



EXTERNAL EXAMINER HANDBOOK

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1 Introduction

This Handbook is intended for use by External Examiners, and University staff who work in liaison with External Examiners. The Handbook is intended to support External Examiners and staff in their role.

The Handbook outlines procedures related to the duties of External Examiner for courses and that of the Chief External Examiner. It also provides details of the University's procedures, including how we consider and make use of External Examiner reports. This Handbook supplements the External Examiner Policy which outlines the responsibilities of the External Examiner, and the Quality Handbook which outlines the principles, processes, general rules and conventions of learning, teaching and assessment at Leeds Arts University.

The content of this handbook applies to all External Examiners including the Chief External Examiner, unless specifically stating that it applies to External Examiners or the Chief External Examiner only.

2 Nomination, Application, Appointment and Termination of an External Examiner

2.1 *Nomination of External Examiners*

The Quality & Standards Office maintains a register of External Examiners and will routinely notify the relevant Course Leader of the appointments required for the forthcoming year. External Examiner applications should be made in the calendar year preceding the commencement of appointment.

Where a new course has been approved, the Quality and Standards Office will secure an appointment of an External Examiner ahead of the start of the course.

The Quality & Standards Office may ask the Course Leader for suggestions of suitable candidates. The proposed nominees may be approached by the Quality & Standards Office informally to ascertain their willingness to apply for the role. The Quality & Standards Office should provide sufficient information on the role, to enable the proposed nominees to make a realistic decision about applying for the appointment.

The criteria for appointment including the person specification and conflicts of interest as set out in the External Examiner Policy and should be followed when appointing External Examiners and the Chief External Examiner.

2.2 *Application*

A completed application form, together with a supporting CV, should be returned to the Quality & Standards Office, who will check that the form is complete, for conflict of interest, and that all the criteria are met as per Section 3.3 of the External Examiner Policy.

For External Examiner and Chief External Examiner appointments, the nominees' CV will be considered and approved by the Quality and Standards Office, who have delegated powers from the Academic Board. The Quality And Standards Office may consult with the relevant Course Leader and Director - Undergraduate Studies/Assistant Head of Postgraduate Studies in order to identify a preferred candidate.

2.3 Appointment

The Quality & Standards Office will advise the Director - Undergraduate Studies/Assistant Head of Postgraduate Studies, the Course Leader, and the nominee of the outcome of External Examiner applications. An appointment letter will be issued to the successful candidate. This letter will include:

- Term of appointment;
- Details on their role and responsibilities;
- Arrangement for payment of fees and expenses;
- Documentation required to demonstrate their eligibility to work in the UK;
- Hiring of individuals form;
- Contract acceptance form.

The appointment of External Examiners is subject to the requirements of the Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act (2006) which means that the University must be able to demonstrate that the person appointed has permission to work in this country. For this reason the University requires that any appointment of an External Examiner produces documentation which demonstrates this right as part of the appointment process and prior to the appointment start date. A list of documents which will be accepted by the University in line with Home Office requirements will be enclosed with the appointment letter. External Examiners will be asked to either provide their documentation to our third-party provider of Right to Work checks in order to conduct the checks remotely. Alternatively, External Examiners may bring their documentation to an in-person meeting with a Human Resources representative, or post original documentation to the Human Resources department and attend a video call via Microsoft Teams where a member of Human Resources will confirm the appointees' identity.

2.4 Notice Period

In order for the University to be able to ensure that its arrangements for external examining remain robust, External Examiners are requested to provide 3 months' notice where possible if they wish to end their appointment prior to the agreed end date. This is to allow the University adequate time to make alternative arrangements for the external examining of the course area.

2.5 Termination of appointment

The grounds for termination of an External Examiner's appointment are stated in section 3.6 of the External Examiner Policy.

2.6 Performance of External Examiners

If any aspect of an External Examiner's performance or conduct is considered to be unsatisfactory by the Director - Undergraduate Studies/Head of Postgraduate Studies, or the Course Leader. The Quality and Standards Office should be informed immediately. In such cases the Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality Assurance and Standards) will write to the External Examiner concerned, requesting a written response. If the response is deemed to be satisfactory then no further action shall be taken at this stage.

