External Examining

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* The University has adopted the principles of Designing for Diverse Learners, and all policy documents should be written with reference to these principles. Further information is available at the [Designing for diverse learners website](https://designingfordiverselearners.info/).
* An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) must be considered for all new and amended policies. Further information is available from the [EIA section of SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/EDI/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments-(EIAs).aspx).
* This document is available in alternative formats from [**policy@hull.ac.uk**](mailto:policy@hull.ac.uk).
* All printed or downloaded versions of this document are classified as uncontrolled

External Examining

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External Examining

# Introduction

* 1. The external examiner process is designed to assist the University in discharging its responsibility for the quality and standards of the education it provides, the awards it offers and enhancing the quality of its provision.
  2. More specifically, it includes:
     1. Commenting on the standards of modules/awards and that modules/awards are comparable to all appropriate nationally recognised standards [examiners are primarily directed to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements (see www.qaa.ac.uk). Oversight may include modules which do not directly contribute to a student's classification results but is nevertheless important in defining the academic standard].
     2. Ensuring that assessment methods are fair, that assessment is operated fairly and in accordance with University regulations.
     3. Reviewing the assessment performance of students as a cohort.
     4. Reviewing assessment tasks, irrespective of their format, level or stage within a programme.
     5. Reviewing a representative sample of student output. The purpose of this is to oversee that robust moderation of assessments has taken place. External examiners **must** not be involved in marking student work.
     6. Verifying that the University's policy for moderation/second marking has been applied and provide comment on the evidence provided.
     7. Commenting on the way in which feedback on assessments is being provided to students to promote learning.
     8. Commenting on any other opportunities provided to enhance the quality of the student's learning opportunities.
     9. Commenting on examples of effective practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment.
     10. Attending and making recommendations to Boards of Examiners.
     11. Confirming that they have been satisfied with the assessment process and the standards achieved by the students.
     12. Be consulted on curriculum development, including the introduction of new programmes of study and revisions to the existing programmes of study.
     13. Make a full report on the assessment process to the University on an annual basis.
     14. Immediately report any circumstances relating to allegations of academic misconduct in writing to the Chair of the Board of Examiners concerned.
     15. External examiners are not required to give approval to degree classifications or overall module marks where the decision has been deferred due to issues relating to academic misconduct or an administrative error has occurred with respect to the recording of marks or calculation of result.
  3. External examiners shall have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. They shall inspect a sufficient amount of work of the candidates to enable them to arrive at a judgement that can be applied to the assessment as a whole.
  4. This Code of Practice complies with the QAA UK Quality Code for External Expertise and the QAA External Examining Principles.

# External Examiners at the University of Hull

* 1. External examining involves action at both the module and programme levels.
  2. The role of the external examiner specifically provides feedback to the University on the learning opportunities provided to students, and the assessment of their learning at the modular and programme levels.
  3. External examiners will be advised on appointment, which programme(s), modules, or other elements they will be responsible for overseeing.

## Module External Examining

* 1. At the modular level external examiners **must**:
     1. Review assessment tasks.
     2. Verify that the standards of the assessment of module learning outcomes/competencies are appropriate for the level and credit volume.
     3. Ensure that the assessment process, including the conduct of Boards of Examiners, is just, equitable, rigorous and fairly operated in the marking and grading of student performance, and in the exercise of any discretion (within regulations).
     4. Compare the academic standards of student work within specific module(s) with those of other higher education institutions.
     5. Attend all Boards of Examiners at which student achievement in the module/s for which they are responsible is confirmed.
     6. Provide externality of opinion on the processes involved in learning, teaching, and assessment.
     7. Submit an annual report using the University’s pro-forma.

