



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 and Assessment Guidance documents which outline 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.

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 of Higher Education in order to identify a preferred candidate.

2.3 *Appointment*

The Quality & Standards Office will advise the Director of Higher Education, 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;

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. In addition to the provision of valid identification documents, a follow up video call via Microsoft Teams with a member of Human Resources is also required to 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 of Higher Education, 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 University;
- 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 nature of the provision.

For example, for undergraduate courses, there are currently two periods of External Examining, one at the end of each semester.

For postgraduate courses, there are currently three periods of External Examining at the end of each trimester.

Each 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 meet with relevant staff and undertake sampling of student work, assessment decisions and feedback during each External Examining period.

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 marking team, the relevant Module Assessment Feedback (MAF) sheets, Module Assessment Records (MAR), the assessment brief and criteria, relevant course and module specifications, and other relevant policy documentation.

The Quality & Standards Office is responsible for the provision 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 the Module Information document, which includes the brief set for the module. 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 at the relevant Examination 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.

External Examining may take place remotely, assuming continued availability of appropriate infrastructure to facilitate this, such as teleconferencing facilities.

4.4 Attendance at Examination and Progression Boards

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

- confirmation that the threshold academic standards set for the modules and/or awards meet with the requirements of the Sector Recognised Standards and the relevant Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark Statements;
- confirmation that academic standards and achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience;
- confirmation that the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s) and are conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
- observed good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment;
- opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students;
- confirmation that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled;
- confirmation that issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being addressed or responded to.

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 External Examiner will be expected to provide written comments that may be read out in their absence. The Chair and secretary of the exam board will be informed and may set other appropriate conditions for

the external examiner's absence. The External Examiner will be expected to complete and submit their report as normal.

4.5 *The External Examiner report*

An electronic copy of the relevant report form template 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, for example via the University's deliberative structure or in the event of external audit by a relevant regulatory agency.

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 and are considered by the relevant Course Leader and Director of Higher Education for confirmation that the report is acceptable. Reports which do not satisfy this 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 an unsatisfactory report or no report is submitted, the External Examiner's fee may be withheld and 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 relevant Director of Higher Education 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.

Should the Chief External Examiner be unable to attend a meeting of the Final Examination Board in-person then they should inform the University as soon as possible. The Chair and the secretary of the Board shall be informed and may place conditions on the absence of the Chief External Examiner.

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

5.3 *The Chief External Examiner report*

An electronic copy of the report form template 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. 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, for example via the University's deliberative structure or in the event of external audit by a relevant regulatory agency. 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 Monitoring 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. 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 may be identified during the nomination of a proposed new External Examiner, or in their first year of appointment. The Quality and Standards Office will communicate the mentoring arrangements with the External Examiner. The mentoring process 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 will be paid. Once a payroll record has been created and the External Examiner's final report of the academic year is submitted, and is of a satisfactory standard, the annual fee payment will be activated.

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 annually.

7.3 Expenses

External Examiners may claim expenses in line with the University's Financial Procedures. Claim forms must be completed correctly and supported 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. The University's Financial Procedures should be referred to as the primary source for guidance on expenses claims.

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 at the start of each 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 and Module Specifications.
- Information pertaining to the University's expenses procedures.
- 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).

The Quality & Standards Office will advise External Examiners of any relevant changes throughout their appointment, including updates made to forms and procedures.