

External Examiner Handbook

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1. Role and Responsibilities of External Examiners

1.1 In fulfilling your role, we expect you to:

- be given the opportunity to comment on the form and content of proposed assessment briefs and examination papers and an agreed sample of coursework and other assessments that count towards the award, and the relevant marking criteria
- review samples of assessed work which have been moderated in order to comment whether the assessment processes are robust and learners have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the course and reached the required standard
- comment on whether the academic standards for the course(s) are set and maintained in line with the requirements of national frameworks and, where applicable, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and/or professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements;
- compare the standards of the award and performance of students and apprentices with that of their peers on comparable courses of higher education elsewhere in the UK
- satisfy yourself and then confirm that the assessments have been conducted in accordance with the relevant assessment regulations
- based on moderation, to advise Assessment Boards on the adjustment of whole sets of marks awarded by internal markers subject to the agreement of the Assessment Board
- to participate in the meetings of the Assessment Board and ensure that the decisions accord with the University's regulations, policies and procedures, including decisions relating to mitigation or academic offences
- provide expert and impartial feedback to the Course Team on the effectiveness of the course design, and specifically, assessments, including comment on good practice and innovative practices to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of the learning opportunities provided
- submit an annual report using the approved University report template, by the agreed deadline

1.2 You may be offered the opportunity to mentor other examiners who are new or inexperienced in the role. The intention is for this to offer development opportunities for both parties. There is no additional fee for mentoring as this is not likely to incur a significant amount of extra work and is therefore covered by the standard basic fee.

1.3 As a part of the process for monitoring standards of performance you will have a role in commenting on unit and course assessment data, including award data over time to contribute to providing assurances in respect of consistency of standards and avoiding grade inflation.

1.4 If a course is delivered in different locations and/or in partnership with other institutions, you are requested to highlight if you have any issues or concerns relating to comparability of student/apprentice performance or experience arising specifically from this delivery.

1.5 In addition to the above, whilst in office you may be invited to offer an independent view regarding the provision to which your appointment relates in a number of ways:

- to provide advice for use in Course review or have an advisory role to play in the development of additional provision, acting as a 'critical friend' to support such developments
- to comment on proposed changes to the course structure or content, applying judgement in regard both to the assessment of the modified course(s)/unit(s) and to its appropriateness to the level of the award
- to comment on the suitability of assessment policies, procedures, and regulations and to provide opinion on proposed changes to these

1.6 On occasion, we may seek your view on proposed amendments to policy and procedure over and above assessment, to support this we may look to appoint individuals or groups of external examiners to comment on specific areas of practice (for example access and participation, learning and teaching).

2. Key contacts, information we will provide and how we will communicate with you

2.1 A variety of different staff members will form your key- contacts.

2.2 The Course Leader will remain your main contact and will liaise with you directly throughout the academic cycle.

2.3 Within Registry, you will have a specific Course Administrator who will support all of the administration related with assessment and assessment boards and will be available for supporting you with general queries. The Deputy Academic Registrar will support all of the Course Administrators and may contact you directly from time to time.

2.4 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will provide support to colleagues throughout the nomination and appointment procedures and will provide information and updates on regulations, policy and procedures to all examiners on an annual basis.

2.5 On initial appointment, you will be provided with;

- The External Examiner Handbook, including notification of any amendments or additions
- Access to the relevant areas of the VLE, and details of who to gain support with navigation, as required
- Marking criteria for the course(s) to be examined.
- Assessment briefs for the units concerned
- A timetable/schedule of the examining process for the course, including when work will be available for scrutiny and the dates of practical assessments when external examiners are expected/invited to attend
- Assessment marks
- Moderation reports, as applicable
- Details of procedures for claiming expenses and fees
- Information about completing the external examiner's report, including the expected submission date and a copy of the report form template
- Any other materials that you may reasonably request

2.6 You will be provided with access to relevant IT systems and details of how to gain support will be provided by your Course Administrator.

2.7 Much of the communication will be via the email you provide to us as part of the nomination process. We have an established email inbox (externalexamining@aecc.ac.uk) which should be used for submission of your Annual Reports. This email address can also be utilised for general queries where you are unsure who might best support with the query.

