



External Examiners' Handbook

Academic Year 2023-24

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INTRODUCTION

1. This Handbook explains the University of Worcester (the University) approach to External Examining. It is provided to all External Examiners on their appointment. Please send requests for an alternative format of this Handbook to Briony Wheeler (briony.wheeler@worc.ac.uk).
2. External Examiners play a vital and highly valued role in assuring the standards and enhancing the quality of University awards. At the University, we use External Examiners to provide assurance that the standards of our courses meet sector-recognised standards and are comparable with other UK higher education institutions (HEIs). We encourage our External Examiners to be impartial, constructive and critical peers supporting our course teams in ensuring consistent, fair, equitable and transparent assessment of student work.
3. Our approach to external examining is informed by the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) including the [Advice and Guidance on External Expertise](#), [the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment \(UKSCQA\) External Examining Principles](#), and the [Office for Students general and ongoing conditions of registration for quality and standards](#).
4. The main responsibility of the External Examiner is to ensure the maintenance of standards and ensure that:
 - The academic standards of programmes reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards, including national qualification frameworks and, where appropriate, PSRB standards.
 - Awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
 - The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time are reasonably comparable with those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies of which they have experience.
 - Programmes are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
 - Degree apprenticeship and higher technical qualification provision map to the requirements of the specific Standard.

SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

5. There is a robust process for the selection and approval of External Examiners, including [Regulations for the Appointment of External Examiners](#).
6. In line with UK Home Office guidance, prospective External Examiners must provide evidence of their Right to Work (RTW) in the UK before appointments can be confirmed. The University is exploring the use of an Identity Service Provider (IDSP) to conduct online/digital RTW checks.
7. However, until this service is approved by the University's Human Resources (HR) department, External Examiners who are British or Irish citizens are required to provide physical copies of their Right to Work documents, either by post or in person, for HR to validate.
8. The required documentation, which is typically an original passport or birth or adoption certificate, can be provided by either:
 - Attending the University prior to commencing work at HR Department, University of Worcester Woodbury Building, St Johns Campus, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.
 - Sending original documents via Special Delivery (or other tracked method) clearly marked 'HR Department (external examiners)' to the above address. Postage costs can be reclaimed as expenses, following completion of the onboarding process.
9. On receipt, HR will meet with the external examiner via Microsoft Teams, to complete the Right to Work check.
10. For those External Examiners who are not British or Irish citizens, we carry out a Home Office Right to Work check, which means that we can check relevant identification documents, typically a biometric residence cared of permit, remotely.
11. External Examiner appointments are normally made for a fixed term of four years, running from the 1st of September in year one, to the 31st of December in year four. This provides overlap of appointments at the end of each term of office to ensure consistency and appropriate handover.
12. The University holds an annual External Examiners' Induction Day, during which Examiners are provided with an overview of their duties, role and rights, and the general academic regulations. The day focuses on the specific expectations of External Examining at the University, and therefore all incoming External Examiners are expected to attend, irrespective of their previous experience. This event also provides the opportunity for External Examiners to meet with members of the course team.
13. The date for the 2023-24 External Examiner Induction Day is **Monday, 29th of January 2024**. All newly appointed External Examiners will be sent an MS

Team invitation to this event. If you need this invitation to be sent to you again, please contact Briony Wheeler (Briony.Wheeler@worc.ac.uk).

14. A recording of the previous Academic Year's External Examiner Induction Day is available for reference, on the University's [External Examiner SharePoint](#) pages.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

15. Upon appointment, external examiners are sent an appointment letter which confirms and provides the following information, specific to each Examiner:
 - Award (or award element) to which the examiner is appointed.
 - Term of office.
 - Reminder that their appointment is subject to the completion of on-line HR new starter forms and appropriate Right to Work checks (within three weeks from receipt of the appointment letter).
 - Contact details for course leader/key personnel.
 - Agreed annual fee.
 - Link to Taught Courses Regulatory Framework for reference (this applies to both undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses).
 - Process/principles for resignation.
 - Process and general criteria for termination of appointment.
 - External examiners are directed to University policies related to learning and teaching, such as the Assessment Policy, on the AQU webpages.
16. Course teams (typically the Course Leader) are responsible for providing examiners, through the External Examiner Hub with course specific information, including relevant course handbooks, programme and module specifications and, where appropriate, details of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) information including that related to continuing PSRB accreditation (for example, fitness to practice requirements).
17. The Course Leader will also provide incoming External Examiners with a copy of the previous year's Annual Evaluation Report (AER), which contains the outgoing External Examiner's annual report and course response.
18. The Course Leader is also responsible for providing their External Examiner with a schedule of key dates for the moderation of student assessments, and for ensuring that the dates of examination boards are communicated with adequate notice.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

19. External Examiners are expected to attend the University annual induction event at the beginning of their term of office. The induction for 2023-24 will be online, on the 29th January 2024. Invitations to the induction event are issued

by the Academic Quality Officer (External Examiners).

