

# External Examiners' Operational Guide

Student and Academic Services

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# Contents

<b>1. BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Guiding principles - an introduction to UWE Bristol and its Academic Regulatory Framework.....	4
1.2 Scope for external examining at UWE Bristol .....	4
1.3 Key contacts at UWE Bristol for External Examiners .....	5
<b>2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners .....	7
2.2 Roles and responsibilities of Field External Examiners.....	7
2.3 Roles and responsibilities of Chief External Examiners .....	9
2.4 Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners (Variant Regulations).....	10
2.5 Roles and responsibilities of Chief External Examiners (Variant Regulations) .....	11
2.6 Additional responsibilities for Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)	11
2.7 Additional responsibilities for Collaborative Partnership provision.....	12
2.8 Additional responsibilities for curriculum design and approval .....	12
<b>3. NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 External Examiner nomination.....	14
3.2 Changes of Responsibilities .....	14
3.3 Right to work in the UK requirements .....	14
3.4 Data Protection Statement.....	15
3.5 Confidentiality Statement.....	15
3.6 External Examiner Appointment .....	15
3.7 External Examiners' Annual Conference .....	16
3.8 Mentor scheme.....	16
<b>4. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 The assessment journey and sampling guidance.....	17
4.2 Academic calendar .....	17
4.3 Scrutiny of draft examination and assignment briefs .....	18

4.4	Documentation provided to External Examiners .....	18
4.5	Online assessment – Blackboard and SharePoint sites .....	19
4.6	Examining boards .....	19
4.7	Field Boards .....	20
4.8	Award Boards.....	21
4.9	Reconvened Exam Boards.....	22
4.10	Student Engagement.....	22
<b>5.</b>	<b>ANNUAL REPORTING .....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1	Annual reporting process and timelines.....	24
5.2	Faculty responses to External Examiner reports .....	25
5.3	University responses to External Examiner reports .....	25
<b>6.</b>	<b>FEES AND EXPENSES .....</b>	<b>26</b>
6.1	Annual Fees .....	26
6.2	Expenses.....	26
<b>7.</b>	<b>EXTERNAL EXAMINER CONTRACTUAL CHANGES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
7.1	Changes to circumstances .....	27
7.2	External Examiner Resignation .....	27
7.3	Termination of contract .....	27
	<b>Appendix: Useful Links .....</b>	<b>28</b>
	Internal (some may require UWE Login) .....	28
	External .....	29

# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Guiding principles - an introduction to UWE Bristol and its Academic Regulatory Framework

**1.1.1** The University of the West of England is an independent degree awarding body. Teaching and learning at UWE Bristol is based on modules within a credit accumulation framework. Credit is a means of quantifying and recording the achievement of assessed learning.

**1.1.2** The [University's Academic Regulations](#) assure academic standards and ensure all students are treated consistently and equitably. Compliance with the Academic Regulations is non-negotiable. The Academic Regulations are occasionally varied due to external bodies or collaborative partnership requirements.

**1.1.3** Collaborative Provision - The University has approved academic partnerships with collaborative partners (both in the UK and overseas) where provision delivered by the partner institution can lead to an award of the University. For more information please see the [Enhancement Framework](#).

**1.1.4** The University's principles and guidance for Assessment and Moderation are defined within the [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#).

## 1.2 Scope for external examining at UWE Bristol

**1.2.1** External Examiners are appointed to provide universities with independent and impartial judgements and advice regarding the quality and standards of their provision.

**1.2.2** At UWE Bristol, External Examiners are drawn both from academics at other institutions and professional practitioners. Their role is to ensure that the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures in relation to assessment are applied appropriately; that nationally agreed levels of standards and quality are being upheld and that student performance is comparable to that at other institutions.

**1.2.3** The external examining system is a key part of UWE's [Enhancement Framework](#). External Examiners' roles and responsibilities may differ for provision governed by approved variant regulations, which reflect specific requirements for external bodies or collaborative partners.

**1.2.4** This Operational Guide outlines the principles and processes for the external examining system for taught provision at UWE Bristol. The [External Examiner Resources website](#) provides further information and guidance to appointed UWE External Examiners.

## **1.3 Key contacts at UWE Bristol for External Examiners**

**1.3.1 Quality Enhancement Team:** QET manage the nomination and appointment of External Examiners; allocation of mentors; changes to responsibilities and module allocation; resignations or termination of contracts; annual reporting; fee payments and the annual External Examiner Conference.

**1.3.2 Student Administration Team:** SAT manage the day to day operational administration of the assessment process and communication with External Examiners including sending all draft examination scripts and assessments; access to samples of marked scripts and other documentation to aid the External Examiner in completing their role; organisation of Field Board and Award Boards and the payment of External Examiner expenses.