## Programme External Examining

* 1. At the programme level external examiners **should**:
     1. Monitor the continued currency and validity of the programme as a whole.
     2. Verify that the standards of the assessment of programme learning outcomes/competencies are appropriate for the level of award.
     3. Attend Boards of Examiners at which student achievement in the programme/s for which they are responsible is classified and degree awards and progression are recommended (when appropriate).
     4. Compare the academic standards of student performance within the programme as a whole with those of other higher education institutions.
     5. Submit an annual report using the University’s pro-forma.
  2. Academic Units **should** contact the external examiner on proposed changes to programmes and modules. Consultation with the external examiner is mandatory in cases where it is proposed to withdraw a programme of study which has students on it.
  3. External examiners are not permitted, and **must** not be asked, to undertake any of the following:
     1. Setting assessment tasks (whether coursework, exam papers or other).
     2. First or second marking of student assessed work.
     3. Revising the marks awarded for the assessed work of individual students.

## External Examiner Meetings with students

* 1. External examiners may, with the agreement of the relevant Head of Academic Unit, meet with students as part of their general induction to the University and programme(s)/module(s). Such meetings are not restricted to the beginning of the external examiner’s term of office.

# Nomination of External Examiners

* 1. The Head of Academic Unit is responsible for ensuring the nomination of suitably qualified and experienced external examiners for all programmes and modules delivered by the Academic Unit or, in the case of collaborative provision, overseen by the Academic Unit.
  2. Heads of Academic Units **must** ensure that external examiners have been nominated by the start of the relevant academic session (or the start of the relevant trimester for programmes following non-traditional scheduling).
  3. Nominations **must** make explicit which programmes, modules, or other elements the nominee will be responsible for overseeing as external examiner, including the name of partner institution(s) where applicable. There **should** only be one external examiner appointed to oversee an individual module.
  4. Where it is necessary to involve two or more external examiners for a programme, one external examiner **must** be nominated as the ‘lead external examiner’.

# Appointment of External Examiners

* 1. The appointment of an external examiner (including extensions to existing appointments) **must** be approved by University Education Student Experience Committee (via the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC)) exercising powers delegated by Senate.

## Appointment period for external examiners

* 1. External examiners shall normally be appointed for a period of four years.
  2. Nominations for the renewal of appointment of external examiners will be for exceptional circumstances only and for a period of a maximum of one further year (or two years in the case of a programmes that are being withdrawn).
  3. An external examiner **must** not be appointed for a further term of office unless no fewer than five years have elapsed since the previous term of office.
  4. Any extension of external examiners’ responsibility requires prior approval by QSC.

## Criteria for appointment of external examiners

* 1. In deciding whether to approve the appointment of an external examiner, QSC will consider the core duties for external examiners and have regard to the criteria stated below:
     1. That the nominee holds a qualification higher than or equal to that being examined.
     2. That the nominee has appropriate levels of expertise and experience in relation to the role to be performed whether drawn from inside or outside higher education; this would include external examiners from, for example, industry or the professions, particularly if there are additional criteria from professional or accrediting bodies to be met.
     3. That the nominee is a person of sufficient experience and has competence in the subject area who is able to command authority and the respect of colleagues.
     4. That the nominee has knowledge and understanding of relevant UK sector-wide benchmark statements and other reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality.
     5. That the nominee is familiar with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed, and awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula. If the nominee is no longer employed in the sector, for example is retired or is an Emeritus Professor, the nomination **must** be able to evidence recent work within the sector with regards to education, teaching, learning and assessment.
     6. That the nominee has competence and experience relating to design and operation of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject area and to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
     7. That the nominee is fluent in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the receiving information to arrive at informed views.
     8. That the nominee is not an employee of another institution in which a member of this University already serves as an examiner in the same subject area or discipline, unless the subject is taught in a very limited number of institutions and it can be demonstrated that there is no real risk of a conflict of interest, nor of reciprocal arrangements.
     9. That the nominee is not a former student of the University, member of staff, or person with Recognised Teacher Status, unless a period of no fewer than five years have elapsed.
     10. That the nominee is not from the same institution as any other external examiner in the nominating subject area or discipline or as the external they are succeeding.
     11. That the workload associated with the external examiner’s role is not unduly onerous.
  2. NOTE: In deciding whether to make a nomination, the Head of Academic Unit **must** be satisfied that the nominee will have sufficient time to carry out the role having regard to the number of external examinerships currently held by the nominee. Nominees already holding two external examinerships **should** not be nominated for a third role unless the roles in question are sufficiently limited to ensure the nominee can carry out all three roles.

