



EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' HANDBOOK

Academic Quality Unit
July 2011
Version 3

Foreword

The external examiner system is fundamental to the University's key aim of providing an outstanding student experience. It provides essential insight into existing practices from a unique perspective.

The aim of this Handbook is to ensure that policy, process and practice is transparent to all those involved, including UW academic and administrative staff as well as external examiners themselves.

In particular, the purposes of this Handbook are to:

1. Outline the roles and responsibilities of external examiners and of the University (see Section 1).
2. Detail the induction arrangements for external examiners (see Section 2)
3. Outline the requirements for external examiner reports (see Section 3)
4. Describe how external examiner reports are used in the University at committee level and in Schools, and how feedback is provided to external examiners (see Section 3).
5. Outline the administrative procedures for the submission and payment of external examiner fees and expenses (see Section 4).
6. Provide information about the academic framework and generic assessment regulations which contextualise the award and module regulations that external examiners receive for the particular Assessment Board to which they are appointed (see Section 5).

Further information about the University's quality policies and processes can be accessed through the [Academic Quality Unit](#) (AQU) website. If you have any questions about the external examiner system in general, please contact Margaret Chaffey in the first instance.

Mrs Margaret Chaffey
Academic Quality Unit
University of Worcester
Room WB.119
Henwick Grove
Worcester
WR2 6AJ
United Kingdom

(Email: m.chaffey@worc.ac.uk)

Tel. +(44) 1905 855519

Fax +(44) 1905 855132

Foreword.....	2
Section 1: The Role and Rights of External Examiners	4
Role of the External Examiner	4
Role of external examiners in moderating assessment items.....	5
The role of the Chief External Examiner	5
Rights of the External Examiner	5
Section 2: Induction.....	7
General information for external examiners	7
Arrangements for informing external examiners following appointment	7
Section 3: Annual Report to the University	8
Use made of External Examiners' Reports	9
Timescales	9
Section 4: Fees and expenses	10
External examiner Fees.....	10
Payment of Fees/Expenses	10
Section 5: Useful Information	11
Contacts	11
Additional Information.....	12

Section 1: The Role and Rights of External Examiners

Role of the External Examiner

External examiners have an important role within the quality assurance mechanisms in assuring comparability of academic standards outside and within the University and ensuring the fairness of the operation and assessment of courses. They also contribute towards the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching, and the attainment by students of course outcomes.

The Assessment Policy sets out the requirements for moderation of assessments and marking. Each Institute and/or course is required to formulate policies on internal and external moderation. External examiners are expected to be familiar with the University's Assessment Policy.

In particular, the following normally comprise the external examiner's role:

- To verify the work of internal examiners in respect of the assessments with which the external examiner is associated in accordance with the University regulations. In order to fulfil this role the external examiner will be presented with a sample of work (normally around 15%, or at least 6 items) across the full range of marks and, as applicable in the case of some collaborative provision, across the range of institutions where provision is delivered. The external examiner is expected to use the sample of work to assure themselves, and the University, of the security of the whole set of marks (see moderation, below).
- To ensure that all students are examined within the regulations approved for the course with particular reference to the requirements of professional bodies (PSRBs) as applicable.
- To view in advance, and comment on as appropriate, a sample of internally approved assessment items.
- To inform the University of any matter which, in his or her view, militates against the maintenance of proper academic standards
- To attend the meetings of Boards of Examiners at which the results of assessments are agreed (usually referred to as Subject Assessment Boards). Where attendance is not possible, to provide written comments to the Chair of the Board regarding satisfaction with marks.
- To satisfy himself or herself that the work and decisions of a Board of Examiners of which he or she is a member are consistent with the best practice in higher education.
- To ensure that the standard of any marks which contribute to an award which is recommended by a Board of Examiners of which he or she is a member would be comparable to the standard of other universities in the United Kingdom.

- To ensure that the standards set for the course are appropriate through reference to national subject and qualification benchmarks, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and programme specifications.
- To endorse the outcomes of assessment by signing the Board papers.
- To report annually to the Academic Board of the University on the standards attained by students on the course, and on any other matters deemed appropriate to enable the University to assure academic standards and quality. (See Section 3 for details.)

Additionally, external examiners should expect to be consulted regarding proposed changes to provision, or for any other advice and guidance deemed necessary throughout the period of office.

Role of external examiners in moderating assessment items

Specifically with regard to moderation, in exceptional circumstances an external examiner may amend an individual mark, but only where the effect of the action on all students in the relevant cohort has been taken into account. The external examiner may, in such circumstances, require other work to be re-marked: either that element for the whole cohort, or a range of work for an individual. In cases where the external examiner believes that mark(s) for an individual student or a cohort might be reviewed, s/he should contact the relevant Examination and Assessment Officer to discuss the matter before their visit to the University.