**1.3.3 Field Leaders and Associate Heads of Department:** Field Leaders (or other academic colleagues responsible for managing the External Examiners allocated within a Field of study) will:

- provide information to the External Examiner regarding the particular context of the Field within which they are examining, particularly with regard to examining assessments and an induction to collaborative partners or linked to Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies;
- advise module leaders of relevant University and Faculty policies applicable in selecting an appropriate sample of scripts to be sent to an External Examiner;
- advise module leaders and colleagues liaising with External Examiners as to the basis for the sampling for moderation. This includes how it is representative of the assessment profile of the cohort and any specific aspects of the sample on which advice is sought. For example if the marking of the highest, average and weakest scripts is valid and consistent with declared assessment criteria and whether the range of marking is appropriate;

- upon request from the programme design team lead, help identify the appropriate External Examiner to contribute towards the design of new/ revised curriculum, ensuring that they have relevant subject expertise;
- have responsibility for considering and taking actions forward from External Examiner annual reports, and managing the Faculty responses back to the External Examiner in conjunction with the relevant Head of Department.

**1.3.4** In cases where provision included within an External Examiner's portfolio is delivered by a collaborative partner, an allocated **Link Tutor** (one per programme) will also identify when a new examiner is needed and provide further information regarding the partnership and any approved variant regulations.

**1.3.5** The **Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching** and **Scheme Directors** (or equivalent) will be responsible for providing further guidance and information to Chief External Examiners appointed within their Faculty.

## **2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

### **2.1 Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners**

#### **2.1.1** All External Examiners shall:

- report on the academic standards, rigor of assessment processes and student performance of UWE's taught provision;
- as required by their specific responsibilities, judge students impartially for assessment without being influenced by previous association with the University, its staff or any of the students;
- as required by their specific responsibilities, compare the performance of students with information available on the assessment of students elsewhere in higher education and/or with the standards expected by the appropriate professions;
- be knowledgeable about and competent in assessing student achievement in higher education at levels relevant to the subjects and awards to which their appointments relate;
- have broad and current knowledge and relevant experience in the area of work related to their appointment;
- report to the University on the effectiveness of the assessments and the conduct of the examining board and any matters arising in accordance with the University's requirements for such reports;
- report to the Vice-Chancellor or his or her nominee on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of the module, subject or award.

### **2.2 Roles and responsibilities of Field External Examiners**

**2.2.1** Field External Examiners are subject/professional practice experts appointed with responsibility for a specified group of modules within a named Field. Some modules which sit within the Field of study may be delivered by a collaborative partner. Their role is to contribute to discussions on the comparability of standards set at the subject/module level. This is facilitated by ensuring assessments are conducted in accordance with the regulations (or appropriate variant regulations). Furthermore, by verifying the rigour, consistency and fairness of assessment in the context of the aims and objectives set for the Field within the module specifications, the assessment criteria and assessment requirements.

### 2.2.2 Field External Examiners will:

- scrutinise a sample of the work, other than professional competencies assessed by an appropriately qualified practitioner, from each module for which they are responsible within the Field to which they are appointed in order to ensure that marking is at an appropriate level and that candidates are fairly placed in relation to the cohort;
- have the right, if necessary for the discharge of their responsibilities to have access to all assessed work for each module for which they are responsible within the Field to which they are appointed;
- be eligible to be present at a viva voce examination if they are approved by a professional body to have oversight of standards of a professionally recognised or accredited award, and at the discretion of the Executive Dean of Faculty;
- not be able to change a mark for an individual student. However, where scrutiny of the assessment for the whole cohort has taken place, they may recommend that the module leader or the Field Board reviews the marks awarded by the internal examiners, provided this is consistent with fairness to all candidates;
- in cases of proven cohort-wide extenuating circumstances, recommend to the Field Board that marks may be adjusted for the whole cohort, provided this is consistent with fairness to all candidates;
- attend the meetings of the Field Board to which they are appointed at which decisions on the award of credit are made and ensure that those decisions have been reached by means according with the University's requirements and with normal practice in higher education;
- participate as required in any reviews of decisions about individual student's performance on modules within the Field taken during the examiner's period of office;
- report to the University on the effectiveness of the assessments and the conduct of the examining board and any matters arising in accordance with the University's requirements for such reports.

### 2.2.3 Additional information

- If required by a professional body and as agreed by the University, a Field External Examiner shall exceptionally be permitted oversight of one or more awards carrying professional accreditation or recognition in addition to responsibilities relating to a Field;
- Field External Examiners' annual reports shall refer to the specified Field and modules for which the examiner is responsible. Where such examiners are approved to exercise oversight of a professionally accredited or recognised award,



they may comment on the academic standards achieved in the professionally accredited or recognised award as a whole;

- External Examiners may be invited to attend the University to meet the relevant academic and professional support colleagues in order to become familiar with the area of work and the Faculty's approach to learning, teaching and assessment;
- External Examiners will receive information about UWE Field Boards and potential additional Field Boards for collaborative provision. For collaborative provision, additional Field Boards may be scheduled on different dates due to time zone and delivery differences. Scheduling for individual Field Boards will be confirmed by the University's Student Administration Team;
- Additionally, Field External Examiners may be asked to contribute to the design of new curriculum within the appropriate Faculty, ensuring that external frameworks and benchmarks are met;
- External Examiners will be informed whether they are able to meet with students on modules which they are examining. The University is supportive of the role of students in the quality enhancement processes and encourages Faculties to facilitate an External Examiner's consultation with students, where appropriate.