## Circumstances where an external examiner must not be appointed

* 1. Circumstances where an external examiner **must** not be appointed:
     1. Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study.
     2. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study.
     3. Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study.
     4. Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question.
     5. Where there is a succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home institution.
     6. Where the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same subject area or discipline of the same institution occurs.
     7. A member of a governing body or senior committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners.
     8. a current employee of the University or one of its collaborative partners.

## Confirmation of appointment

* 1. The Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) will be responsible for ensuring that those persons appointed as external examiners are provided with a formal letter of confirmation of appointment, which includes the modules, programmes and/or awards to which the external examiner is appointed.

## Recording external examiner appointments

* 1. The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that a central record of external examiner appointments is maintained, including details of:
     1. The name, home institution (if applicable) and subject area/department of the external examiner.
     2. The nominating Academic Unit.
     3. The date of appointment and length of period of appointment.
     4. The modules and/or programmes (or other units) for which the external has been appointed.
     5. The date of receipt of the external examiner’s annual reports.
  2. The Faculty is responsible for contributing to the University’s register of staff carrying out external examining duties for other institutions.

# The Induction of External Examiners

* 1. New external examiners shall be provided with sufficient information to enable them to understand and fulfil their responsibilities.
  2. The Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) is responsible for providing each new external examiner with a formal letter of appointment and information on where to find the following guidance:

* + 1. A summary of the University’s quality and standards framework, and details of how to access the full version of the framework.
    2. The University Code of Practice for External Examining.
    3. The University Code of Practice for Boards of Examiners.
    4. University regulations governing the programmes/modules for which the examiner has been appointed.
    5. Access to the University Canvas page for external examiners: [University of Hull External Examiner Guidance](https://canvas.hull.ac.uk/courses/56702)
  1. The Faculty quality team or, in the case of collaborative provision, the Partner Institution’s quality department, is responsible for ensuring that each external examiner is provided with the following information:
     1. Information about the Subject Academic Unit, its staff, facilities for learning and teaching and its portfolio of programme(s) and module(s).
     2. Copies of the previous external examiner’s report (if applicable).
     3. A copy of any external PSRB accreditation (if applicable).
     4. The module and programme specifications for each programme/module within the remit of the external examiner.
     5. The assessment criteria for the assessment tasks for the programmes/modules in question.
     6. Dates for forthcoming examination and assessment deadlines and boards of examiners meetings.
  2. Where possible, external examiners **should** have the opportunity to meet with outgoing external examiners, and to meet with staff and students.
  3. In the case of collaborative provision any invitation to meet staff **should** include an opportunity to meet the University academic contact for the provision in question.
  4. The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that appropriate discussions are held with the external examiner as to how communications will take place and the evidence which the external examiner will require to fulfil their role.

# Consideration of assessment tasks

* 1. The external examiner is entitled to be consulted on all summative assessment tasks irrespective of their format, level, or stage within a programme after they have undergone internal scrutiny within the academic unit. They **should** always scrutinise those assessments that contribute towards a final award (typically diploma, honours and masters level), though that may be after the assessment has taken place. The precise range of tasks which the external examiner wishes to see, and the timing of the consultation, **must** be discussed with the external examiner in advance.
  2. The external examiner can recommend the modification of assessments if it is felt that these do not adequately assess the intended learning outcomes/competencies and/or reflect the relevant standard for the level of study.
  3. The Academic Unit shall have final responsibility for determining assessment tasks. Where it is decided to act contrary to the opinion and advice of an external examiner, the external examiner shall be informed of the Academic Unit’s actions and reasons.
  4. The approval of assessment tasks for collaborative provision is subject to the requirements of the University’s Code of Practice: Moderation of Assessment Tasks, through which the assessment tasks **must** have been approved by the University Academic Contact before submission to the external examiner. In the event of disagreement, the University Moderator has final responsibility for determining assessment tasks.