The role of the Chief External Examiner

The Chief External Examiner maintains oversight of the conduct and operation of a scheme, course, programme or award.

The role of the Chief External Examiner covers the conduct and operation of the exam board, student performance and standards, scheme management, and generic issues raised by course external examiners.

The role of a Chief External Examiner is to satisfy themselves that standards and procedures are applied consistently across a scheme, course, programme or award, that regulations are applied appropriately, that the Scheme Exam Board is conducted fairly and to report annually to Academic Board on these matters. Where, exceptionally, the Chief External Examiner is unable to attend an Exam Board, appropriate arrangements should be made in consultation with the Head of Registry Services.

Rights of the External Examiner

An external examiner has the authority and the responsibility to report directly to the Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University in such cases that there is concern about standards and performance, particularly if it is considered that assessments are being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the University's awards. Any other issues of a

confidential nature, which the external examiner may wish to raise, may also be referred, in full and in writing, to the Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive.

External examiners are also able to:

- request to see a sample of all draft assessment exercises before they are given to students in consultation with the appropriate internal examiner or examiners.
- inspect any assessment material relating to the course; particularly, but not exclusively, to see any examination papers, scripts, course-work or project reports relating to the assessments with which he or she is specifically associated, and, where appropriate, industrial training reports.
- meet students and discuss curriculum development with academic staff.
- attend the meetings of the Board of Examiners of which he or she is a member and to submit an annual report to the Academic Quality Unit.
- withhold his or her signature from the recommendation of an award.

Section 2: Induction

General information for external examiners

The Academic Quality Unit co-ordinates the production of an External Examiners' Handbook containing generic guidance on the role of the external examiner, scheme regulations, its place within the University's academic portfolio, and academic regulations and policies. Course teams (typically the Course Leader) are responsible for providing examiners with course specific information, including relevant course handbooks, programme specifications and module specifications and, where appropriate, details of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) information.

University policies related to learning and teaching are available directly from the AQU webpages and external examiners are directed to this information upon appointment. In particular, the University's Assessment Policy, an explanation of the way the University interprets and implements the QAA Code of Practice for external examining and other examination-related information are available on the same page as the External Examiners' Handbook.

Arrangements for informing external examiners following appointment

Appointments are normally made for 4 years, running from September to December. This provides overlap of appointments at the end of each term of office to ensure consistency and, where appropriate, mentoring opportunities for incoming examiners. The Audit and Review Committee will recommend such action as appropriate. In cases where external examiners have participated in the development of provision, normally via the [Course Planning and Approval Process](#), such appointments will normally be made for three years.

The University holds an annual external examiners' briefing day during which examiners are introduced to general regulations, scheme regulations, and their courses. The date of the briefing day is published on the AQU webpages and all new external examiners are invited to this event. Following the briefing day, related materials are made available on the AQU webpages.

Where a nominated external examiner does not have previous external examination experience arrangements are made to ensure that they join a team of examiners with such experience and/or are assigned a mentor. In cases where there is only one external examiner for an award, or all external examiners have limited experience, either the outgoing external examiner is asked to carry out this mentoring role or, alternatively, an external examiner in a similar field.

It is expected that course teams provide incoming external examiners with a copy of the previous year's annual evaluation report, which contains the outgoing external examiner's report and course response.

Section 3: Annual Report to the University

The external examiner attends as a full member of the appropriate Board of Examiners and is required to submit an annual report to the University, via the Academic Quality Unit.

Where an examiner acts for two discrete courses, they will normally produce two reports (see also Section 4). This is clarified during the nomination and appointment process.

The report, which should preserve the anonymity of students, covers the following areas:

- the appropriateness of the academic standards.
- the overall performance of the students in relation to: the award under consideration, their peers on comparable courses, peers in previous years, national frameworks and/or professional body standards.
- the strengths and weaknesses of students as a group or as individuals.
- the quality of knowledge and skills (both general and subject-specific) demonstrated by the students.
- the structure, organisation, design, links to learning outcomes and marking of all assessments.
- the appropriateness of assessment strategies and techniques.
- consistency and rigour of marking.
- the lessons of the examination and assessment for the curriculum, aims and content, teaching methods and resources of the course.
- the conduct and operation of the Board of Examiners.
- the quality of teaching and learning as indicated by the student performances.
- any institutional issues for discussion.
- any other recommendations for course improvement based on the experience of examining.
- activities undertaken during the year
- comments on the University interpretation of the role of external examiner, and the support given in order to carry out that role.
- (in the case of examiners completing their term of office) any additional comments.

The current report template is accessible via the AQU webpages.