## **2.3 Roles and responsibilities of Chief External Examiners**

**2.3.1** The role of the Chief External Examiner is different from the more traditional role of External Examiners. A Chief External Examiner is appointed by the University to have oversight of a portfolio of awards relevant at Department or Field level. This may differ across Faculties. Some of these awards may be delivered by a collaborative partner.

**2.3.2** Chief External Examiners shall:

- ensure that all assessments are conducted in accordance with the assessment regulations for the programme / cognate group of programmes;
- ensure that the responsibilities of the Award Board relating to a student's eligibility for an award are fully and properly discharged in accordance with the assessment regulations;
- exceptionally, as permitted by the Academic Regulations and assisted as necessary by another examiner of her or his choosing, conduct a viva voce examination to assist an Award Board in determining classification for honours or other differential level of an award;
- attend the meetings of the Award Board to which they are appointed at which decisions on recommendations for award(s) are made and ensure that those

recommendations have been reached by means consistent with the University's requirements and with normal practice in higher education;

- receive the Award Board data (if available) regarding programmes and cohorts and participate in discussions at the Award Board regarding programme performance. These observations should be included in the annual Chief External Examiner report;
- participate as required in any reviews of decisions about an individual student's awards taken during the examiner's period of office;
- have access to relevant assessed work where necessary for the discharge of these responsibilities;
- report to the University on the effectiveness of the assessment and the conduct of the examining board and any matters arising in accordance with the University's requirements for such reports;

### **2.3.3** Additional Information

- Chief External Examiners may also carry additional responsibility for compliance to Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements.

## **2.4 Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners (Variant Regulations)**

**2.4.1** For single-tier awards, External Examiners are appointed to an award and are responsible for ensuring that assessment arrangements are properly undertaken at subject and award level. This may be delivered by a collaborative partner and the External Examiner will be made aware if this is the case. All External Examiners (Variant Regulations) attend the Award Board.

**2.4.2** All External Examiners (Variant Regulations) shall, for the subject area for which they have been appointed, follow the same responsibilities as for a Field External Examiner for the module, unit or subject.

**2.4.3** External Examiners (Variant Regulations) will be informed as to whether they are able to meet with students on the award which they are examining. The University supports the role of students in the quality enhancement process and encourages Faculties to facilitate consultation with students, where appropriate.

**2.4.4** In the event that the External Examiner (Variant Regulations) is the sole examiner for the award, a separate Chief External Examiner (Variant Regulations) will be

appointed for additional oversight.

## **2.5 Roles and responsibilities of Chief External Examiners (Variant Regulations)**

**2.5.1** Where there are multiple External Examiners (Variant Regulations) appointed to an award, one of the examiners will be appointed as the Chief External Examiner (Variant Regulations) for the award and will have oversight of the other examiners in their team.

**2.5.2** In addition to the usual responsibilities, the Chief External Examiner (Variant Regulations) shall:

- attend the meetings of the examining board to which he or she is appointed at which decisions on recommendations for award(s) are made and ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means consistent with the University's requirements and with normal practice in higher education;
- ensure that all assessments are conducted in accordance with the assessment regulations for the programme;
- ensure that the responsibilities of the examining board relating to a student's eligibility for an award are fully and properly discharged in accordance with the assessment regulations;
- exceptionally, as permitted by the assessment regulations and the Academic Regulations, conduct a viva voce examination of a candidate;
- participate as required in any reviews of decisions about an individual student's award(s) taken during the examiner's period of office;
- have access to relevant assessed work where necessary for the discharge of these responsibilities.

## **2.6 Additional responsibilities for Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)**

**2.6.1** There may be additional requirements beyond standard UWE practice when a module or programme within an Examiner's portfolio has links to a PSRB.

**2.6.2** These requirements may include but are not limited to: current membership of a relevant professional body; mandatory attendance at Field and Award Boards; and other non-specified practice based requirements. PSRBs may also request oversight of External Examiner CVs for validation or reaccreditation purposes.

**2.6.3** The Quality Enhancement Team will specify any relevant additional PSRB requirements during the nomination process and confirm them to the External Examiner within their appointment letter.

**2.6.4** An External Examiner who has been appointed with the additional responsibility of oversight of a professionally accredited award will receive an additional fee which will be confirmed in the appointment letter.

## **2.7 Additional responsibilities for Collaborative Partnership provision**

**2.7.1** Some External Examiners may have responsibility for modules or awards which are delivered at one of UWE's collaborative partners.

