

Quality Assurance



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

External Examiner Handbook

2023/24

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Handbook

This handbook has been produced to assist you in your role as external examiner. You will find within it information about our policies and procedures, the duties of external examiners, and how we consider your annual reports.

Please contact the Quality Assurance Team at gat@leeds.ac.uk if you have any queries about your appointment or the submission of your annual report. Please contact the relevant School directly should you have a programme-specific query.

1.2 Resources

- 1.2.1 Please see below for links to relevant University of Leeds website pages for information relating to your duties.

[External Examiners](#)

[Ordinance IX First Degrees and Undergraduate Awards](#)

[Ordinance XI Taught Postgraduate Awards](#)

[Rules for Award](#)

[Code of Practice on Assessment](#)

- 1.2.2 Please see below for links to resources relevant to your role.

[The Quality Assurance Agency's Advice and Guidance on External Expertise](#)

1.3 Personal Data

- 1.3.1 All personal data supplied by you for the purpose of your appointment and subsequently concerning your appointment will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be held securely and for no longer than is necessary. The University will use your personal data for purposes connected with your appointment, for example communication about and payment of fees and expenses, and for any other legitimate reasons. The University will not disclose your contact details or any other personal details to third parties (i.e. outside the University) without your consent unless required to do so under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

2 PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

2.1 The Role of External Examiners

- 2.1.1 The views of external examiners are an essential part of the University's quality assurance mechanisms. External examiners:
- i. ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and national benchmarks;
 - ii. provide assurance for the University that its assessment system is fair and operated equitably;

- iii. provide assurance that the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes for the programme/module;
- iv. provide advice on the content, balance and structure of programmes and modules of study and on assessment processes;
- v. provide recommendations for enhancement and comment on good practice.

2.1.2 External examiners are responsible to the Senate of the University through the Taught Student Education Board.

2.1.3 The University accordingly values greatly the time, effort and experience contributed by its external examiners to the assurance of the standards and quality of its taught programme provision.

2.2 Requirements for External Examiners

2.2.1 At least one external examiner must be appointed for each award/programme made by the University. In some disciplines it may be appropriate to combine a number of cognate programmes within the remit of one external examiner. In other areas it may be necessary, because of the specialist nature of the modules offered, the breadth of the subject or the high number of students concerned, to appoint additional external examiners for specific modules.

2.2.2 External examiners should not normally expect to be asked to take sole responsibility for (a) programme(s) with more than 150 full-time equivalent (FTE) final year students.

2.2.3 On integrated higher and degree apprenticeship programmes the external examiner appointed to the programme/award will normally also undertake external scrutiny of the End Point Assessment (EPA). This involves the external examiner undertaking sampling of assessment and internal quality assurance processes for the EPA, to confirm that national standards have been achieved and upheld. The Learning Enhancement Team works with the Quality Assurance Team on the appointment of examiners who undertake the EQA of EPA delivery (EQA external examiners) and manages reporting processes for the role.

2.3 Criteria for the Selection of External Examiners

2.3.1 Nominees must show appropriate evidence of the following:

- i. knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- ii. competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- iii. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- iv. awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curriculum;

- v. competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- vi. familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- vii. competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience;
- viii. meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

2.3.2 Nominees must also meet the following criteria:

- i. Nominees will normally be of the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, Reader or Senior Lecturer. The possibility is not excluded of appointing individuals of lecturer grade in certain circumstances.
- ii. Nominees from outside the University sector may be accepted in appropriate cases, e.g. from industry, the medical services or other professions. In some cases, these appointments will be made alongside appointments of external examiners from within the University sector.
- iii. Nominees will not normally be from outside the United Kingdom.
- iv. Nominees will not normally have retired more than one year previously.
- v. Nominees will not normally hold more than two external examiner appointments concurrently.
- vi. Nominees will not represent a 'reciprocal' arrangement of external examiners working in cognate areas of the University and another institution.
- vii. Nominees will not be from the same institution as the previous external examiner for the programme(s).
- viii. Former members of the University's staff will not be appointed as external examiners until any student whom they may have taught has completed the programme. This time span will vary in relation to programmes of study, but will normally be at least three years.

2.3.3 Where a nominee has no previous experience of the role, a mentor will be required. A mentor will normally be another appointed external examiner for the School. The possibility is not excluded of previous external examiners or a member of the School's academic staff (e.g. School's Academic Assessment Lead) fulfilling the mentor role in certain circumstances. Mentor arrangements must be included on the nomination form and will be detailed on the appointment letter. The mentor will be supplied with contact details for the mentee.