If the response is deemed to be unsatisfactory then the Quality and Standards Office will consider the case such as to warrant the premature termination of contract, it shall make a recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor accordingly. The Vice-Chancellor will decide whether to accept the recommendation.

2.7 *Period of leave*

If, due to unforeseen circumstances, an External Examiner or Chief External Examiner is likely to be unavailable for an extended period of time during the period of appointment, the Quality & Standards Office should be informed as soon as possible. This will ensure that alternative External Examiner arrangements can be put in place.

2.8 *Chief External Examiner nomination, appointment, and performance of contract*

The criteria for the appointment of the Chief External Examiner are set out in the External Examiner Policy. The appointment of a Chief External Examiner will be made by the Quality and Standards Office. The procedures for appointment and termination will be subject to the normal criteria as set out above. Details of the procedures related to duties of Chief External Examiners are set out in Section 5. The performance of the Chief External Examiner is monitored by the Quality and Standards Office.

3 *Induction*

3.1 *External Examiner Training and Induction Process*

3.2 *Induction to the University*

The External Examiner induction process provides External Examiners with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the regulatory framework of the University and to meet with key staff.

The aim of the induction and training is to ensure External Examiners:

- Become familiar with the course(s) and modules they are appointed to oversee;
- Understand the external examining process and their remit within this;
- Understand the relevant Academic Regulations, assessment practices and associated administrative procedures;
- Develop effective working relationships with the University.

3.3 *Induction to the relevant course(s)*

The relevant Course Leader will provide a detailed briefing about the course(s) during your first period of External Examining.

3.4 *Induction of External Examiners with little or no previous experience of the role*

As set out in the External Examiner Policy, the University welcomes applications from people new to the role of external examining. External Examiners with no previous external examining experience may be asked to be mentored by the Chief External Examiner if appropriate (see Section 6 for further information). This will be facilitated by the Quality and Standards Office.

4 *Procedures related to the duties of External Examiners*

4.1 *Overview*

External Examiners play a central role in providing assurance of the standards of the University's awards. The general principles of External Examining are stated in Section 3.2 and the role of the External Examiner is stated in Section 5.1 of the External Examiner Policy.

The number of periods of external examining each academic year varies depending on the course.

For undergraduate courses, the first period is normally in February following the completion of Semester 1 assessment, prior to the Examination Board. Likewise, the second period is normally in June, following completion of Semester 2 assessment. Both of these periods of External Examining will include attendance at the relevant Examination Board and production of a report following each Board. We will provide External Examiners with the opportunity to be inducted and familiarise themselves with their course(s) (if required), meet with relevant staff, and undertake sampling of student work, assessment decisions and feedback.

For postgraduate courses, there will be two periods of External Examining. One interim visit, which will take place at some point in the second or third trimester, and one final visit, which will normally take place following the completion of the third trimester assessment, prior to the Examination Board.

4.2 Course content and structure

External Examiners are encouraged to have a dialogue with course teams during the external examining process in order to understand the content and structure of courses, as it pertains to quality and standards.

4.3 External Examining of assessment

The guiding principle for the selection of assessed work for examining is that External Examiners should have enough evidence to determine that marking is of an appropriate standard and is consistent. The External Examiner will normally be able to view a sample of work, along with the provisional marks agreed by the markers, the relevant Module Assessment Feedback (MAF) sheets, Module Assessment Records (MAR), the assessment brief and criteria, and relevant course and module specifications.

The Quality & Standards Office is responsible for the retention of a selection of assessed work to be made available to the External Examiner. The sample of work should comprise all fail marks. For undergraduate courses, this will normally include at least one piece of work from each grade banding.

External Examiners have access to Module Information which includes the brief. A sample of student work will be provided as facilitated by the Quality & Standards Office. Where practical, External Examiners can request additional samples of student work to assist their deliberations as required. Students' profiles of marks are not sent to the External Examiner at the external examining stage in order to maintain the integrity of the assessment process. Student profiles are made available in the documentation to be considered by the relevant exam board.

The size of sampling is kept under review as the External Examiner's term of appointment progresses, to ensure they have an appropriate overview of the academic standards for the course(s) they are responsible for. For postgraduate courses, this includes core modules which are shared across the specialist MA provision.

External Examining may take place remotely, but in-person attendance at each Examination Board is expected.