**2.7.2** Where provision is delivered at both UWE and by a collaborative partner, External Examiners will have an opportunity to discuss provision with partner colleagues through invitation to attend examining boards either in person or by video conference. They may also be invited to become involved in other capacities.

**2.7.3** Where provision is delivered both at UWE and by a collaborative partner, External Examiners will consider a samples of work from both UWE provision and the partner. The External Examiner will be made aware of which partner it is for.

**2.7.4** External Examiners with responsibility for modules delivered at UWE and at a collaborative partner may be asked to attend additional Field Boards which will consider the collaborative provision.

**2.7.5** In some cases where provision delivered by a collaborative partner, the roles and responsibilities of an External Examiner may differ. The Quality Enhancement Team will specify any relevant additional requirements during the nomination process and confirm them to the External Examiner within their appointment letter.

## **2.8 Additional responsibilities for curriculum design and approval**

**2.8.1** External Examiners may be asked to contribute to the design of new or revised curriculum within the appropriate Faculty. During their tenure, they may be contacted either by the relevant UWE Academic or the Quality Enhancement Team and invited to contribute during the curriculum design phase.

**2.8.2** The external role within a curriculum design team will be to provide advice on the context of current developments in the discipline, curriculum content and confirm that relevant subject benchmark statements have been mapped appropriately. They will not contribute to the approval of new or revised curriculum.

**2.8.3** External Examiners will be asked to either attend a design team meeting at the University (in person or via a video/telephone conference link), or receive the documentation via correspondence and provide feedback through a report using a provided template.

**2.8.4** An additional fee will be paid (including expenses) if attending a design team meeting at the University.

## 3. NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT

### 3.1 External Examiner nomination

**3.1.1** The process for nomination and appointment of External Examiners is set out in the External Peer Review section of the [Enhancement Framework](#).

### 3.2 Changes of Responsibilities

**3.2.1 Extension of tenure** - An External Examiner may be asked to extend their tenure by an additional year and they reserve the right to either accept or decline this request. However, they cannot serve more than 5 years in post. The Chair of the relevant Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committee and the Quality Enhancement Team will determine whether the rationale for the extension of tenure is acceptable.

**3.2.2 Changes to module allocation** – An External Examiner’s portfolio may change on an annual basis. The Quality Enhancement Team will consider whether the Faculty requested changes to an External Examiner’s module allocation are appropriate and will adjust the fee structure if necessary. All External Examiners will be contacted on an annual basis to confirm their portfolio and to advise of any changes to their allocation of modules. Please note: Further changes to an External Examiner’s portfolio may be required during the academic year in order to reflect any changes in business needs. Any changes will be communicated to the External Examiner in writing.

### 3.3 Right to work in the UK requirements

**3.3.1** The University has a legal duty under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 to check all employees have the right to work in the UK before they start their role. External Examiners are considered by the Act to be undertaking work at UWE Bristol. The University is unable to allow anyone to undertake work for the University or be paid any fees if they are not able to prove their Right to Work.

**3.3.2** Nominees must present their original documentation to the Quality Enhancement Team at UWE Bristol so that it can be verified. Whilst the University is in possession of the documentation, they are required by law to check the validity of this documentation via either via a pre-arranged live video call or in person. This will happen before the External Examiner’s appointment can be confirmed.

## 3.4 Data Protection Statement

- 3.4.1** Please note that UWE Bristol will always comply with its legal obligations when processing personal data. Personal data will only be processed in a way which is consistent with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as enacted and amended in UK law and Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data will only be processed in a way which is compatible with UWE Bristol's policies, procedures and collective agreements. For further details please see the [UWE Staff Data Privacy Notice](#).
- 3.4.2** Included within the nomination form is a data protection statement which the External Examiner should agree to. The data protection statement can be downloaded [here](#).
- 3.4.3** In line with QAA requirements, the Quality Enhancement Team will publish the name and workplace of External Examiners allocated to modules in the module handbook. Included is a statement that students should not contact the External Examiner directly. Students are advised to contact the module leader in the first instance and seek further advice on the [Academic Advice section](#) of our website. Should a student approach an examiner regarding their grades or marks, the examiner should not discuss the matter and instead signpost them to the module leader or Quality Enhancement Team.

## 3.5 Confidentiality Statement

- 3.5.1** Included within the nomination form is a confidentiality statement which the External Examiner should agree to. The confidentiality statement can be downloaded [here](#).
- 3.5.2** External Examiners may be in receipt of students' sensitive personal data during the discharge of their role and they must ensure that if any such information is downloaded from the UWE controlled IT system, then it is suitably stored and protected. Further guidance on handling sensitive personal data in accordance with UWE guidelines can be accessed [here](#).

