University Guidance: External Examiners Meeting with Students

Student Involvement with External Examiners

Students play an important role in the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes. The University of Cumbria believes that meetings between students and External Examiners can provide valuable opportunities for both parties. These meetings help students better understand the role of External Examiners and enable External Examiners to gather feedback about the student learning experience across the subject area they oversee.

In line with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) External Examining Principles, students may be offered the opportunity to meet with External Examiners, typically through a virtual meeting. Attendance is entirely voluntary.

The University also makes Subject External Examiner reports available to students through module-level Blackboard sites, and External Examiner details are provided within Module Guides.

Purpose of Student Meetings

The primary purpose of meetings between students and External Examiners is to gather student feedback on the academic experience. To support productive discussions, it is recommended that key themes or questions are identified in advance.

Topics that may be discussed include:

- The usefulness and timeliness of feedback on assignments.
- Aspects of the course that students particularly enjoy or find challenging.
- Opportunities to apply learning in practice.
- Students' experiences of:
    - Placement learning
    - Work-based learning
    - Study abroad opportunities
    - Joint or combined courses
- Whether students feel the curriculum is inclusive and accessible.

- For apprenticeship programmes, experiences of End-point Assessment modules where relevant.

External Examiners may be encouraged to reflect on the outcomes of student meetings within their annual report.

Understanding the Role of External Examiners

Programme teams should ensure that students understand the role and responsibilities of External Examiners before any meeting takes place.

Students should be aware that External Examiners:

- Provide independent academic oversight and advice on academic standards and quality.
- Can comment on academic matters relating to programmes and assessment.
- Cannot influence individual student circumstances.
- Cannot change individual assessment marks.
- Cannot intervene in complaints or academic appeals, except in exceptional circumstances and only in accordance with University policies.
- Do not deal with non-academic matters such as accommodation, parking, facilities, or other student services. These should be raised through the appropriate University channels.

Topics That Must Not Be Discussed

Students must not discuss:

- Their individual assessment marks or grades.
- Personal assessment outcomes.
- Ongoing complaints or academic appeals.
- Requests for mark changes or special consideration.

Appropriate University procedures, including the Academic Appeals procedures within the Academic Regulations, are available for students wishing to raise concerns about assessment decisions.

Student Contact with External Examiners

The QAA UK Quality Code states that students should not make direct contact with External Examiners outside of approved University arrangements.

Students must not:

- Contact External Examiners directly by email or other means.
- Seek individual advice about their academic performance.
- Attempt to discuss marks, complaints, or appeals outside of formal University processes.

External Examiners will not respond to direct student communications. Any contact received from a student should be forwarded to:

externalexaminers@cumbria.ac.uk

The University will work with Programme Leaders to remind students that direct contact is not permitted. Repeated attempts to contact an External Examiner may result in action under the University's Student Code of Conduct procedures.

Key Messages for Students

Before attending a meeting with an External Examiner, students should understand that:

✓ The meeting is an opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience.

✓ External Examiners are interested in hearing about strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement within programmes.

✓ Feedback should focus on the student experience as a whole rather than individual cases.

✓ Attendance is voluntary.

✗ External Examiners cannot change grades or influence assessment outcomes.

✗ External Examiners cannot deal with personal complaints, appeals, or non-academic issues.

✗ Students must not contact External Examiners outside the formal meeting process.

Further Information

Subject External Examiner reports can be accessed through relevant Blackboard module sites, and details of External Examiners are available within Module Guides. Programme teams should ensure students are familiar with these resources and the role of External Examiners before any meeting takes place.