newsletter for the new academic year. This newsletter aims to provide an informal way of sharing useful information, along with key reminders, updates, and changes to regulations.

Included in this quarter's update:

- **Reminders/Useful links**
- **External Examiner Induction Sessions**
- **A new academic year: what to expect and an update to fees**
- **External Examiners Annual Reports – 2025/26**
- **Applications for Chief External Examiners**
- **Meet the team: staff profiles and introductions**

We always appreciate hearing from you and would be happy to help with any queries or feedback at any time.

REMINDERS/USEFUL LINKS

Website address: External examiners
As an External Examiner you may meet with students during your tenure, please find new guidance for External Examiners meeting with students which is located on our webpage, under "Information for External Examiners".

EXTERNAL EXAMINER INDUCTION SESSIONS

We will be holding a series of External Examiner induction sessions led by Shona Rogan, Quality Assurance Officer, with support from the Assessments and Awards Manager and the Head of Collaborative Provision.
Two sessions will be offered during October and November. If you are a newly appointed External Examiner, you should already have received an invitation. There is no need to attend both sessions. If you are unable to attend either, one of the sessions will be recorded and made available on our website shortly.
These sessions provide an opportunity to meet the team, learn more about the University's External Examining processes, and ask any questions you may have.
If you have any questions or would like an invitation to be resent, please contact **externalexaminers@cumbria.ac.uk**

A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR – WHAT TO EXPECT AND AN UPDATE TO FEES

As we move into a new academic year, we would like to extend a warm welcome to our new External Examiners and to all of our continuing colleagues.
Programme teams should be making contact with External Examiners to discuss upcoming assessment and moderation activity, if they have not done so already. Newly appointed External Examiners should also have received an introduction and induction information from their programme team.
If you are still awaiting contact, please get in touch with us and we will work with the programme team to ensure you receive the information and support you need.

We would like to thank all of our Subject External Examiners for the invaluable support they provide to our programmes. We are pleased to confirm that the annual fee for Subject External Examiners will increase to £450 per year from the 2026/27 academic year.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS ANNUAL REPORTS – 2025/26

Thank you to everyone who has submitted an Annual Report for 2025/26. Annual reports are a key element of the External Examiner process, providing independent oversight of academic standards, programme quality and assessment practices. They offer valuable feedback on what is working well, identify areas for improvement, and enable the University to monitor progress against previous recommendations, supporting the continuous enhancement of the student experience. Reports are also made available to students, via our Black Board site, making your feedback an important part of the University's commitment to transparency and enhancement.

Undergraduate External Examiners should now have submitted their reports. If you are a Postgraduate External Examiner, the deadline for submission is 31 October 2026. You should already have received the updated reporting templates; however, if you have any questions or anticipate any delays, please let us know as soon as possible.
A reminder also to submit your claim form, together with any additional claim forms relating to roles undertaken during 2025/26, such as Chief External Examiner or External Examiner Mentor activities.

APPLICATIONS FOR CHIEF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Applications are now open for new Chief External Examiners (CEEs).
Chief External Examiners attend Assessment and Awards Panels and play a vital role in the assessment process. While the role is not subject-specific, Chief External Examiners provide independent oversight to ensure that assessment processes are robust, operated fairly, and conducted in accordance with University regulations.
An additional fee of £300 per academic year is payable upon receipt of the annual report.

To be eligible for the role, you must have served as an External Examiner for at least one year and be able to commit to attending Assessment and Awards Panels as required throughout the academic year. This is in addition to your Subject External Examiner responsibilities.

If you are interested in becoming a Chief External Examiner, please contact **externalexaminers@cumbria.ac.uk** for further information.

MEET THE TEAM: STAFF PROFILES AND INTRODUCTIONS

We were delighted to receive such positive feedback on the staff profiles featured in our first newsletter, which introduced myself (Steph) and Shona as members of the External Examiner team.

In this edition, we are pleased to introduce some of the colleagues who support, manage, and oversee the External Examiner process. From reintroducing members of the External Examiner team to highlighting colleagues from Academic Registry and the University's leadership and management teams, these profiles hopefully provide an insight into the people working behind the scenes to support you in your role.

