



ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE

Appendix 4 - Part C

INFORMATION ON THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER SYSTEM

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Academic Quality Unit

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PART C : INFORMATION FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

1 Introduction

This booklet seeks to assist newly appointed academic external examiners in the execution of their duties and is produced by the Academic Quality Unit.

Please note that in line with QAA requirements, Course Teams will publish the name of the respective external examiner(s), their position and home institution together with a statement advising students that it is inappropriate for them to make direct contact with the external examiner. External examiners are asked to advise any student who does contact them directly, to contact the Academic Quality Unit at UCLan where they can obtain advice on the appropriate channels for taking forward their query.

Any comments and suggestions for improvement should be made to the Head of the Academic Quality Unit (Tel: 01772 893126).

2 Role and functions of the External Examiner

The QAA states that external examiners are engaged to:

- provide impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the degree awarding body's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards.
- confirm that the provider consistently and fairly implements their own policies and procedures to ensure the integrity and rigour of assessment practices.
- comment on the quality and standards of the courses in relation to the national standards and frameworks and comment on the reasonable comparability of standards achieved at other UK providers with whom the examiner has experience.
- comment on good practice, and make recommendations for enhancement to inform the continuous improvement of courses.

[UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance \(External Expertise\)](#)

2.1 The Role of the External Examiner

The external examiner's role is to enable the University to ensure that:-

- standards of awards are comparable with those across the HE sector in the United Kingdom;
- assessment requirements of modules leading to University awards meet learning aims and learning outcomes of those modules;
- standards across the modules for which external examiners are responsible are comparable;
- the achievement of programme aims and objectives through the assessment process is referenced to the commercial, industrial and professional environment;
- assessment strategies and methods leading to University awards are in line with current best practice in the discipline concerned;
- work leading to University awards is assessed carefully, accurately and fairly by internal examiners;
- Assessment Boards give full and fair consideration to each student;
- there is an experienced and objective input into the exercise of discretion by Assessment Boards through the external examiner's understanding and knowledge of how comparable situations are dealt with elsewhere; and

In addition an external examiner is expected to:-

- provide an annual evaluative report on the assessment process, to assist course teams to improve the quality of the University's provision;
- give advice to Course Teams, if requested, on proposed minor amendments to the modules and courses to which the external examiner is appointed.

An external examiner who has previous experience of external examining is expected to:-

- give guidance and advice, if required, to new external examiners who join their examining team and who have no previous external examining experience.

2.2 The Duties of an External Examiner

2.2.1 External examiners have particular responsibility for ensuring that standards and comparability are maintained, assuring fairness in the application and implementation of assessment processes and procedures in accordance with the approved course regulations, and for judging whether students have fulfilled the learning outcomes of courses to a satisfactory standard.

2.2.2 In undertaking this role, external examiners are primarily concerned with the final qualifications of students, however, external examiners appointed to a new course for which only stage one is running, will be expected to familiarise themselves with the course and advise on any proposals for minor amendments to the course.

The main areas in which external examiners will be involved include:

- at Stage 2 of undergraduate degree programmes (both single and combined Honours);
- in the full programme for other courses (eg one year courses, postgraduate courses, Foundation Degrees and HND/Cs);
- at Stage 0 and Stage 1 only where final (not exit) awards are made.

Please note that where professional bodies require external examiner involvement at Stage One, this should be negotiated with the Course Team.

2.2.3 Precise details of the involvement within a particular course will be negotiated between the external examiner and the Head of School. However, the external examiner will be expected to:

- Undertake the External Examiner induction.
- Verify the implementation of the overall assessment strategy.
- approve the form and content of all proposed examination and re-assessment examination papers for every module for which they are responsible at level five or above which contributes to the classification of awards and for this to be recorded. External approval is not required for level three/foundation year assessments, or assessments that do not contribute to the classification of an award.
- Review a sample of briefs for course work/practical assignments/dissertation proposals selected from all briefs made available electronically by the School. [NB: External examiners are entitled to review an amended assessment brief on request if substantial changes were suggested in external verification.]
- Scrutinise a representative sample of examination scripts or coursework/dissertations for the modules/course assessments for which s/he is responsible (to be negotiated between the external examiner and the Head of School).
- External moderation is required for all assessments at level five and above contributing to the classification of an award, based upon a representative sample of work. External moderation should consist of a confirmation that the assessment criteria for every element of assessment have been correctly and accurately applied to a representative sample. The minimum requirement for

moderation samples for both internal and external moderation purposes is set at 10% of all work submitted for a particular element of assessment, and (where student numbers on modules are small) the sample to include at least 3 pieces of work from the batch to be taken from work awarded the highest marks, marks in the middle range and the lowest marks). The sample of work moderated by the external examiner should include a selection of work that has been internally moderated. External moderation is not required for level three/foundation year assessments, or assessments that do not contribute to the classification of an award.