## 3.6 External Examiner Appointment

- 3.6.1** Once an External Examiner appointment has been confirmed, the Quality Enhancement Team will ensure that they are provided with an appropriate

induction to the role. This may include invitation to the External Examiners' Annual Conference and additional support through allocation to an External Examiner mentor if deemed appropriate.

## **3.7 External Examiners' Annual Conference**

**3.7.1** The Quality Enhancement Team deliver an annual conference for External Examiners. This event is aimed at new External Examiners, or External Examiners who are in their second year of tenure and were unable to attend the previous year. The agenda and workshops are updated annually to reflect current issues or initiatives at UWE Bristol or in the Higher Education sector. The [External Examiner Resources](#) contain copies of the presentations and the workshops.

## **3.8 Mentor scheme**

**3.8.1** Where a new External Examiner is appointed and does not have previous experience of either external examining, or acting in the role of Chief, an appropriate mentor will be sought. The mentor will be an experienced current External Examiner who has been invited to complete this additional role offering guidance, advice and support. Once agreed, their name and contact details will be made available to the new examiner.

**3.8.2** The role of the mentor will be:

- to provide advice and guidance on the UWE external examining system and the expectations of the External Examiner role in addition to support and guidance offered by UWE;
- to be a good listener who is able to ask questions, offer suggestions and advice, and generally talk issues through;
- to explore any issues with the new external examiner, including options and potential solutions;
- to support the new External Examiner to develop an action plan, where appropriate;
- to provide a mentoring relationship that is confidential to the mentor and the new External Examiner.



## 4. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### 4.1 The assessment journey and sampling guidance

- 4.1.1** The [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#) sets out the University's principles and guidance for the assessment and moderation process, including guidance for selecting an appropriate sample of scripts for internal marking and external moderation.
- 4.1.2** The University wishes to ensure that moderation of students' assessed work is undertaken rigorously and fairly with regard to the whole of a cohort whose assessed work is subject to External Examiner moderation. External Examiners are invited to comment on the rigour, fairness and consistency of marking against the assessment criteria provided for the assessed work.
- 4.1.3** For the most part, Field External Examiners will receive a sample of marked work, representing the spread of marks awarded.
- 4.1.4** Where a sample of assessed work is made available, External Examiners are not permitted to alter marks on individual scripts or assessed work. Should a Field External Examiner wish to question the mark or assessment awarded to an individual student, care must be taken to ensure that any proposed change is considered in relation to the impact of such changes on the assessment of the whole cohort. Following discussions with the relevant module leader, an External Examiner may propose that the marks of the whole cohort be raised or lowered by a specified amount. If an error in the application of assessment criteria is identified, all scripts be reviewed to check whether the error has been repeated elsewhere.
- 4.1.5** Field External Examiners may be asked to act as an independent marker of an individual script or piece of work where the internal markers have been unable to agree on a mark or assessment. In these circumstances, the External Examiner's view shall prevail.

### 4.2 Academic calendar

- 4.2.1** The University's assessment and moderation process works on an annual academic calendar, reflecting typical teaching and assessment periods and timings of Examining Boards. The Student Administration Team will provide each External Examiner with a copy of the annual academic calendar. Please also see the [Term Dates webpage](#) for the Academic Year Calendar for more details.

**4.2.2** Some collaborative provision partners operate to a variant annual academic calendar and the Partnership Operations Team will make the relevant External Examiner aware in these cases.

### **4.3 Scrutiny of draft examination and assignment briefs**

**4.3.1** External Examiners will be sent all draft examination questions for external scrutiny prior to approval and publication by the Faculty. Each Faculty may have a different method of setting and approving assessments as agreed by the relevant Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

**4.3.2** The University encourages (as best practice) that External Examiners also be asked to review draft assignment questions prior to approval and publication by the Faculty. Other draft assessments may also be made available to the External Examiner upon request.

**4.3.3** External Examiners will be asked to consider the draft examination questions and confirm that they will effectively test the students' learning and allow them to meet the stated learning outcomes of the module.

### **4.4 Documentation provided to External Examiners**

**4.4.1** External Examiners will be provided with the list of documents below to allow them to judge the quality and appropriateness of assessments and to assure themselves the assessments are testing the intended learning outcomes. This may be made available electronically via SharePoint.

<b>Documentation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
External Examiner Scrutiny Tracker (EEST): - lists of module runs - lists of assessment types - estimated date of exam papers for scrutiny - estimated dates of samples for scrutiny - exam board dates	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team if appropriate
Examining Board Guidance updated for each assessment period	Quality Enhancement Team
Access to Blackboard/SharePoint login details	Quality Enhancement Team
A sample of University Module Assessment (including assessment criteria and outcomes of internal marking)	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Terms of Reference for Examining Boards	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Previous annual External Examiner reports	Quality Enhancement Team