SHONA ROGAN: QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER



I have worked at the University, and previously at its legacy institution, the Cumbria Institute of the Arts, for 23 years. Since May 2025, I have been working as a Quality Assurance Officer, a role I thoroughly enjoy. I feel very fortunate to be part of such a supportive and dedicated team. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my husband, our two sons, and Lucy, our energetic two-year-old Staffordshire Bull Terrier.

STEPH BIRKETT: QUALITY ASSURANCE ADMINISTRATOR



I joined the University in 2022 as a Quality Assurance Administrative Assistant before progressing into my current role, I have worked with External Examiners from the start. Having now experienced a full four-year External Examiner cycle, it has been rewarding to see the entire process, from onboarding new External Examiners through to receiving their final Annual Reports.

I particularly enjoy working on process improvements and finding ways to make our systems and processes work better for both External Examiners and University colleagues. I work closely with Shona, and between us we are often the first point of contact for External Examiners. We are always happy to answer questions and provide support whenever needed. On a personal note, I moved to Lancaster from Leeds some years ago and feel very fortunate to be so close to the Lake District. Outside of work, I enjoy getting outdoors, particularly for autumn walks, usually with a good pub at the end of the route!

DAVID MCGREGOR: HEAD OF COLLABORATIVE PROVISION



I work with the University's validation / franchise partnerships to ensure they comply with the University's Academic Regulations and quality assurance procedures. If your remit includes any partner-delivered provision, we will look to schedule meetings to introduce you to the partner and to agree ways of working through your tenure. There will also be a University of Cumbria lecturer appointed in an academic link tutor role. If you are ever uncertain about the role and the interaction with the partner institution, do not hesitate to contact me at david.mcgregor@cumbria.ac.uk.

PAUL LAWLOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER (COLLABORATIVE PROVISION)



Hi, I'm Paul Lawlor, Quality Officer for Collaborative Provision at the University of Cumbria. I support the quality assurance and enhancement of the University's collaborative partnerships, including External Examiner arrangements, annual monitoring, quality review activities, and programme validations. Having moved from Ireland to Cumbria to study in 2015 and graduating in 2018, I previously worked as an Outreach Officer within the University's Student Recruitment Team before joining the Quality/Collaborative Provision Team and Academic Development service. I particularly enjoy the variety of collaborative provision and the opportunity to build positive relationships with colleagues and partner institutions. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, travelling, and following football (COYG!).

ALICE HELM-ALABASTER: QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER



I have worked for the University for 18 years. My first position was in the Faculty of Education as Faculty Administration Manager. I then moved into central services undertaking a variety of roles/projects before being appointed into the role of Quality Assurance Manager just over 10 years ago. I have very much enjoyed working in a variety of roles, enabling me to gain a really thorough institutional oversight of the University. In my current role, I lead a team of 10 covering all things quality assurance related. You will often hear us say "All roads lead to quality"!

CATHY LAMBERT: PVC STUDENT JOURNEY ACADEMIC REGISTRAR



Cathy Lambert is the Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Journey and Academic Registrar) and has strategic responsibility for delivering an excellent student journey from enquiry through to graduation and beyond to reflect the diversity of the University's student population. Cathy provides leadership to teams across Quality Assurance, Student Admissions, Programme Administration, Placements, Apprenticeships & Employer Skills, Student Systems & Data, Assessment & Awards, Graduation Ceremonies, Student Procedures and Student Services (including Student Enquiry Points, Disability, Health and Wellbeing, Money Advice, University Library, Careers & Employability and Study Skills).

Cathy is the University's Authorising Officer for UK Visas & Immigration and the lead contact for the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Prior to joining the University of Cumbria in 2022, Cathy has held senior leadership positions in the UK as Academic Registrar at Edinburgh Napier University and Canterbury Christ Church University. She was also Interim Academic Registrar at the University of Bradford. Cathy has a national profile and was chair of the UK's Academic Registrars Council in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and also served as deputy chair for two years.

We hope to feature some more of our colleuges that provide support to External Examiners in future articles!

IN CLOSING

Thank you, as always, for the valuable support you provide to our programmes. We welcome any questions, feedback, or suggestions for future newsletter articles, as well as ideas on how we can best support you in your role. Please contact us at **externalexaminers@cumbria.ac.uk.**

Thank you, Shona & Steph