- g) [NB. The external examiner has the right to see the work of all students proposed for the highest available category of the award and for failure and samples of the work of students proposed for each category of award, in order to ensure that each student is fairly placed in relation to the rest of the cohort. They may see the work of all students assessed if desired.]
- h) Changes may not be made exclusively to marks within a representative sample. Where the external examiner is unwilling to confirm that the marking is fair and of an appropriate standard, based on the sample, the relevant parts of the assessment in question for the entire cohort should be remarked. This might be through scaling up or down, should the sample be considered to be consistently over or under-marked, or a full re-mark if the pattern of error is inconsistent.
- i) Attend all relevant Assessment Boards where final awards are made to help to ensure that those recommendations have been reached by fair means according to the University's requirements and normal practice in higher education in the United Kingdom. Remote attendance via online platforms is acceptable. If this duty cannot be discharged for some unavoidable reason, then the examiner should communicate their views in writing to the Chair of the Assessment Board. There is no requirement for external examiner attendance at Reassessment Boards however External Examiners may be asked to comment and/or confirm marks in advance of the Board if a profile has changed in a substantive way e.g. if reassessment has affected the classification of the award. . N.B Where a Chief External Examiner is appointed to attend the Course Assessment Board, subject External Examiners sign off the marks at an earlier stage in the process and have the opportunity to feed into the Course Assessment Board or raise concerns directly with the Chief External Examiner ahead of the board. The subject/award external examiner will have the opportunity to attend the Board should they wish to do so, but their presence is not mandatory.
- j) Provide advice to the University Assessment Board concerning decisions in respect of final awards of candidates registered for a course for which the external examiner is responsible (this does not confer any right to overturn the grades previously agreed by other Assessment Boards) and sign the recommendation list. The external examiner may also withhold their signature from the list of the results have not been agreed.
- k) Approve the recommendations of the Board by correspondence where they are not able to attend the end of year Assessment Board for exceptional reasons.

(NB external examiners will not be expected to attend module assessment boards, end of semester 1 assessment boards, or stage 0/1 Assessment Boards, where final awards will not be made, but may have an input to these assessment boards by correspondence, telephone etc.)
- l) Provide an Annual Report on the courses/modules to which they have been appointed, reporting on the standards of the University in comparison with the national scene, the effectiveness of the assessment process and the lessons to be drawn, and to draw to the University's attention matters of serious concern arising from the assessment process which put at risk the standards of the University. External examiners will also be asked to report on any good practice that they have identified. (Where the responsibility for the modules in a programme is split between a number of external examiners, one of these will normally be nominated as a Chief External Examiner who is expected to maintain an overview of the comparability of results across the programme).
- m) Where an external examiner is appointed to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the University will require two separate reports to be completed following the relevant Assessment Boards.

- n) External examiners should be aware that under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2005 the University is required to publish all information (not covered by exemption) if requested. The institution is also required by the QAA to make the full external examiner annual report available to student representatives. In view of this it is important that external examiners do not include in their report any reference to individuals by name.
- o) If an external examiner has serious concerns arising from the assessment process which put at risk the standards of the University or any relevant external awarding body, these must be raised with the Chair of the Assessment Board in the first instance. Should an examiner wish to raise matters of particular importance or sensitivity, this can be done by way of a confidential report addressed to the Vice Chancellor. If an external examiner feels that they have not received a satisfactory response from the Vice Chancellor, they are entitled to invoke the QAA's concern scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.
- p) Approve the mapping exercise undertaken for proposed articulation agreements to confirm the match between the course at the partner institution and UCLan at the point of entry.
- q) Scrutinise a sample of APL portfolios of evidence and assessed work from articulation agreements submitted by students for entry with advanced standing onto a course if required.
- r) Provide advice to course teams, if requested, upon proposed minor amendments to course/module content or regulations to which the external examiner is appointed.
- s) Communicate with Course/Subject Teams without lengthy delay on matters concerning examinations and assessment
- t) Assume the role of a mentor, if required, for new external examiners who join their examining team and who have no previous external examining experience. This may involve allowing the new external examiner to contact them should they require any guidance or advice concerning their role.

