



## HE EXTERNAL EXAMINER POLICY

Originator: Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality Assurance & Standards)  
Date: 14 November 2022  
Approved by: Academic Board  
Document Type: Policy

Previous version: August 2020

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## 1 Summary

This policy document sets out the role of the External Examiner at Leeds Arts University. It explains how we appoint, instruct and engage External Examiners on our Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses.

This document will be of most interest to our new and existing External Examiners, staff and students. It will be of interest also to regulatory, professional and statutory bodies.

The University operates a 'two tier' system of formal meetings to agree assessment outcomes with *Course Examination Boards* followed by a *Final Examination Board*. The External Examiners attend and report to the Course Examination Boards whilst a Chief External Examiner attends and reports to the Final Examination Board. The Chief External Examiner provides a further level of external scrutiny of the academic standards across the provision.

If due to extraordinary disruption to the academic business of the University, an External Examiner is unable to attend the relevant Examination Board, alternative arrangements may be made, in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Aim

The External Examining process is an important and integral part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement activities. The University expects External Examiners to help assess whether its students meet the threshold academic standards set out in the Sector-Recognised Standards and other requirements such as Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark Statements.

External Examiners also provide impartial and independent confirmation that the University's processes have been followed and that the assessment and classification processes are fair, reliable and transparent.

### 2.2 Authority and scope

This policy relates to the appointment, roles, duties, rights and responsibilities of External Examiners for Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses.

This policy is underpinned by the [External Examining Principles](#) agreed by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance (UKSCQA).

### 3 Appointment of External Examiners

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Academic Board delegates responsibility for approval of the appointment of external examiners, including chief external Examiners, to the Quality and Standards Office.

The Academic Board advises the Vice-Chancellor on any general issues relating to the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners.

#### 3.2 General principles

The following general principles apply:

- a) The Chief External Examiner considers quality and standards for all Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate courses;
- b) External Examiners may be appointed to oversee more than one course across the provision where appropriate;
- c) External Examiners should be appointed to newly approved courses by January of the first year of the course;
- d) All newly appointed External Examiners must take part in training and induction;
- e) External Examiners need to provide appropriate evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK prior to their engagement with the University.

#### 3.3 Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners

##### a. Person Specification

Appointed External Examiners should be able to show appropriate evidence of the following:

- i) have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK higher education sector;
- ii) are experienced in teaching, course design and student assessment at the level of the award;
- iii) have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development;
- iv) are experienced in acting as an External Examiner or willing to undertake mentoring if not;
- v) are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the University and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant partners;
- vi) do not personally benefit from any student outcomes, nor have any connection to any student being assessed;
- vii) have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively;
- viii) are drawn from a relevant variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the course benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny;
- ix) comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate;

- x) normally hold a limited number of concurrent external examining engagements (for example, either one or two).

b. Conflicts of interest

The University will not normally appoint External Examiners in the following categories or circumstances:

- i) a member of a governing body or committee of the University or a current employee of the University;
- ii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course of study;
- iii) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course of study;
- iv) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course of study;
- v) 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 course(s) or modules in question;
- vi) former staff or students of the University unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their course(s);
- vii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate courses at another institution;
- viii) the succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution;
- ix) the appointment within the same provision (i.e. Undergraduate or Postgraduate) of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same institution.

c. Duration of appointment

The following criteria should be followed in terms of duration of appointment:

- i) The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity;
- ii) An External Examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment;
- iii) External Examiners should normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for courses at any point in time;
- iv) Appointments will start on 1 January (unless circumstances necessitate a different start date).

### 3.4 Appointment of Chief External Examiner

In order to ensure an appropriate level of critical distance, the Chief External Examiner should be nominated and appointed independently of course External Examiners.

The appointment of the Chief External Examiner follows the criteria set out in Section 3.3 in terms of person specification, conflict of interest and duration of appointment.

### 3.5 External Examiners without prior examining experience

The criteria for appointment of an External Examiner refer to the need to ensure that nominees are suitably qualified but it may sometimes be difficult to find adequately experienced External Examiner candidates who also have the appropriate expertise in certain art and design subject areas. As a result, the University welcomes applications to External Examiner roles from a variety of institutional and professional contexts and traditions, and from those without previous examining experience but which may have other relevant experience, such as extensive internal examining, course leadership and research. The University supports such applications through its mentoring arrangements set out within the role of the Chief External Examiner. In the event that an External Examiner is appointed without prior external examining experience, mentoring will be made available.