# Consideration of student work

* 1. An external examiner has the right to see all student output in order to form an informed view of the standards of student work. However, a representative sample from the full range of marks awarded is appropriate. The precise output to be seen **must** be agreed between the Academic Unit and the external examiner.
  2. The guiding principle is that external examiners **should** have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. The evidence **should** include rubrics, mark schemes and examples of the feedback that students receive.
  3. A representative sample is approximately 10% of the student cohort for the module selected, but subject to a minimum of ten students and a maximum of twenty students. If the cohort is less than 10 students, all work **should** be made available to the external examiner.
  4. A representative sample of student output **must** normally include the output for candidates whose final module marks are around classification borderlines (on the understanding that borderline candidates **should** be considered collectively rather than as individual cases) and include a representative sample of FAILS. In the case of collaborative programmes, agreement **must** involve the University Academic Contact.
  5. Where an external examiner considers that the sample reveals evidence of significant over- or under-marking, they may recommend to the Board of Examiners the moderation of the marks for the cohort. The final decision remains with the Board and **must** be applied to all student work for the assessment task in question and not solely those samples of student work seen by the external examiner.
  6. Based on the sampling of student work, external examiners may provide feedback about the assessment tasks in the context of the sample of work, for consideration in setting for the next session.

# Membership and attendance at Boards of Examiners

* 1. External examiners are automatically appointed as members of the formal Boards of Examiners as appropriate to their duties.
  2. External examiners are expected to participate in the Boards of Examiners at which the final marks for the modules which they are assigned to are considered and report on the individual modules.
  3. External examiners are invited to participate in the Boards of Examiners at which credit is awarded, progression issues are determined, and degrees are awarded, but attendance is not a requirement.
  4. As a member of Boards of Examiners, external examiners **should** be given opportunity to:
     1. Report on the quality of the assessments, standard and accuracy of marking, and conduct of the assessment process generally.
     2. Offer suggestions to enhance the process of assessment and for the quality of the learning opportunities.
     3. Report on the academic standards of the programme.
     4. Attend boards of examiners meetings; however, the board is not inquorate where the external examiner is unable to attend. Where the external examiner is unable to attend the board may proceed but the Dean **must** be informed of the alternative arrangements made.
     5. Comment on the conduct of the board including application of regulations. If an external examiner has serious concerns about the conduct of a board which requires an immediate response (prior to submission of the external examiner’s report) they are encouraged to raise those concerns with the relevant Dean or, in very serious cases, the University Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC). A serious concern is interpreted as involving either evidence that the academic standards of the University awards may be at risk, or evidence that University regulations or procedures are not being adhered to.

# External Examiner Annual Reports

* 1. External examiner reports **must** be submitted annually. The form **should** be completed online using the official link provided by the University of Hull. Annual reports **should** be submitted within four weeks of the relevant Boards of Examiners meeting.
  2. In the case of part time Postgraduate Masters programmes the external examiner may prefer to wait until after the final (Masters Stage) Boards of Examiners meetings. This **should** be agreed with the academic area in advance, and the external **should** arrange to provide interim feedback on any issues which they believe **should** be considered by the academic area prior to the final boards of examiners.
  3. Where a report has not been submitted within the required timeframe, is incomplete or carries insufficient detail, the University shall write to the external examiner asking them to provide their report or a re-submission and the likely date on which it will be submitted.
  4. If an External Examiner does not submit a report, the Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) will take such steps as appropriate to the circumstances to obtain it, and/or may choose to issue a letter of premature termination as a result.
  5. Failure to submit reports or situations of unsatisfactory performance can lead to an informal warning or the premature termination of an external examiner’s contract. Fees are not paid until a satisfactory report is submitted.
  6. The Dean is responsible for ensuring that academic units have in place, systems for addressing the issues raised in the report, and provide feedback to the external examiner. This process **should** form part of the ongoing interrelationship between the academic unit and external examiner. In particular, the reports **should** normally provide confirmation of the resolution of issues which the external examiner has raised during the Board(s) of Examiners, and through other discussions with the academic area.
  7. Where an external examiner has raised an issue which impinges on the requirements of a professional body (for example a body which accredits the programme of study concerned), the academic area **should** raise the issue with the relevant body, and if appropriate, instigate discussions involving the professional body and the external examiner.
  8. Issues raised by external examiners will be considered to be of relevance at University level where consistency across the institution is desirable and therefore practice, or change of practice, **should** be considered for implementation across the institution (this could include examples of effective practice); or where it is an issue the academic unit is not empowered to act upon (e.g. because of University regulations or the issue lies within the jurisdiction of another body). The academic area/programme director will feedback to the external examiner on the institutional issues they have raised through the normal reporting procedure.