Programme and Module handbooks	Available in Blackboard Partnerships Modules - available in Partner Operations Manuals.
Programme and Module specifications	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team (available in Partner Operations Manuals)
Previous Programme and Module reports	Available from Module Leader
Blackboard VLE information made available to students for examiner reference	Student Administration Team
Dissertations and projects where relevant	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Where available, model answers	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Summary of module statistics (students assessed, average marks, standard deviation and pass rates)	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Operations Manual or Variant Regulations for Collaborative Provision	Partnership Operations Team via External Examiner Scrutiny Tracker (EEST)
Previous Field and Award Board minutes	Student Administration Team or Partnerships SAT Team
Chief External Examiners will be given access to the SharePoint website where External Examiner reports are available.	Quality Enhancement Team

## 4.5 Online assessment – Blackboard and SharePoint sites

**4.5.1** Electronically submitted work and that marked online can be accessed by the External Examiner tab in the University Online Virtual Learning Environment – BlackBoard. Electronic packages of samples will be created and made available to External Examiner in their Blackboard tab and an alert will be sent. Please see the following link to the guidance for External Examiners in using the [External Examiner Tab](#).

**4.5.2** For non-UK collaborative provision, sample assessments will be made available on the Partnerships SharePoint Site. The Partnership Operations Team will provide access and relevant links to access documentation. For any queries, please contact the relevant administrator or email [partnerships.sat@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:partnerships.sat@uwe.ac.uk).

## 4.6 Examining boards

**4.6.1** The Student Administration Team are responsible for briefing External Examiners regarding their attendance at and engagement with exam boards.

- 4.6.2** In order to ensure each External Examiner is properly prepared and able to carry out their duties regarding exam boards, the University will:
- inform all External Examiners, in advance, of exam board dates which they are required to attend;
  - inform all External Examiners of the dates for any 'scrutiny days' or formal induction days which may be run in advance of exam boards;
  - send contact details of the other External Examiners in their examining team and the Chief External Examiner (provided in appointment letter);
  - send background information to each External Examiner, which will include as relevant: updates/clarifications of regulations, module and programme handbooks, draft assessments, formal policy documents, module specifications, minutes and agendas for previous exam boards;
  - provide copies of the Annual Report Template for examiners to complete following the main board, as well as the previous year's Annual Report and Faculty response or a copy of the outgoing External Examiner's report (where applicable). These are provided by the Quality Enhancement Team;
  - ensure that hospitality arrangements are made and any expenses reimbursed as appropriate.

**4.6.3** The University will ensure that all External Examiners receive scripts to be moderated, along with mark sheets and supplementary course material as appropriate, in advance of the exam boards.

**4.6.4 Attendance at Field and Award Boards:** External Examiners are required to attend their relevant Field or Award Boards. Some Field External Examiners with PSRB responsibility may also be required to attend relevant Award Boards.

**4.6.5 Scrutiny days:** Additional sessions prior to an Examining Board may be arranged for the Field or Faculty, although this is not common practice across the University. This provides an opportunity for External Examiners to meet with UWE staff prior to the exam board and to review scripts and paperwork. The Student Administration Team will make the External Examiner aware if they have been invited to a scrutiny day.

## **4.7 Field Boards**

**4.7.1** Field Boards consider and approve module marks and award credit – rather than a student's whole award.

**4.7.2** At the meeting Field External Examiners will:

- be required to consider and approve the Field Board decisions on the award of credit;
- participate in the Field Board's discharging of its responsibilities relating to any matters concerning assessment offences and adverse circumstances affecting a cohort of students;
- be invited from time to time to comment on matters related to the development and operation of the assessment requirements for the modules and Field to which the External Examiner's appointment relates.

**4.7.3** Field External Examiners are not permitted to:

- attend Award Boards, except where a PSRB requires the External Examiner to attend the Award Board in order to have oversight of the award as a whole in addition to their Field Board responsibilities;
- be involved in any assessment decisions which are not within the remit of the Field Board; for example, personal circumstances claimed by individual students in relation to their performance for an award.

**4.7.4** At, and following the Field Board, External Examiners are invited to comment on any matters arising from their involvement in the assessment process, or from their knowledge and experience of the learning and teaching provided to students, which might assist internal examiners and teaching staff to maintain and improve quality and standards.

**4.7.5** Feedback from External Examiners following the board is facilitated by means of the annual External Examiner's report.

## **4.8 Award Boards**

**4.8.1** Award Boards decide the eligibility of students for awards, including intermediate and default awards, within their jurisdiction and the effect of any personal circumstances on the performance of a student in relation to an award or to progression within an award. Hence these boards are student facing.

**4.8.2** At Award Boards, External Examiners shall:

- ensure that the procedures and arrangements for the Award Board are conducted in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations and the University's Academic Procedures and requirements;
- ensure that the Award Board discharges its responsibilities relating to any matters concerning assessment offences and consideration of personal circumstances affecting individual students;
- approve the award recommendations made by the Award Board;

- reflect upon information and data provided for them on the performance of cohorts of students (Chief External Examiners only).