4.4 Attendance at Examination and Progression Boards

External Examiners are required to attend the Examination Boards (exam boards) relevant to their role in person. As members of the relevant exam board, bringing a specifically external view, External Examiners are encouraged to provide comments on matters including:

- standards of marking, student performance and achievement;
- the consideration of reports and statistics, and any related issues including retention presented to the exam board;
- differential performance across different cohorts;
- review of the evidence of quality and the achievement of standards in all modules and courses considered by the exam board;
- entitlement of students to receive relevant awards and, where appropriate, the grade or classification of such award;
- receipt of decisions made by Extenuating Circumstances Panel or the Academic Misconduct Panel. This relates to adverse circumstances affecting students' performance, or penalties to be applied for academic offences.

The date and time of all relevant exam boards are provided in advance. If it is clear at an early stage that an External Examiner will not be able to attend the exam board, alternative arrangements will need to be considered as appropriate.

If an External Examiner will be absent at short notice, the respective exam board may proceed if agreement is made with the Chair. The Chair will set appropriate conditions for the External Examiner's absence, which will be communicated by the Quality and Standards Office.

The External Examiner will be expected to complete and submit their report as normal.

4.5 *Signing of exam board mark sheets*

External Examiners countersign the mark sheets of the relevant exam board to endorse the marks presented. In so doing, the External Examiner indicates that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process, and confirms that the standards set in the assessments are commensurate with equivalent awards at other UK institutions and as described in the *Sector Recognised Standards*. Such endorsement does not imply that the External Examiner has reviewed the work of every student or that they agrees with every individual assessment decision.

In the unlikely event that an External Examiner feels that they cannot endorse the results from the meeting of the respective Examination Board, the External Examiner shall be invited to make a separate report to the Vice-Chancellor. The reasons for the marks not being endorsed shall be recorded in the formal record of the meeting and shall be reported to the Vice-Chancellor by the Chair of the relevant exam board. The Vice-Chancellor shall determine an appropriate course of action and ensure that affected students are informed if there is to be any delay in finalising and communicating results.

4.6 *The External Examiner report*

An electronic copy of the relevant report form is made available to External Examiners by the Quality & Standards Office.

External Examiners should produce a full and comprehensive report according to the template and timescale specified, normally within four weeks of the relevant exam boards.

External Examiners are advised not to include the names of individual members of staff or students in the report, as reports are circulated widely within the University and may be made available to an external audience via the University's deliberative structure.

External Examiners who are in their final year of appointment are asked to make closing comments on their observations over their full term of appointment.

The report(s) should be sufficiently full to offer the course team useful information on their application of University processes. Reports which do not satisfy the initial check are referred back to the External Examiner with a request to remedy any defects or omissions. If a satisfactory report is still not received, or if no report is received by the due date, the Quality & Standards Office will follow up appropriately. If a unsatisfactory report or no report is submitted, the External Examiner's fee may be withheld or that the individual External Examiner's contract may be terminated.

The relevant Course Leader will respond to significant areas arising from the observations within an External Examiner's report in the Annual Course Evaluation (ACE). ACEs are approved by the Director of Studies/Head of Postgraduate Studies and the Academic Board.

Should the External Examiner feel it necessary, a separate, confidential report may be sent directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

5 Procedures related to the duties of Chief External Examiners

5.1 *Overview*

The role of the Chief External Examiner is explained in Section 5.3 of the External Examiner Policy.

5.2 *Oversight of the Final Examination Boards*

The Chief External Examiner is a member of the Final Examination Board.

The Chief External Examiner is required to attend all meetings of the Final Examination and Board that considers the award of qualifications. They will be asked to provide feedback and endorse the decisions made by the Board, which will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Should the Chief External Examiner be unable to attend a meeting of the Final Examination Board in-person then exceptional arrangements may be put in place, for example for the meeting to be conducted virtually, via telephone, or via written correspondence and written endorsement of the outcomes secured as appropriate.

The role of the Chief External Examiner is included in Section 5.3 of the External Examiner Policy.

5.3 *Signing of Final Examination Board mark sheets*

The Chief External Examiner countersigns the mark sheets of the Final Examination Board to endorse the marks presented.