2.4 Appointment of External Examiners

2.4.1 Nominations for the appointment of external examiners are approved by the Chair of the relevant Faculty Taught Student Education Committee. The nomination should be submitted to the Quality Assurance Team on the appropriate form and be

accompanied by a detailed CV for the person nominated. The nominee should also be asked to give consent to their details being held and used by the University in relation to their duties as an external examiner.

- 2.4.2 Nominations must be approved by Heads of Schools who are responsible for ensuring that there are no 'reciprocal' appointments and no successive appointments of external examiners from the same institution for the programme(s).
- 2.4.3 External examiners are appointed either on a self-employed basis (usually the case for postgraduate programmes) or on a worker basis (usually the case for undergraduate programmes).
- 2.4.4 External examiners who are appointed on a worker basis (usually the case for undergraduate programmes) must provide evidence of their eligibility to work required by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).¹

2.5 Period of Service of External Examiners

- 2.5.1 External examiners are normally appointed for four years.
- 2.5.2 External examiners must remain in post for each complete academic cycle (including all reassessment periods and the Awards Boards for postgraduate programmes held in October/November).

2.6 Discontinuation of the Role

- 2.6.1 External examiners may resign from the role on three months' notice. An external examiner should contact the Quality Assurance Team if they wish to resign from their role.
- 2.6.2 The University reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an external examiner prematurely in the following circumstances:
 - i. non-attendance at Progression and Awards Boards without prior agreement;
 - ii. non-submission of annual reports within the specified timescales;
 - iii. non-fulfilment of other duties outlined in the procedures as listed below;
 - iv. where in the University's judgement a situation arises compromising either the University's reputation or the good standing of the external examiner;
 - v. where the University no longer requires the services of the external examiner for academic reasons.

2.7 Amendments to External Examiner Appointments

- 2.7.1 Once an external examiner is appointed, schools will need to make a formal request to the Quality Assurance Team to amend the remit of an external examiner.
- 2.7.2 Once an external examiner is appointed, schools will need to make a formal request to the Quality Assurance Team to extend the appointment period of an external

¹ A list of the documents which provide acceptable proof can be found on the [HR website](#).

examiner. Appointments beyond four years are not normally permitted but in exceptional cases approval may be given to the extension of an appointment for a fifth year. The re-appointment of an external examiner beyond the five-year period will not normally be considered until a further five years have elapsed.

2.8 Guidance for External Examiners

- 2.8.1 External examiners are asked to complete the institutional induction at the start of their appointment before undertaking any duties of the role. The institutional induction provides guidance on the role and the University's policies and procedures.
- 2.8.2 External examiners will be provided the External Examiner Handbook, which includes links to all relevant information (e.g. Ordinances and Regulations), each academic year by the Quality Assurance Team.
- 2.8.3 Schools will provide external examiners with the following materials (including annual updates if required):
 - i. Relevant programme and module specifications (including guidance on accreditation if necessary)
 - ii. Relevant handbooks (including school handbook and/or programme handbook)
 - iii. School Code of Practice on Assessment (including marking criteria)
 - iv. Guidance on school marking practices (including second and check marking)
 - v. Previous external examiner annual reports and responses
 - vi. Timeline of assessment activity/communications (including dates of meetings and date that the annual report is expected)

3 THE DUTIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

3.1 The Duties of External Examiners

- 3.1.1 External examiners are appointed to complete the following duties:
 - i. review programme design, curriculum and assessment;
 - ii. approve relevant assessment per University policy;
 - iii. review a representative sample of work, marking and feedback;
 - iv. adjudicate between markers to determine an individual mark if required in exceptional circumstances;
 - v. attend the relevant Progression and Awards Board;
 - vi. provide assurance of assessment procedures and Progression and Awards Board procedures;
 - vii. confirm appropriateness of change of marks if required;
 - viii. complete an annual report.
- 3.1.2 If they request it, external examiners should be offered the opportunity to meet

students on the programme, individually or collectively, to allow the students to comment in confidence on the quality of their learning experience.

- 3.1.3 External examiners will be provided with a University of Leeds staff account. All users of University of Leeds staff accounts, including external examiners, are required to complete an online Information Governance training programme on an annual basis. Completion of the training allows external examiners to access University IT systems and Minerva (the Virtual Learning Environment). Further information is available on the [Information Governance training programme website page](#).
- 3.1.4 External examiner comments relating to a named or identifiable student will become available to that student should they submit a data subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018. External examiner comments on, for example, annual reports, scripts, assessed work, separate assessment report/comment sheets or in the minutes of meetings should be able to be produced for a data subject in a meaningful form and should be both intelligible and appropriate. Further information is available on the [Data Protection website page](#).
- 3.1.5 External examiners are not permitted to respond to contacts made by third parties including students or their representatives, external bodies and organisations. If any such contacts are attempted, external examiners should immediately contact the Quality Assurance Team.

