

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' HANDBOOK

| Board | Earliest Date for Event | Latest Date for Event |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Subject Assessment Board | 29 May 2019 | 03 June 2019 |
| Progression/Award Board | 11 June 2019 | 17 June 2019 |

These dates are provided as a guide only, but the bulk of External Examiners will be required to attend a board at the University during this period. Specific dates will be sent at a later date when individual board dates have been set.

| Title: External Examiner Handbook | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
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Foreword

The External Examiner system is fundamental to the University's key aim of providing an outstanding student experience. It helps the University to ensure that awards delivered in its name meet threshold academic standards.

The aim of this Handbook is to ensure that policy, process and practice is transparent to all those involved, including University and partner organisation academic and administrative staff as well as External Examiners themselves. This process therefore aims to encapsulate the way the University interprets and implements the QAA Quality Code, particularly in relation to External Expertise.

In particular, the purposes of this Handbook are to:

1. Outline the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners and of the University (see Section 1)
2. Detail the induction arrangements for External Examiners (see Section 2)
3. Outline the requirements for External Examiner reports (see Section 3)
4. Describe how External Examiner reports are used throughout the University and how feedback is provided to external examiners (see Section 3)
5. Outline the administrative procedures for the submission and payment of External Examiner fees and expenses (see Section 4)
6. Provide information about the academic frameworks and generic assessment regulations which contextualize the award and module regulations that External Examiners receive for the particular Assessment Board to which they are appointed (see Section 5).

Further information about the University's quality policies and processes can be accessed through the [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service](#) (QAE) website. Queries regarding the External Examiner system can be directed to extexam@southwales.ac.uk.

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Section 1: The Role and Rights of External Examiners

Role of the External Examiner

External examiners have an important role within the quality assurance mechanisms in assuring comparability of academic standards outside and within the University and ensuring the fairness of the operation and assessment of courses. They also contribute towards the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching, and the attainment by students of course outcomes.

The University [Assessment for Learning Policy](#) sets out the requirements for moderation of assessments and marking. External Examiners are expected to be familiar with the University's Assessment for Learning Policy and are encouraged to become familiar with other guidance and policy documents available on the [Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching](#) webpages.

In particular, the following normally comprise the External Examiner's role:

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | To maintain oversight of the academic standards, quality and coherence of the module(s)/course(s) to which they are appointed. |
| 2. | To judge the overall standards of student performance on module(s)/course(s) to which they are appointed. |
| 3. | To monitor the overall standards of student performance on module(s)/course(s) to which they are appointed. |
| 4. | To provide comment that the course(s) to which they are appointed is in line with the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, as applicable, to the best of their professional knowledge. |
| 5. | To provide comment that the course(s) to which they are appointed is in line with the Regulations for Taught Courses to the best of their professional knowledge. |
| 6. | To comment on the form and content of elements of assessment that count towards the outcome of the module. |
| 7. | To scrutinise a sample of student work in accordance with the University guidance. |
| 8. | To monitor and report on the application of the moderation process undertaken by the module team. |
| 9. | To attend the University up to two occasions per academic year (see Section 4 for fees relating to additional visits). |
| 10. | To attend and submit an oral report to at least one subject assessment board during tenure, either in person or by electronic means and provide a view on overall module performance and assess the extent to which the determination of marks is sound and fair. |
| 11. | To attend and submit an oral report to the progression and award board(s) annually and provide a view on the overall performance of students, the strengths and weaknesses, the quality of knowledge and skills demonstrated by the students and the structure, organisation, design and marking of all assessments and to assess the extent to which the determination of awards is sound and fair. |
| 12. | To provide feedback on any good practice and enhancement that has been observed. |
| 13. | To produce and submit an annual report using the standard University of South Wales template no later than 4 weeks from the date of the progression/award board attended. |
| 14. | To undertake any training as directed. |
| 15. | To potentially mentor new External Examiners, as requested. |
| 16. | To comment on and approve changes to existing modules and the design of new modules considered by Faculty Quality Assurance Committees outside of the University's periodic review process. |
| 17. | To approve changes to course structures considered by Faculty Quality Assurance Committees outside of the University's periodic review process. |
| 18. | To report to the Vice-Chancellor, when appropriate, on any matters of serious concern. |

Role of External Examiners in moderating assessments

Moderation of work is subject to the University's [Assessment for Learning Policy](#), Appendix 2, paragraph 4.14.

The University will make assignments and examinations available to External Examiners prior to them being sat.

Following moderation, External Examiners may feel it necessary to adjust the proposed marks of internal markers. In such circumstances, we ask that the marks of all students taking the module are revised (either upwards or downwards) and not just the students that have been sampled. This proposed adjustment would be agreed with the subject leader and the module leader prior to the subject assessment board.