**4.8.3** Chief External Examiners are not permitted to:

- attend Field Boards or be involved in decisions on the award of credit unless they also hold a position as a Field External Examiner;
- have any power to alter the decision of a Field Board in relation to the award or withholding of credit;
- be involved in the direct, individual assessment of students other than by exceptionally undertaking a viva voce examination.

**4.8.4** At, and following the Award Board, External Examiners are invited to comment on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of award(s) of the University.

**4.8.5** Feedback from External Examiners following the board is facilitated by means of the annual External Examiner's report.

## **4.9 Reconvened Exam Boards**

**4.9.1** If an examining board is required to review a decision after the full meeting, the responsibility may be delegated to a subcommittee (known as a reconvened board) with terms of reference limited to the review in question.

## **4.10 Student Engagement**

**4.10.1** It is beneficial for students to be aware of the role the External Examiner has within the monitoring and evaluation process in assuring the quality and standards of their programmes.

**4.10.2** The University encourages where possible for External Examiners to meet with students. There is no specific expectation that External Examiners have to meet with students and the benefits of this engagement should be discussed with Field leaders.

**4.10.3** When meeting with students, it is important for External Examiners to focus specifically on questions that support their understanding of the quality and standards of the modules/programmes. Any concerns regarding operational aspects should be raised by students through the Student Representative Staff Forum. Furthermore, any complaints should be raised through the internal University processes.

**4.10.4** Below is a table of suggested questions to ask of students. Examiners should encourage use of examples where possible:

1. Are assessments sufficiently challenging?
2. Are assessments clear and do the students understand how they relate to the learning objectives (i.e. learning outcomes)?
3. Which type of assessments do they enjoy and feel support their learning?
4. Do students receive feedback that supports their future learning?
5. Is feedback appropriately timed to support future learning/assessments that are set?
6. What formative assessments do they take and how do they feel this supports their learning?
7. What support/guidance do students receive in using the library for further reading and referencing?
8. What involvement in their modules do professional practitioners play? Do they have visiting lecturers and how do they feel it helps their learning?
9. Are there any practical areas (related to their discipline) that students would like to learn/be incorporated into modules?
10. What do students feel could be enhanced to improve their module/programme in relation to the subjects covered and assessments?

**4.10.5** In line with QAA requirements, the Quality Enhancement Team will publish the name and workplace of External Examiners allocated to modules in the module handbook. Included is a statement that students should not contact the External Examiner directly. Students are advised to contact the module leader in the first instance and seek further advice on the [Academic Advice section](#) of our website. Should a student approach an Examiner regarding their grades or marks, the Examiner should not discuss the matter and instead signpost them to the module leader or Quality Enhancement Team.

## 5. ANNUAL REPORTING

### 5.1 Annual reporting process and timelines

- 5.1.1** External Examiners are required to report once per academic year to the University on the conduct of assessments and on issues related to assessment. The report is important to the monitoring and evaluation of the University's academic provision and feedback is taken forwards through Departmental Action Plans and discussed at the Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committee. The annual reporting process is managed by the Quality Enhancement Team.
- 5.1.2** A separate template is provided for each of the different types of External Examiners. Each template follows the core focus but is contextualised to match the requirements and responsibilities of each role. External Examiners will be issued with individual, personalised templates each year. If an External Examiner requires a replacement template, they should contact the Quality Enhancement Team.
- 5.1.3** The report provides External Examiners with the opportunity to feedback directly on issues for consideration by the University and to make additional comments on any areas not specifically covered in the report. External Examiners completing their tenure are also invited to provide a short overview of their term in office.
- 5.1.4** External Examiners who also have responsibility for UWE provision delivered at any collaborative partners are also asked to additionally report on this within the same template. There is also a specific question regarding oversight of an award on behalf of any PSRBs.
- 5.1.5** In order to protect confidentiality, individual students and staff should not be named in reports. If External Examiners wish to make feedback that may compromise student or staff anonymity, a separate attachment should be used.
- 5.1.6** The University is classed as a 'public authority' for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and therefore External Examiner reports may be disclosed in response to a request for information that falls within the terms of the Act. The Quality Enhancement Team will endeavour to let External Examiners know when such a request has been received. The University will also share External Examiner reports with PSRBs, collaborative partners and current students where appropriate.



**5.1.7** External Examiners may, in exceptional circumstances, report separately and confidentially to the Vice-Chancellor on any matters of serious concern. Where an External Examiner has serious concerns about issues relating to the standards at UWE, and has exhausted all internal procedures including such a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, they may pursue these issues externally through the QAA Concerns scheme. For further details see the QAA website for [how to make a complaint](#).

**5.1.8** The Quality Enhancement Team may return to an External Examiner for further information on any report, if it is not considered to meet the University's stated requirements.