3.2 Participation of the External Examiner in General Discussion of Programmes and Procedures

- 3.2.1 It is expected that time will be made for external examiners to discuss programme structure and design, assessment strategies and methods, and relevant procedures with appropriate School staff on a regular basis during their appointment period. Where these discussions form part of the Progression and Awards Boards, they should be formally recorded.

3.3 Participation of the External Examiner in Assessment Procedures

- 3.3.1 Draft assessment papers, model answers and assessment criteria should be available to external examiners for scrutiny in good time before the assessment period. The provision provided to external examiners should be aligned to the University's process for the preparation of assessment that is scheduled centrally by the University's Assessment and Progress Team and the School's process for the preparation of other types of assessment. This should include provision for reassessments. External examiners may request additional materials if required.
- 3.3.2 External examiners should be informed of any immediate adjustments to assessment that may be necessary and, where feasible, consulted in advance.
- 3.3.3 External examiners have the right to view all assessed work, including evidence of performance on placements which form an assessed part of the programme. In those cases where it is agreed that a sample of assessed work will be provided the principles for such a selection should be confirmed with external examiners in advance. In general the selection should be made so as to ensure that external examiners have sufficient evidence to determine that internal marking, moderation

and classification are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. External examiners should be provided a representative sample of work across the full range of marks.

- 3.3.4 If, during their review of the work of students, external examiners encounter any instance in which they suspect plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct (such as cheating or the fabrication of results) they should immediately report their concerns and views to the relevant School.
- 3.3.5 The role of the external examiner is not to contribute to the assessment of students, but to ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and national benchmarks. If an external examiner does not agree with any of the marks given to assessed work within a sample they may require further action such as the:
- i. additional marking of all the student work within the group; or
 - ii. additional marking of an element of assessed work of all the students within the group; or
 - iii. moderation of the marks of all the students within the group.
- 3.3.6 All external examiners are members of the relevant Progression and Awards Board and are required to be present at all Progression and Awards Boards in the subject(s) in which they have been involved. The Progression and Awards Board is the Board at which the results of assessments are considered and any awards and classifications determined on the University's behalf prior to publication. External examiners have the right to be present at those meetings where external examiner involvement is essential in the approval of awards, classifications and marks/grades contributing to awards or the ratification of module marks for purposes such as progression. If an external examiner exceptionally cannot attend a meeting where their presence is required, they must be available for consultation by a suitably agreed alternative.
- 3.3.7 All awards and classifications must be approved by the relevant Progression and Awards Board. As external examiners are required for Progression and Awards Boards to be quorate, all awards and classifications require the explicit approval of external examiners. As members of Progression and Awards Boards, external examiners have oversight of all module marks contributing to award and classification, including exit awards and taught postgraduate awards, and all module marks arising from reassessment.
- 3.3.8 External examiners must provide explicit agreement for the change of marks following Assessment Committees.

3.4 Annual Reports

- 3.4.1 External examiners are required to submit an annual report within six weeks of the relevant Progression and Awards Board using the standard template. If an annual report is not submitted within this time period, external examiners will be reminded by the University and/or the relevant School to submit an annual report. Subsequent failure to submit an annual report will lead to the University considering terminating an external examiner appointment.

- 3.4.2 External examiner comments on an individual candidate (i.e. a data subject) included in an annual report would need to be produced as part of a data subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018. External examiners are accordingly asked not to identify individual students in their annual reports.
- 3.4.3 Annual reports will be provided to the relevant Head of School and to the Chair of the relevant Faculty Taught Student Education Committee. Personal identifiers included in annual reports will be redacted prior to further distribution.
- 3.4.4 Heads of Schools will ensure that annual reports are discussed by the appropriate school committees and that external examiners are informed in writing of the School's response to their comments. The Quality and Standards Committee will monitor that schools have dealt appropriately with the issues identified in the annual reports and will consider any generic issues arising.
- 3.4.5 External examiners are encouraged to liaise with appropriate School staff should they have any comments that may require immediate consideration and may raise any issues of concern in advance of the submission of the annual report by contacting the Quality Assurance Team.
- 3.4.6 In addition, an external examiner may write privately to the Vice Chancellor should they wish to make a comment which would not be appropriate for inclusion in the annual report.
- 3.4.7 Annual reports will be available to students. Annual reports may also be available to external reviewing/accreditation agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and, where appropriate, to the relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

3.5 Fees and Expenses

- 3.5.1 Fees are paid to external examiners by the School concerned following receipt of the annual report. A schedule of payments is produced annually by the Quality Assurance Team and is available on the external examiners website page (see also annexes).
- 3.5.2 Valid expenses will be reimbursed by the School concerned which will provide the necessary claim forms. The levels of reimbursement are the same as for University staff. Valid expenses include the costs of travel to and from the University, overnight accommodation, postage and general subsistence.