In the unlikely event that the Chief External Examiner feels that they cannot endorse the results from the meeting of the Final Examination Board, the Chief External Examiner shall be invited to make a separate report to the Vice-Chancellor. The reasons shall be recorded in the formal record of the meeting and shall be reported to the Vice-Chancellor by the Chair of the Final Examination Board. The Vice-Chancellor shall determine an appropriate

course of action and ensure that affected students are informed if there is to be any delay in finalising and communicating results.

5.4 *The Chief External Examiner report*

An electronic copy of the report form is made available to the Chief External Examiner by the Quality and Standards Office.

The Chief External Examiner should produce full and comprehensive reports according to the template and timescale specified, normally within four weeks of the Final Examination and Board. There are normally three Final Examination and Boards scheduled per academic year. The Chief External Examiner is advised not to include the names of individual members of staff or students in the report, as reports are circulated widely within the University and may be made available to an external audience. A Chief External Examiner in their final year of appointment is asked to make closing comments on their observations over their full term of appointment.

A response to the Chief External Examiner's reports will be provided by the University. The draft response will be considered and approved by the Academic Board. The Chief External Examiner report are one of the key reference points for the Annual Quality Report.

6 *Mentoring of new External Examiners without prior examining experience*

6.1 *Overview*

The criteria for appointment of External Examiners allows nominations to be drawn from a wide variety of professional contexts in order to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of academic and practitioner scrutiny. For this purpose, the University has in place a process for new or inexperienced External Examiners to be mentored if deemed appropriate. The role of mentor is carried out by the Chief External Examiner. The University will consider mentoring arrangements for new External Examiners as per Section 5.3 of the External Examiner Policy.

A new External Examiner may also request for mentoring arrangements to be put in place in their first year of appointment if this form of support is required.

6.2 *Arrangements*

The need for mentoring arrangements to be put in place will be identified during the nomination of a proposed new External Examiner. The Quality and Standards Office will communicate the mentoring arrangements with the External Examiner. The mentoring process may be put in place from the date of the approval of the appointment of the mentee and may remain in place as long as deemed necessary.

7 *Fees and Expenses for External Examiners and Chief External Examiners*

7.1 *Overview*

Upon appointment new External Examiners will also need to complete the Hiring of Individuals form, included with the appointment letter, in order for a payroll record to be created. External Examiners will be asked to provide details of a bank account into which fees and expense payments. Once a payroll record has been created and the External Examiner's final report of the academic year is submitted, the annual fee payment will be activated. Further details about entitlement to work in the UK and payroll are given in the appointment letter.

7.2 Fees

External Examiners and the Chief External Examiner will be paid an annual fee upon the receipt of a satisfactory report(s) which should be submitted to the Quality & Standards Office (see Section 4 for further details). Details about the fee will be provided in the appointment letter and is reviewed by the University each year.

7.3 Expenses

External Examiners may claim expenses in line with the University's financial procedures, a summary of which is set out below. Expense claims should be submitted to the Quality & Standards Office within 30 days of the date on which the expense was incurred. Claim forms must be completed correctly and supported with evidence, such as itemised receipts. Expenses will be paid independently from fees and will not be delayed until receipt of the External Examiner's final report.

For further information or queries relating to payment of fees and expenses, External Examiners should contact the Quality and Standards Office. External Examiners should contact the Quality and Standards Office for approval in advance of any expenses being incurred. A Guidance for Expenses document is available. The University's Financial Procedures should be referred to as the primary source for guidance on expenses claims.

Details regarding the University's Expenses Procedures will be provided.

8 Information for External Examiners

In addition to the appointment letter setting out contractual arrangements, External Examiners will receive the following information from the Quality & Standards Office before commencing their first period of External Examining:

- External Examiner Policy;
- External Examiner Handbook;
- Relevant forms including report forms;
- The Quality Handbook;
- Academic Regulations, including Assessment Criteria/Grading Descriptors;
- Relevant course information, including Course Specifications, Module Specifications, and Course Handbooks.
- Information pertaining to the University's Expenses Procedures.

The Quality & Standards Office will advise External Examiners of any relevant changes throughout their appointment, including updates made to forms and procedures. Further course-specific materials will be provided at the appropriate times. This will include:

- Relevant module information (via access to the VLE, eStudio);
- Samples of student work and Module Assessment Feedback (MAF);
- Assessment decisions via Module Assessment Records (MARs).