The Chief External Examiner will provide mentoring and guidance in the following topics:

- a) the assessment process;
- b) experiences from Examination Boards, including common scenarios that may arise and approaches to giving feedback at the meeting;
- c) the best approach to writing an annual report and what may or may not be appropriate to include in the report given the audiences that the report attracts;
- d) providing advice during the consultation process for new or modified modules and courses;
- e) current issues in higher education and the discipline particularly those pertaining to external examining.

### 3.6 Termination of Contract

The University reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an External Examiner at any time, subject to approved University procedures, for failure by the External Examiner to fulfil their obligations, for example, failure to produce reports in a timely manner or to an appropriate standard.

Other circumstances that may constitute grounds for termination include:

- a) failure to attend a board of examiners without good reason;
- b) a new conflict of interest that cannot be resolved;
- c) discontinuation of the course;
- d) the External Examiner is proven to have acted in such a way that they bring their discipline or the University into disrepute (such as being dismissed for misconduct by their employing institution);
- e) the External Examiner has not attended the stipulated training and induction or taken part in mentoring arrangements as appropriate.

## 4 External Examiner Training and Induction

New External Examiners, including the Chief External Examiner, are required to take part in the External Examiner Training & Induction Process before starting their external examining. The induction and training provides the External Examiners with clarification of the remit of the external examiner role together with an overview of what is expected of them, including what constitutes a constructive report. It also provides the External Examiners with an overview of the relevant procedures, practices and academic regulations. The induction and training also serves to introduce the External Examiner to the relevant course and provides the Chief External Examiner with an overview of the provision to be examined.

## 5 The role and responsibilities of the External Examiner

### 5.1 Role of the External Examiner

The External Examiner is required to attend the relevant Examination Boards.

External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:

- i) the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
- ii) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
- iii) the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience.

External Examiners are also expected to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- iv) good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the External Examiners;
- v) opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

### 5.2 Queries over academic standards

Where an External Examiner has concerns about the standards of the qualification, they should express this as part of a dialogue with the Course Leader, and the Quality & Standards Office. As a result of that dialogue, exceptionally, the marks of all students for an assessment or a module may be raised or lowered by a constant factor through moderation. External Examiners are not empowered to change an individual student's marks. In such cases, the Chair of the appropriate Examination Board will be consulted. The Chair will give careful consideration to the External Examiner's concerns and will attempt to resolve the issues, but the final decision rests with the Examination Board. If the final decision does not accord with the External Examiner's view, the Chair of the Examination Board will so inform the External Examiner and the decision will also be reported promptly to the Chair of the Final Examination Board. Should an External Examiner have serious concerns about academic standards they can raise this directly with the Vice-Chancellor.

### 5.3 Role of the Chief External Examiner

As part of the role, the Chief External Examiner is required to attend all Final Examination Board meetings.

The Chief External Examiner provides assurance to the University that the academic standards and quality achieved across the provision are in accordance with national qualification frameworks and other requirements such as Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark Statements. The role of the Chief External Examiner also covers the conduct and operation of the Final Examination Board and the appropriateness and application of regulations.

## 6 External Examiners Reporting

### 6.1 Content of reports

External Examiners' reports should provide clear and informative feedback to the institution on those areas defined for the role in Section 5.1. In addition, External Examiner reports:

- i) confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details);
- ii) state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction;
- iii) address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body;
- iv) give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).

### 6.2 Timing of report

External Examiners are required to submit their reports within four weeks following the relevant Examination Boards. External Examiner fees will not be paid until receipt of the report.

### 6.3 Consideration of reports

External Examiners' comments and recommendations contained in External Examiners' reports are considered at both course and University level. The actions taken as a result of reports, or the reasons for not taking action, are formally recorded through the Annual Course Evaluation process.

Student Representatives are given the opportunity to be involved in this process through their respective Quality and Standards Committee, enabling them to understand issues raised and the course response.

Any general issues and themes arising from the reports are reviewed at a University level.