3. Review of assessment briefs and marking criteria

3.1 External examiner review of assessment briefs, draft examination papers and marking criteria is to help ensure that all assessments are appropriate for the subject(s), the level(s) and in relation to

the anticipated intended learning outcomes and that learners will be assessed fairly in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

3.2 You will be given opportunities to review the form and content of proposed examination papers (including resit papers) and assessment briefs. Marking schemes, and any specific guidance associated with PSRBs will also be included where appropriate. Examination papers and assessment briefs will be provided in final draft form and in a timely fashion, with timelines for review confirmed on an annual basis. You will not be expected to act as a proof-reader.

3.3 As a minimum, you will receive all assessment materials which contribute toward classification in order to have an opportunity to review them, therefore normally excluding Level 3 and 4 assessments (except in any cases where awards are designed to terminate at these levels).

3.4 The information you will receive is to include:

- all examination papers (including resit papers);
- assessment briefs (including reassessment where appropriate)
- marking schemes for the above
- A copy of the assessment guidelines, and the planned assessment schedule and moderation plan
- A sample of assessment briefs which are assessed by 100% coursework (including those assessed by one formal element worth 100% or those assessed by a number of sub-elements worth 100% in total) must be reviewed

3.5 The Unit Leader will provide you with feedback as to how your comments on draft assessment material have been taken into consideration and whether changes have been made as a result, and when these will be implemented. A deadline for the completion of this review and confirmation will be provided on an annual basis, set in accordance with the Setting and Scrutiny of Assessments Policy and Procedure.

4. Meeting Learners

4.1 You will be given the opportunity to meet with learners on the course you are examining on an annual basis. Your Course Leader and Course Administrator will work with you to determine the appropriate timing and nature of this meeting, which may include learners from across levels or cohorts (as applicable to the course you are examining) and may be offered virtually or in-person if you are intending to visit the campus.

5. Review Assessment samples

5.1 The Course Team will contact you to arrange the and agree the nature and sample size of assessed learners' work to be provided for moderation during the academic year, and timescales for feedback. The Team will consult with you to take into account your requests in respect of receiving assessment criteria, model answers, marking schemes and any statistical data required.

5.2 To facilitate external examiner moderation, the agreed sample must clearly identify the moderation audit trail and the first marker and moderator must be identifiable to the you.

5.3 Where multiple-choice questions, tests which utilise automated assessment packages, or live assessments (e.g., presentations) are the sole method of assessment for a unit, then you must be provided with access to these. Where live assessments make up 100% of coursework, the Course Leader must agree an appropriate sample size with you and agree how you will be given access to relevant materials.

5.4 You will have access to the work of learners proposed for the highest available category of the award and for failure, and samples of the work of learners proposed for each category of the award

5.5 Examples of learners' work will be available in advance of the Assessment Board and will be provided by the Course Administrator.

5.6 You will not be directly involved in assessing learners or in marking. The Marking and Moderating Policy for all Higher Education courses and units (Health Sciences University awards) sets out the internal arrangements to be followed where internal markers disagree.

5.7 You will not have any special role in individual student matters involving exceptional personal circumstances or academic offences; your role in such cases is to ensure that the institution's procedures are applied appropriately.

5.8 If, following review of assessment, you identify that all students are considered to have been unduly advantaged or disadvantaged by errors in the marking or assessment process, you can request additional samples to assist you in confirming your concerns.

5.9 Moderation by external examiners should not result in changes to the marks for individual students. You may need to request review of marking for full cohorts, where you have identified a concern. This may include, for example, the request for a review of all assessments by a particular marker whose marking has raised a concern. Should you identify a specific marking error (rather than a trend) this should be drawn to the attention of the course team, to enable this to be rectified before the Assessment Board.

5.10 Where amendments are recommended to entire cohort marking, it must be confirmed that all assessment has been reviewed, to ensure no student will be unduly advantaged or disadvantaged. External examiners should remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.

6. Assessment Boards

6.1 The Course Administrator will liaise with you to confirm the arrangements for the Assessment Boards at the start of the academic cycle. If you have any concerns about the scheduling of Boards, you are requested to raise this directly with Registry via the Course Administrator in the first instance.

6.2 You are a formal member of the Assessment Board and the expectation is therefore that you will attend the Board. If unforeseen exceptional circumstances mean that your attendance is not guaranteed, you need to raise this with the Course Leader and Course Administrator as soon as possible so we can work together to manage your oversight and involvement.