The Chief External Examiner report covers the conduct and operation of the exam board, student performance and standards, scheme management (as applicable), and any generic issues identified, for instance, by course external examiners.

It is a condition of appointment that all external examiners provide a written annual report based on the UW Report Template, within 3 weeks of their attendance at the awarding Examination Board. The annual report should be sent electronically to m.chaffey@worc.ac.uk and can be downloaded via the link on the AQU webpages. Payment of the annual fee is processed automatically upon receipt of your report.

Use made of External Examiners' Reports

External examiners' reports form an essential aspect of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University. Discussion of external examiner reports are incorporated specifically within the annual evaluation process, periodic review and through course management committees. In addition, reports are considered in their own right through the following process:

Copies of reports are, upon receipt, sent to the Director of Quality and Educational Development (Chair of Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee) who produces an annual report to Academic Board providing an overview of all reports.

Reports are also sent to the Director of the appropriate scheme, the Head of Institute, Course Manager/Leader, the Examinations Officer and other members of the University as deemed appropriate (normally determined by Institute structure, eg. Heads of Division or Heads of Centre). Reports on courses taught collaboratively with partners should be addressed to both institutions and will be shared at this point.

The formal University response to the report is made via the annual evaluation process. Issues raised by the external examiner are discussed in the annual evaluation report produced by the course team. Issues concerning the operation of the scheme are reported in the Scheme Director's annual report. Course annual evaluation reports also highlight any issues regarding University procedures for the attention of ASQEC. External examiners' reports are considered for general as well as specific issues by the Head of Institute, and these are discussed in the Institute's Annual Evaluation report.

It is University policy that the course annual evaluation report, including external examiners' reports and the course team response to these, is discussed with students via course management committees. This response is verified by Institute Quality Committees before the full report is sent by the Course team to the relevant external examiner(s).

Timescales

- June/July (typically): Report requested following examination boards
- August/September: AQU sends acknowledgement of receipt
- November/December: Course teams submit annual evaluation report to Institute Quality Committees (see [Annual Evaluation Process](#) pages for full details).
- December/January: The external examiner should receive a response to the report and the evaluation report prior to the end of Semester 1.
- January: ASQEC receive report summarising outcomes from all external examiner reports. This is then forwarded to all external examiners.

Section 4: Fees and expenses

External examiner Fees

	for 2010-11
Covering at least TWO academic levels <i>(normally undergraduate awards)</i>	400
Covering ONE academic level <i>(normally postgraduate awards)</i>	300
Covering less than one full academic level <i>(normally one or two modules only)</i>	200

NB. External examiners attending a Scheme Board of Examiners meeting, often referred to as Chief External Examiners, will normally be paid an additional £100 further to the basic rate outlined above.

On occasion, external examiners are asked to cover more than one award or course. In such cases, where provision is sufficiently similar for one report to cover all related awards, a supplemental fee of £50 is normally paid to account for the additional volume of work. Where awards are entirely discrete, normally requiring attendance at more than one examination board and subsequently requiring more than one report, externals are paid at the rates above for each award covered. In all cases, such decisions are made through negotiation with the course team and/or with the external examiner concerned.

Payment of Fees/Expenses

Expenses: Expense claims for visits to Worcester should also be sent to Margaret Chaffey, Academic Quality Unit on completion of the [Expenses Claim Form](#), which can be downloaded from the link given below.

Annual Fee Payment: Your annual fee will be processed automatically upon receipt of your annual report.

Section 5: Useful Information

Contacts

You may wish to use this page to record certain contact details at the University of Worcester

Academic Contact
(Course Leader)

Email/telephone

Examinations Officer

Email/telephone

Administrative Contact
(UW Institute)

Email/telephone

HND/FD Scheme details – Sue Cuthbert, Head of Collaborative Programmes
Tel. 01905 85 5599 (s.cuthbert@worc.ac.uk)

Appointment enquiries, visit expenses, accommodation and reports – Margaret Chaffey, Academic Quality Unit, Tel. 01905 855519 (m.chaffey@worc.ac.uk)

UW Links

[Link to AQU homepage](#) for information on QA&E policy and practice: for further details please contact [Julian Martin](#), Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

[Undergraduate Regulatory Framework \(URF\)](#)

[Postgraduate Regulatory Framework \(PRF\)](#)

[Undergraduate/Postgraduate Grade Descriptors](#)

[Guidance on using numeric marking for undergraduate work](#)

[Assessment Policy](#)

[Policy on Learning Outcomes](#)

National Links

[The Higher Education Academy, Guidance on External Examining](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency : The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency : Code of Practice](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency : Code of Practice : Section 4 : External Examining](#)

Additional Information

[Link to Main University of Worcester page](#)

Link to maps:

[Directional Maps](#)

[Campus Map](#)

[Car Parking](#)