# Termination of External Examiner appointments

* 1. Where the Head of Academic Unit is concerned that an external examiner is not performing their duties in accordance with the University’s requirements, or if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, they **must** adhere to the following process, adopting each further step only in the event that the first step does not resolve the matter satisfactorily:
     1. Inform the Dean of their concerns.
     2. Discuss their concerns with the relevant external examiner and seek to clarify actions which are desirable to resolve those concerns.
     3. Make a formal written request to the external examiner setting out actions deemed appropriate (copied to the Dean).
     4. Make a formal written request to the University Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) to terminate the external examiner’s contract, specifying the reasons for the request, and providing evidence of the steps taken to resolve the concerns (copied to the Dean).
     5. On receipt of such a request the Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) may consult further with the Head of Academic Unit, Dean of Faculty and external examiner.
     6. Where the Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) is satisfied that reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the concerns and the concerns remain unresolved, the Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC) may approve the termination request and **must** write to the external examiner informing them of the decision and the reasons for it.
     7. All such termination decisions **must** be officially recorded in the register of external examiner appointments.
  2. In some instances, an external examiner may terminate their appointment. The University does not stipulate a time frame for the termination of an external examiner appointment but when agreeing to become an external examiner, the external examiner agrees to contribute to the maintenance of the academic standards of the University’s awards and as part of the quality process the external examiner is required to participate in and attend Boards of Examiners and submit an annual report. The University therefore expects that an external examiner will serve out the current academic year in question (including moderation of student work and attendance of Boards of Examiners) and/or gives a trimester period of notice.
  3. In order to give notice of their intention to terminate their appointment, an external examiner **should** formally write to the Education Student Experience Committee (via QSC).

# Version control

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| **Version** | **Author** | **Date approved** | **Relevant sections** |
|  |  | Aug 2024 | Transfer to new template. |
| 1 04 | External Examiner Working Group | May 2023, Education Committee | Substantive revisions following the work of a University working group:   * Removal of two types of external examiner. There is no longer a distinction between External Examiners. * The Code notes that External examining involves action at both the module and programme levels. External examiners will be advised on appointment, which programme(s), modules, or other elements they will be responsible for overseeing. * Section 7 clarifies it is appropriate for an EE to look at a representative sample of student output from the full range of marks awarded – and include a representative sample of FAILS. * 8.3 – it is not a requirement for EE’s to participate in Boards of Examiners at which credit is awarded, progression issues are determined, and degrees are awarded. * Removes reference to EE’s confirming decisions made at exam boards where credit is awarded, progression issues are determined, and degrees are awarded. * Revisions to committee structure and roles of staff throughout. |
| 1 03 | Lisa Tees, Quality Manager, Quality Support Service. | Dec 2021, Education Committee | * Migrated to new template. * 4.6(e) – added reference to Emeritus Professor. |
| 1 02 | Lisa Tees, Quality Manager, Quality Support Service. | July 2020, Education Committee | Revisions to make clear the duties and role of an EE, the nomination and appointment of an EE. The Code also includes induction and termination of an EE. |
| 1 01 | Lisa Tees, Quality Manager, Quality Support Service. | May 2020, Education Committee | Introduces the following temporary amendments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic:   * The requirement to consult external examiners on all summative assessment tasks is suspended (para 6). |
| 1 00 | Quality Manager, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE). | Aug 2018, ULTC | NEW.  Previously, the Code of Practice was in two parts:   * The Roles and Appointment of External Examiners. * The Duties of External Examiners. |