6.3 Assessment Boards are being managed virtually as standard. Where any arrangements are to be made for in-person Assessment Boards, information relating to expenses claims for travel and hotel arrangements will be provided by the Course Administrator.

6.4 At the meeting of the Assessment Board the role of the external examiner is:

- to ensure that recommendations accord with the requirements and normal practice of the regulations for that course and the institution;
- to ensure that decisions made are fair and consistent;
- to make general comments, where applicable, on the academic standards and quality of the course and the assessment process including good practice in learning, teaching and assessment and the enhancement of learning opportunities, and any other observations;
- to sign the Assessment Board Report as confirmation that the conduct of the assessment process is satisfactory

7. Annual Reports

7.1 You will be provided with the relevant Annual Report template and instructions for submission ahead of the Assessment Board. All examiners are expected to submit their Annual Report by email within 2 weeks of the Assessment Board.

7.2 As the reports are made available to all students and may be shared with relevant professional bodies or other external agencies, your report must not name, or otherwise identify any student or staff member.

You are asked, as well as answering the specific yes/no questions, to provide frank and open qualitative comment to inform us of particular strengths and issues to be addressed and assist in managing standards and quality effectively.

Submission of reports will be directly to the Quality Team via the externalexamining@aecc.ac.uk email account. The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) is responsible for the central management of external examiner reports and will ensure the report is provided to the Course Leader and Head of School, is made available to ASQC for review as part of the Annual Monitoring procedures as set out in Course and Unit Monitoring Policy and Procedure, and will utilise the information and feedback to inform the annual Assurance Report as part of the institutional review of all external examiner reports.

7.3 If you have concerns of a serious nature, you have the opportunity to set these out directly to the Vice-Chancellor. The information relating how to do this is available within the Annual Report template.

7.4 The Course Leader will respond to the comments you provide within your annual report. The response will be provided, and any planned action reported back to you as earlier as possible, and no later than the conclusion of the annual monitoring activities for the course (timelines are dependent on course start dates). If you have any concerns that you have not received a response, we request that you raise this with the Course Leader. The Annual Report requests confirmation that you received a response to the previous report, and report that you did not will be presented to the relevant course team for action as part of the annual monitoring procedure.

7.5 In your final report submitted at the end of term of office you are asked to provide retrospective comments on your experience as an external examiner at the institution and to draw attention to any significant changes in standards or procedures observed during the period.

8. Practical arrangements

8.1 Fees are payable on receipt of the submission of your annual report. The fee to be paid to an is set out in the letter of appointment. If you have any concerns or questions relating to fees or payments you are requested to contact us by email to the relevant Course Administrator at registry@aecc.ac.uk.

8.2 Where an Assessment Board or other pre-arranged meeting is held face to face, you are responsible for making your own travel arrangements. The Course Administrator will liaise with you regarding travel and subsistence expenses as required.

8.3 Details of costs and subsistence and other expenses should be submitted by email to registry@aecc.ac.uk on the claim form provided. Subsistence expenses will be reimbursed provided details are shown and receipts submitted.

9. Useful sector resources

9.1 The following resources might be useful and helpful for external examiners who are looking for opportunities to further develop their external examining skills and knowledge. Additions and suggestions for this list are welcomed and can be shared with us via the externalexamining@aecc.ac.uk email, or directly with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

AdvanceHE

Resources provided for External Examiners (including access to the AdvancedHE Professional Development training course) is available within their Knowledge Hub: [External examining | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/external-examining)

The Quality Assurance Agency

The External Examining Principles (and associated documentation relating to practice) [External Examining Principles \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/external-examining-principles)

Specific Advice and Guidance chapter relating to External Expertise [External Expertise \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/external-expertise)

Resources contained within the [Quality Code](#) reference points (including Benchmark Statements and Qualification Frameworks)

Version	1.0
Ratified by	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	UK Quality Code 2018. UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance, particularly Externality; Assessment. Mapped against the UKSCQA 'External Examining Principles' (and associated procedural guidance)- published August 2022
Date approved	05 July 2023 (Academic Board) Amendments approved at Academic Board 29 August 2023
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Target	All Staff, Students, Apprentices and External Examiners
Policy location	SIP, Quality Assurance webpage
Equality analysis	No direct impact