2.2.4 It is at the School's discretion as to whether to invite an external examiner to visit a partner institution to meet staff and students.

3 The Responsibilities of the University

3.1 Academic Quality Unit

On appointment, the University's Academic Quality Unit will provide the external examiner with

- A copy of the Academic Regulations. This is also available on the University's web pages under: <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/legal/student-policies/taught-courses>
- The fees and expenses for external examiners
http://www.uclan.ac.uk/AQCsu/external_examiners.php
- Academic Calendar
http://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/study/key_dates.php
- A copy of the Programme Specification
- The last Course Review Process action plan
- The Annual Report from the previous external examiner

The Academic Quality Unit is also responsible for:

- a) Organising compulsory induction training for External Examiners.
- b) Undertaking Right to Work checks
- c) Issuing the following:

- annual guidelines for the content, structure and submission of reports
 - guidelines for the level and payment of fees and expenses.
 - revisions to University Academic regulations.
- d) Drawing attention, where appropriate, to significant issues raised in external examiners' Annual Reports.
- e) Issuing holding responses to External Examiners who have raised an Essential Issue in their annual report
- f) Ensuring that all reasonable adjustments are made for external examiners where appropriate.

3.2 The Chair of the Assessment Board

The Chair of the Assessment Board for the School concerned is responsible for ensuring communication with the external examiner by School staff and for:

- a) providing the current definitive document for the programme(s) for which the external examiner has responsibility;
- b) briefing the external examiner on the operation of the programme(s);
- c) informing the external examiner of Assessment Boards and timing;
- d) consulting the external examiner on possible minor changes, if appropriate
- e) updating the information held by the external examiner on the current structure and content of the programme;
- f) notifying the external examiner of the provision of a course at a Partner Institution or another UCLan Campus
- g) ensuring that, where external examiners are required to scrutinise examination papers and scripts, this material is made available in reasonable time [agreeing with the external examiner the timings for when materials will be made available electronically throughout the academic year]
- h) ensuring that all reasonable adjustments are made for external examiners where appropriate.

3.3 The University School

Following the successful appointment of an external examiner, the Responsibilities of Heads of School are outlined below:

- a) Providing the following:
 - i. A letter of welcome, along with instructions how to access verification and moderation materials.
 - ii. Contact details of relevant staff members and where applicable, details for other members of the External Examining Team.
 - iii. Any information relating to off campus/multi-site delivery, partner institutions;
 - iv. Module Descriptors: detailed information on the modules for which each External Examiner is responsible;
 - v. Verification and moderation materials and details of when these will be made available.
 - vi. Details of marking schemes.
 - vii. Module information packs, where applicable.
 - viii. Dates and times of Assessment Boards
 - ix. Details of opportunities to meet staff and, where appropriate, students.
 - x. Details of meetings with mentors/assessors and students where practice assessments are part of the course.
- b) ensuring that the Course Review process takes account of the views of external examiners as expressed in their reports;
- c) the view of external examiners are made known to Interim and Periodic Review Panels as part of that process;

- d) that the full external examiner annual report is shared with students electronically, and that Schools make it clear the mechanisms through which the reports will be made available;
- e) for ensuring formal responses are made to issues raised by external examiners in their reports. Written responses to any 'essential' issues raised must be sent by the Head of School to the external examiner.
- f) ensuring that all reasonable adjustments are made for external examiners where appropriate.

4 The External Examiner's Annual Report

The University attaches great significance to the annual reports of external examiners as they form a vital part of the documentation used within its quality process and are considered carefully by the Course Team and Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

4.1 Prior to the assessment period, the Academic Quality Unit will provide a link to the online proforma for the annual report, and other relevant information on claiming fees and expenses. The online report proforma should be completed and submitted, no later than 1st August (for standard courses) or within six weeks of the final Assessment Board. Fee/expense claim should be completed on the fee/expense claim form provided and submitted via e-mail to eexaminers@uclan.ac.uk.