Otherwise the University policy is that marks may not be amended in the assessment boards unless there is an unexpected and unplanned event which has impacted upon the students' performance. This must be supported by statistical evidence and must be agreed with the External Examiner prior to the assessment board.

Rights of the External Examiner

An External Examiner has the authority and the responsibility to report directly to the Vice-Chancellor of the University in such cases that they believe there to be serious concerns about a module/course. Particularly, if it is considered that assessments are being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the University's awards. Any other issues of a confidential nature, which the External Examiner may wish to raise, may also be referred, in full and in writing, to the Vice-Chancellor.

Upon receipt of a report indicating serious concerns the Academic Registrar and/or nominee carry out an investigation, and a written response provided to the External Examiner.

The University hopes to resolve and address any serious issues they are notified of both effectively and speedily. Where this is not the case, and an External Examiner has serious concerns about systemic failings, and has submitted a report to the Vice-Chancellor and received a report of the investigation and outcomes, External Examiners may consider invoking the QAA's Concerns Scheme, as indicated in the guiding principles of the External Expertise theme of the UK Quality Code, or inform the relevant PSRB.

External Examiners are also able to:

- request to see all of the examination scripts and student assignments for modules for which they have responsibility. Whilst this will not be imposed they do have the opportunity to see everything if they wish;
- inspect any material relating to the course; particularly, but not exclusively, course handbooks, examination papers, scripts, coursework or project reports relating to the assessments with which they are specifically associated;
- discuss curriculum development with academic staff;
- meet students to discuss their course and review a sample of their work (this

may include, for example, assessment of practice documents);

- withhold endorsement for the recommendation of an award.

Final judgements on, or approval of, assessment outcomes are academic peer group processes. As with any such process, it is possible that members of the group will disagree. The Academic Board is the final authority for any award of the University. Therefore any disagreement so great that it cannot be resolved at the level of a Subject Board or Progression/Award Board may come to Academic Board (or delegated subcommittee) for resolution.

Section 2: Induction

General information for External Examiners

Upon appointment, External Examiners are sent a 'contract letter', which confirms and provides the following information, specific to each examiner:

- course and modules details to which the External Examiner is appointed;
- arrangements for subject/award and progression boards;
- training requirements;
- PSRB requirements (where appropriate);
- reporting requirements;
- a copy of the previous External Examiners final report (if relevant);
- tenure details;
- request for completion of Salary to Bank (STB) form;
- request of colour photocopy of passport¹ in accordance with UKVI ['right to work'](#) in the UK.

External Examiners are also directed to the [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service](#) website where they can access current information relevant to their role along with this Handbook.

Following appointment, External Examiners will have access to Blackboard, to enable them to view module content. This is arranged as a matter of course, however, should there be any issues with regards to access please contact the Faculty Quality Office in the first instance.

Course teams (typically the Course Leader) are responsible for providing External Examiners with course specific information, including relevant course handbooks, course and module specifications and, where appropriate, details of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) information including that related to continuing PSRB accreditation (e.g. fitness to practise requirements). The Course Leader is also responsible for providing their External Examiner with a schedule of key dates for the moderation of student assessments.

Arrangements for informing External Examiners following appointment

An External Examiners' term of office will normally be four years to enable them to assess four successive cohorts of students and will normally begin on 1 September and end on 30 November. However, should their services as an External Examiner be no longer required during any year because, for example, the modules they are responsible for have been phased out, their appointment will end.

¹ A full colour copy of the proposed examiners visa is also required if holding a non-European Union United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland passport.

Where the University has appointed an External Examiner who has no previous experience of the role, an existing External Examiner might be asked to act as a mentor to that individual. Duties of mentors is as follows:

1. The general role of a mentor is to provide of advice and guidance. Key discussions may centre around:
 - the role of the external examiner;
 - assessment processes;
 - the approaches to moderation;
 - requirements for annual reporting to the University.
2. There is no requirement for face-to-face meetings of the mentor and the mentee, although they may meet at subject or progression and award boards. Most contact will be via e-mail or telephone.
3. If an external examiner appointed as a mentor has any comments or concerns about the role contact the Faculty in the first instance.

The University utilises online training, available on the [QAE website](#), which provides External Examiners with an overview of their duties, role and rights, and the general academic regulations.

Section 3: Annual Report to the University

When in attendance, External Examiners attend as a full member of the appropriate subject and/or progression and award board and are required to submit an [annual report](#) to the University.

External Examiner reports are shared with students via Blackboard, shared with the relevant course and faculty teams, , and are used as a resource when undertaking continuous monitoring.