**5.1.9** An External Examiner's annual fee is paid upon receipt of the satisfactorily completed annual report.

## **5.2 Faculty responses to External Examiner reports**

**5.2.1** The reporting template also includes a section to be completed by the Faculty following receipt of the External Examiner's comments. This will provide a summary of action taken (or to be taken) in response to external feedback received. The External Examiner will be sent a copy of their report with the Faculty response.

## **5.3 University responses to External Examiner reports**

**5.3.1** Feedback within External Examiner reports is monitored and responded to through Departmental Reports which includes a summary of external feedback. Feedback is included in the Departmental Action Plan which is discussed at Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQCs). Faculties will highlight key areas of good practice and areas for enhancement to the University Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) so that cross-institutional themes are considered and discussed.

## 6. FEES AND EXPENSES

### 6.1 Annual Fees

- 6.1.1** The annual fee for External Examiners is set out in the letter of appointment and is paid after receipt of the External Examiner's annual report to the University. The fees for External Examiners are set out in the [University's fee schedule](#).
- 6.1.2** The annual fee is inclusive of any VAT that might be chargeable. HM Revenue and Customs has instructed that the fee is taxable and this will be administered through the PAYE system. The fee is therefore paid through the UWE payroll system.
- 6.1.3** All payments to External Examiners are made in line with the University's [Anti bribery policy](#). Bribery will not be tolerated by the University in any form and all members of staff and associates (including External Examiners) are required to uphold the highest standards of integrity in their dealings with or on behalf of the University and to comply with all applicable laws of the countries in which they are working. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary and, where appropriate, legal action against the individuals/ organisations concerned.

### 6.2 Expenses

- 6.2.1** Expenses are payable in accordance with the guidelines set out on the [External Examiner Resource](#) webpage.
- 6.2.2** Expenses for additional off-site visits which External Examiners may undertake are agreed and paid by the relevant Faculty Executive or Budget Holder.

## 7. EXTERNAL EXAMINER CONTRACTUAL CHANGES

### 7.1 Changes to circumstances

**7.1.1** External Examiners **must** inform the Quality Enhancement Team of any changes to their circumstances which might affect their role. This may include: changes to contact details; job responsibilities; titles; retirement; or changes of Institution or employer. The Quality Enhancement Team will then determine whether these changes have any effect on the External Examiner's ability to continue in the role by referring to the appointment criteria.

### 7.2 External Examiner Resignation

**7.2.1** Should an External Examiner wish to resign before the end of their appointed tenure date they should formally notify the Quality Enhancement Team in writing as early as possible to ensure a replacement can be found promptly. The notice period for resignation is two months unless mutually otherwise agreed by both parties.

### 7.3 Termination of contract

**7.3.1** As outlined in the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures, the appointment of an External Examiner may be terminated by the University at its sole discretion if the External Examiner has not fulfilled their duties in a manner consistent with the standards required by the University or for convenience. Approved variant regulations may also set out information regarding the early termination of an appointment for an External Examiner.

**7.3.2** The decision by the University to initiate an early termination of tenure is not taken lightly. Following transparent discussion with the Faculty and the External Examiner, the termination will be communicated on behalf of the University by a formal letter from the Director of Student and Academic Services.

**7.3.3** Failure to submit an annual report would not in itself constitute grounds for an early termination of tenure. However, the University would be seriously concerned if an External Examiner consistently failed to submit reports over successive years. Other aspects of the role not adhered to, such as regular non-attendance at exam boards and other such lack of engagement with the role, will also be taken into consideration for the early termination of tenure.

# Appendix: Useful Links

## Internal (some may require UWE Login)

Academic Regulations and Procedures (including Variant Regulations)

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/about/departmentsandservices/professionalservices/studentandacademicservices/regulationspoliciesquality/regulationsandprocedures.aspx>

Acronyms

<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/about-uwe/acronyms>

Assessment and Feedback Policy

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/policies/assessmentcycle.aspx>

Blackboard – External Examiner Tab Guidance

<http://info.uwe.ac.uk/online/Blackboard/staff/guides/online-assessment/external-examiners/>

Enhancement Framework

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/about/departmentsandservices/professionalservices/studentandacademicservices/regulationspoliciesquality/enhancementframework.aspx>

Examining Board – Code of Practice

[https://www2.uwe.ac.uk/services/Marketing/students/Student advice/Exam-board-code-of-practice.pdf](https://www2.uwe.ac.uk/services/Marketing/students/Student%20advice/Exam-board-code-of-practice.pdf)

External Examiners' Resources (including Fee Schedule, Expenses policy)

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/about/departmentsandservices/professionalservices/studentandacademicservices/regulationspoliciesquality/externalexaminerresources.aspx>

Module Specifications

<http://info.uwe.ac.uk/modules/>

Programme Specifications

<http://info.uwe.ac.uk/programmes/default.asp>

The University's 2020 Strategy

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/visionandmission/strategy.aspx>

## External

QAA Qualifications and Credit Frameworks

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks>

QAA Subject Benchmark Statements

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-external-expertise.pdf>