4.2 The online report proforma, along with detailed guidance on completion of the report can be downloaded from the Academic Quality Unit website:
<https://www.uclan.ac.uk/legal/academic-quality>

Please note that the University does not encourage the submission of joint reports from external examiners and prefers independent views to be expressed.

4.3 In accordance with the recommendations from the Quality Assurance Framework for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the full external examiner reports must be shared as a matter of course with students. In view of this, Schools will arrange for the full report and the good practice identified to be shared with students electronically, and that Schools will make it clear to students the mechanisms through which External Examiner reports are made available.

4.3 Where an external examiner is appointed to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the University will require two separate reports to be completed following the relevant Assessment Boards.

4.4 If external examiners make comments that are specific to a particular course at a particular Partner Institution/Campus, they must ensure that they clearly identify which Partner Institution/Campus and which course their comments relate to.

4.5 When completing the report, external examiners must not identify individual students or staff by name in their reports or alter the format of the report templates in any way.

4.6 Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2005 the University is required to publish all information (not covered by exemption) if requested. It may, therefore, be necessary for the institution to disclose the contents of the external examiner annual report.

4.7 Students can request a copy of any comments made on their scripts or any reports made by external examiners on their work and if requested, the University will be required to provide this information. External examiner reports are sometimes requested by external organisations, professional bodies etc. and will be a standing item on the agenda of Assessment Boards.

5 University of Central Lancashire External Examiner Fees

- 5.1 The annual fee is determined according to approved University rates and will be advised to the external examiner upon appointment. The annual fee covers all the duties undertaken by an external examiner in that academic year but will be forfeited if an annual report is not submitted as requested.
- 5.2 The University will reimburse the cost of travel and subsistence at the approved rates, notified annually, and will provide overnight accommodation, if required, at approved hotels. (Arrangements for overnight stays will be made by the appropriate School staff, normally Secretary to the Assessment Board.) It is expected that under normal circumstances examiners will be required to visit the University to attend the final assessment board and that other regular communication will occur by telephone and correspondence.

PLEASE NOTE: External examiner fee payments are not automatically generated upon receipt of your report. Each year an Ad-Hoc claim form for your Fee and Expenses must be submitted to the Academic Quality Unit (eeexaminers@uclan.ac.uk) within six months of submission of your annual report. A link to the Ad-hoc claim form can be found here <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/legal/academic-quality>.

6 Proposed Period of Tenure

- 6.1 The period of tenure should allow the external examiner to be associated in all aspects of assessment, including the drafting of examination papers and involvement in resit examinations and will normally be for four years. Extensions by one year are approved by exception only to ensure continuity.
- 6.2 For courses, which cover the normal academic year (September - August), appointments will commence in October and terminate in September. For courses, which have boards that take place after September but before December, appointments will commence in January and terminate in December.
- 6.3 The periods of tenure will normally overlap where several external examiners have been appointed to the same programme to ensure continuity of standards.

7 Resignation

- 7.1 Where an external examiner wishes to resign from their appointment (e.g. for personal reasons), the University requests that the external examiner provides a six week notification in writing. Letters of resignation should be sent to the Head of the Academic Quality Unit and the Head of School.

8 Termination of Contract

- 8.1 The contract of appointment for external examiners may be terminated on any of the following grounds:
- i. Failure to attend a final Assessment Board without good cause. The University recognises that Schools must give sufficient advance warning of the dates of final Assessment Boards so that external examiners are able to confirm their attendance and carry out their responsibilities.

- ii. Failure to submit an annual report as required. The University values and requires full and informative reports which follow the guidelines provided.
- iii. Failure to undertake the external examiner duties to the satisfaction of the University by providing inadequate scrutiny of proposed assessment tools and/or assessment outcomes and/or an unacceptable delay in corresponding with Course/Subject Teams on matters concerning examinations and assessment.
- iv. Conduct deemed unprofessional or inappropriate by the Chair of the Assessment Board when carrying out the external examiner duties.

9 Privacy Notice

The University recognises the importance of the protection of personal data. For information on how your data may be processed please see [the privacy notice](#).

10 Travelling to the University

Detailed and up to date information on travelling to the University can be found on the University's web pages: [How to Find Us](#).