With this in mind, the formal report to the University, which should preserve the anonymity of students and staff, covers the following areas:

- the overall performance of the students in relation to their peers in comparable subjects;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the student body;
- the quality of knowledge and skills (both general and subject specific) demonstrated by the students;
- the structure, organisation, design and marking of all assessments;
- the quality of teaching as indicated by student performance;
- the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods and resources of the modules and/or subject;
- the standards of the award;
- any matters in relation to Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);
- any other recommendations arising from the assessments; and
- the conduct of the board.

External Examiners are expected to provide their written annual report within 4 weeks of their attendance at a progression and award board. The current report template is accessible via the [QAE webpages](#) and regularly updated. Payment of the annual fee is processed upon receipt of a satisfactory report. The University reserves the right to take appropriate action in relation to non or late submission of a report.

External Examiners of Collaborative Provision

The general external examining arrangements and regulations for courses delivered in collaboration with the University's partner organisations are the same as those for the University's other provision. However, as an External Examiner for collaborative provision, the University encourages External Examiners to meet with the partner course team and/or students at least once during their tenure.

In some instances, the key contact for these arrangements will be the HE Manager or the Course Leader at the partner organisation. The outcomes of such meetings should be noted in the annual report.

External Examiners can be appointed for provision which is delivered either by **multiple partner organisations and/or on multiple sites**. In such cases they should expect to see clearly identified samples for external scrutiny and statistical profiles from **each** partner organisation/site of delivery in order to ensure equivalence of standards. For courses delivered by multiple partners, a further internal moderation activity should have taken place prior to external moderation to enable representatives from all partners to ensure consistency in the application of assessment criteria and complete internal moderation across all partners.

External Examiners are expected to comment on both the comparability of standards and quality of the learning experience and consistency in assessment practice, e.g. application of grading criteria, for the module/course as delivered at each partner organisation/site of delivery and any specific issues for the course as a whole throughout the final report. Where there are inconsistencies in standards, quality of learning experience or assessment practice or comments that are specific to individual partner organisations, these should be identified through the annual report to enable appropriate response, support and action. Similarly, if there are instances of good practice at one or more partner, these should be clearly identified.

Use made of External Examiners' Reports

External Examiners' reports form an essential aspect of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University. These are incorporated specifically within the processes of continuous monitoring and periodic review, and through course management meetings, where they may be discussed with student representatives.

The process for receipt of, and responding to, External Examiner reports is as follows:

Copies of reports are, upon receipt, sent to the Academic Registrar or nominee who produces an overview report for Academic Board, and also responds to all institutional issues raised by External Examiners, following consultation with relevant University colleagues.

Should the Academic Registrar or nominee highlight any issues of serious concern, this is noted and responses are reviewed to ensure the issues are addressed prior to sending the response.

Reports are also sent to Principal Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer for the relevant faculty who in turn send it to the relevant course team. Reports on courses taught collaboratively with partners are copied to the HE Lead of the partner

organisation and University Link Officer.

A response is prepared by the Course Leader, approved by the Dean of Faculty (or nominee), and forwarded to the External Examiner, normally within eight weeks of receipt of the report. External Examiners' reports are considered for general as well as specific issues within the University.

In addition, the course continuous monitoring report which should refer to External Examiners' reports and the Course Team responses to these, is discussed with students via continuous monitoring events. They are also used to populate continuous monitoring action plans at both school and faculty level for approval by the University's Quality Assurance Committee.

External Examiners who have raised institutional issues, can expect a response from the Academic Registrar or nominee.

Section 4: Fees and Expenses

Payment of Fees/Expenses

Expenses: The Expenses Claim form and Guidance can be found on the [External Examiner Expenses website](#).

Annual Fee Payment: The annual fee will be processed upon receipt of the satisfactory annual report from the External Examiner.

If you make additional visits, either to the University or its collaborative partners, then you will be paid at a rate of £100 per full day visit or £50 per half day visit. Up to two visits per academic year will be permitted and any further visits must be approved in advance. Claims for fees for additional visits should be made on the '[External Examiners Additional Visits Fees Proforma](#)', available on the Academic Registry web pages. Any such additional visits should be agreed at the start of the academic year with the faculty/College.

Section 5: Termination of Contract

All External Examiners are entitled to submit their resignation for any reason. The University requests sufficient notice in order to make revised arrangements.

The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of any External Examiner, subject to the agreement of the Academic Registrar.

Useful Links

[Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service Homepage](#)

[Quality Assurance Manual](#)

[Regulations for Taught Courses](#)

[Changes to Regulations](#)

[Course Specific Regulations](#)

[Policies Relating to Assessment and Feedback](#) including [Assessment for Learning Policy](#)

[Annual Report Template](#)

National Links

[The Higher Education Academy, Guidance on External Examining](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency: UK Quality Code](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency: External Expertise Advice and Guidance](#)

Additional Information

[University of South Wales homepage](#)

[Campus Information](#)