3.6 Irreconcilable Differences between the External Examiner and the School

- 3.6.1 If the external examiner feels unable to provide assurance of assessment procedures and Progression and Awards Board procedures, the external examiner and/or Chair of the relevant Progression and Awards Board should immediately report the circumstances to the Head of Quality Assurance.
- 3.6.2 The issues raised will then be considered by the Chair of the relevant Faculty Taught Student Education Committee who will take into account the views of the Dean: Student Education (Quality and Standards) in proposing the action needed to reconcile the difference of view. If the proposed actions prove unacceptable to the

external examiner and/or Chair of the relevant Progression and Awards Board concerned, the issue will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Education who will consult with the Senior Officers of the University in proposing reconciliatory action.

- 3.6.3 In the extreme circumstances that the matter still cannot be reconciled, the University will consider external arbitration through the appointment of an appropriate expert in the discipline considered acceptable as an arbitrator to both the external examiner and Chair of the relevant Progression and Awards Board. The decision of such an external arbitrator will be final.

4 ANNEX: SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Schedule of Payments for External Examiners: 2023-24 Session

The formula for the payment of external examiners consists of two parts: a basic fee and a *per capita* element. The basic fee covers the irreducible load of an external examiner in relation to the setting of assessment papers and attendance in the University for the last stages of the assessment process, and a capitation fee relating to the number of candidates presenting for modules in the subject for which the examiner is responsible.

The *per capita* element is calculated on the basis of a fee per candidate per 10-credit module (undergraduate) or 15-credit module (postgraduate).

There is a separate set of basic fees for examiners who may be asked to take responsibility for groups of modules separately from any overall responsibility they may have with a particular programme of study (the normal basic fee is assumed to apply to full qualifications, normally a minimum of 120 credits in duration).

If an external examiner provides oversight of both undergraduate programmes and postgraduate programmes, a basic fee will be payable for the undergraduate examinership and the postgraduate examinership. A basic fee will also be payable for each entry point for programmes with multiple entry points. **A maximum payment of £1500 for all examinerships held in the University in any one year will apply.**

a. Undergraduate Programmes

A basic fee of £180 will be payable.

In addition, a fee of 70p per candidate per 10-credit module is payable for all modules taken by candidates in the second, third and fourth years of degree programmes (i.e. those contributing to the degree result). 70p per candidate per 10-credit module is also payable for modules taken by candidates of certificate awards, diploma awards or exit awards at Year 1 or 2.

An additional fee of £4.00 per final-year candidate will be payable to the external examiners for subjects which include an oral or performance element.

b. Taught Postgraduate Programmes (including MRes programmes)

A basic fee of £180 will be payable.

In addition a capitation fee of £1.70 per candidate per 15-credit module will be payable.

c. Examiners of Groups of Modules

External examiners who are asked to assume responsibility for groups of modules but who are not associated with an overall degree awarding process will be paid a basic fee as follows:

Number of Credits	Fee
Up to 60 Credits	£110
65 to 90 Credits	£145
95 to 120 Credits and Upwards	£180

In addition, the capitation fee of either 70p per candidate per 10-credit module will be payable to undergraduate students or £1.70 per candidate per 15-credit module for postgraduate students.

d. Work-Based Learning

The external examiner for the Work-Based Learning programme will be paid a basic fee of £180 with a capitation fee of £18 for each candidate presenting for an undergraduate award and £22 for each candidate presenting for a taught postgraduate award.

e. Mentors

External examiners who are asked to mentor new appointees will receive a standard fee of £100 per annum.

f. Degrees of MChD/BChD, BSc

An external examiner will be paid a basic fee of £180 together with a capitation fee for the programme element for which they are appointed.

Year	Basic Fee Per Examiner	Candidate Fee Per Student
Year 1	£180	£3.20
Year 2	£180	£4.20
Year 3	£180	£4.20
Year 4	£180	£5.50
Year 5 Dental Surgery	£180	£8.60

g. Resignations

External examiners who resign before completing the full duties of the role for the academic year will be paid £120. External examiners must have completed partial duties of the role and must complete and submit sections 1 through 3 of the annual report to receive the payment.