20. Where a nominated External Examiner has no or limited External Examination experience, arrangements are made to ensure that they are assigned a mentor for the first 12 months of their contract. The Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) has recommended such action as appropriate under the University of Worcester's Mentoring Policy for New External Examiners.

THE DUTIES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

21. External Examiners contribute towards the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching, and the attainment by students of course outcomes. This means that External Examiners are expected to be familiar with the Assessment Policy which sets out the definitions and requirements for verification, standardisation and moderation of marking across all Schools within the University (see Section 11 of the Assessment Policy for full details).
22. An External Examiner's remit may incorporate more than one course, or more than one iteration of a given course (for example as offered through a collaborative partnership). This is clarified during the nomination and appointment process where the University ensures that the expertise of External Examiners reflects the provision and specifies the scope of the role.
23. The External Examiner's role normally comprises:
 - Verification of assessment materials before they are shared with students to make sure they are appropriate based on the module content, teaching and learning, and module level.
 - Moderation of internal markers' judgement in respect of the assessments with which the External Examiner is associated in accordance with University policy.
 - Ensuring that all students are assessed within the regulations approved for the course with reference to the requirements of professional bodies (PSRBs) as applicable.
 - Agreeing with course/subject teams a process for scrutinising assessment items and assessment criteria either prior to publication to students or as part of the process of external moderation.
 - Meeting with course teams and with students as necessary in order to reach a decision about the academic standards of the award being reported on.
 - Informing the University of any matter which, in their view, militates against the maintenance of proper academic standards.
 - Attending the meetings of Boards of Examiners at which the results of assessments are agreed (usually referred to as Subject Assessment Boards). To facilitate attendance Boards of Examiners are normally held online through MS Teams. Where no form of attendance is possible, External Examiners will, exceptionally and as a minimum for an individual year, provide written comments to the Chair of the Board

regarding satisfaction with marks.

- Satisfying themselves that the work and decisions of a Board of Examiners of which they are a member of are consistent with good practice.
 - Ensuring that the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiners have experience.
 - Ensuring that the threshold academic standards set for the course are appropriate through reference to national subject and qualification benchmarks.
 - Endorsing the outcomes of assessments through the normal Board of Examiner processes.
 - Reporting annually to 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.
24. External Examiners may expect to be consulted regarding proposed changes to provision, or for any other advice and guidance deemed necessary throughout their period of office.
25. External Examiners have the right to:
- In consultation with the appropriate internal marker/s, request to see a sample of all draft assessment items (examination papers and coursework assessments) before they are given to students.
 - Inspect any material relating to the course: particularly, but not exclusively, course handbooks, examination papers, scripts, coursework or project reports relating to the assessments with which they are specifically associated.
 - Meet students.
 - Discuss curriculum development with academic staff.
 - Withhold their endorsement for the recommendation of an award.
26. Final judgements on, or approval of, assessment outcomes are academic peer group processes. As with any such process, it is possible that members of the group will disagree. The Academic Board is the final authority for any award of the University. Therefore, any disagreement so great that it cannot be resolved at the level of a Subject Assessment Board or Board of Examiners (that is, where an external examiner withholds their endorsement of the marks or awards) may come to Academic Board (or delegated subcommittee) for resolution.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS IN THE MODERATION OF ASSESSMENTS

27. Schools and External Examiners are expected to be familiar with the [Assessment Policy](#) which sets out, under Section 11, the definitions and requirements for verification, standardisation and moderation of marking across all Schools within the University.
28. External Examiners are not expected to arbitrate in the event of disagreement between first and second markers and are not expected to change grades for individual items of student work.
29. External Examiners undertake moderation of internal markers' judgement in respect of the assessments with which the External Examiner is associated, in accordance with University policy. In order to fulfil this role, the External Examiner will be given a sample of work (normally around 15 per cent, or at least six 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.
30. External Examiners check that the level of assessments and students' work meets the required academic standards and is in line with similar programmes nationally. They comment on the quality of feedback and how well assessments are managed.
31. The External Examiner attends as a full member of the appropriate Board of Examiners and is required to submit a written annual report to the University.

THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER IN END POINT ASSESSMENT OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

32. External Examiners appointed to a Degree Apprenticeship programme will also act as the External Assessor for the end point assessment. This will normally involve undertaking additional oversight and assurance activities. All External Examiners who also act as External Assessors for the EPA (and mentors if applicable) will be provided additional guidance as part of the external examiner induction and training process. Further information is included in the Apprenticeships EPA Policy.

THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXTERNAL EXAMINER

33. For undergraduate BA/BSc awards that operate to a standard academic year, the University has one Chief External Examiner who maintains oversight of the conduct and operation of the Board that determines progression and award classifications.
34. The role of the Chief External Examiner covers the conduct and operation of the second tier Board of Examiners, the appropriateness and application of regulations, student performance and standards.
35. The Chief External Examiner should satisfy themselves regarding the probity of the examination board processes in respect of the application of the regulations, that is, that there is fair and equal consideration of all students, and the robustness of the assessment systems and processes. In addition, the Chief External Examiner is asked to comment on the outcomes of assessment in relation to academic standards and student achievements based on data provided and to report annually on these matters.
36. Where, exceptionally, the Chief External Examiner is unable to attend a Board of Examiners, appropriate arrangements for confirmation of assessment outcomes should be made in consultation with the Academic Registrar.

ANNUAL EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS

37. It is a condition of appointment that, within 3 weeks of their attendance at the awarding Subject Assessment Board (or other Board of Examiners), all External Examiners provide a written annual report using the relevant [Annual Report Template](#). The completed report should be sent electronically to the Academic Quality Team (AcademicQualityTeam@worc.ac.uk).
38. Payment of the annual fee is processed automatically upon receipt of the report. The University reserves the right to take appropriate action in relation to late or non-submission of the report (see paragraph 64).
39. The Chief External Examiner annual report covers the appropriateness and application of regulations, the conduct and operation of the Board, student performance and standards.
40. All External Examiners will be forwarded the link to the relevant report template/s annually by AQU prior to the date of the final exam board.
41. External Examiner reports are shared with students via Blackboard and discussed with the Student:Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC), which include student representatives.
42. The formal report to the University, which should preserve the anonymity of students and staff, 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 cohort.
 - The quality of knowledge and skills, both general and subject-specific, demonstrated by the students.
 - The curriculum and links to learning outcomes and assessments.
 - The appropriateness of assessment strategies and techniques.
 - Consistency and rigour of marking.
 - The lessons of the examination and assessment process for the future development of the course and its management.
 - The conduct and operation of the Board of Examiners.
 - Teaching and learning quality as indicated by student performance.
 - Any institutional issues.

- Recommendations for course improvement.
 - Whether the response to the previous external examiners report was received and adequate in its content.
 - Activities undertaken during the year.
 - Any identified examples of good practice.
 - Comments on the University interpretation of the role of External Examiner, and the support given in order to carry out that role.
 - Any additional comments (for External Examiners completing their term of office).
43. The External Examiner with responsibility for oversight of the EPA will be asked to comment on the following as an addendum to their report:
- The EPA Assessment Plan and related assessment tasks and materials, and its relationship to external benchmarks, including the Assessment Plan for the Apprenticeship Standard.
 - Delivery of the EPA in practice.
 - The processes for verification, standardisation and moderation, including confirmation that assessment evidence is valid, authentic, current, sufficient and reliable.
 - Management of the gateway.
 - Effectiveness of the IAs in applying consistent standards and feedback to learners.
 - Inclusion and accessibility of the EPA and management of reasonable adjustments.
 - Feedback from apprentices, employers and IAs.
 - Reliability and comparability of the EPA outcomes and the fairness of the processes for managing the EPA process.
 - Quality of off the job and on the job learning, support and assessment, and relationship to apprenticeship standards and requirements.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

44. The general External Examining arrangements and regulations for courses delivered in collaboration with the University's partner organisations are the same as those for the University's other provision. However, as an External Examiner for a collaborative programme, the University expects that External

Examiners would normally meet with the partner course team and/or students at least once every two years (that is, twice during a period of tenure). This is in addition to attendance at the Board of Examiners.

45. The host University School should make clear at the outset the arrangements for external moderation of partner provision, the most appropriate point in the academic year to attend the partner organisation where applicable and the arrangements for the Board of Examiners. In some instances, the key contact for these arrangements will be the HE Manager or the Course Leader at the partner organisation in liaison with the Link Tutor from the host School.
46. The University views the opportunity for External Examiners to meet with students as particularly useful for collaborative programmes delivered through partnership arrangements. The outcomes of such meetings should be reported in the External Examiner's annual report.
47. Where appointed to a course delivered either by multiple partner organisations and/or on multiple sites, the External Examiner should expect to see clearly identified samples for external scrutiny and statistical profiles from each partner organisation/site of delivery, in order to ensure equivalence of standards. For courses delivered by multiple partners, a further internal moderation activity (standardisation) should have taken place prior to external moderation, to enable representatives from all partners to ensure consistency in the application of assessment criteria and to complete internal moderation across all partners.
48. The University requests that External Examiners comment on both the comparability of standards and quality of the learning experience and consistency in assessment practice, for example, application of grading criteria, for the course/programme as delivered at each partner organisation/site of delivery and any specific issues for the course as a whole within the report. Where there are inconsistencies in standards, quality of learning experience or assessment practice or comments that are specific to individual partner organisations, these should be identified through the annual report to enable appropriate response, support and action. Similarly, if there are instances of good practice at one or more partner, these should be clearly identified.
49. Where individual modules or short courses from a wider curriculum framework are offered through partnership arrangements, the University expects that the External Examiner will see clearly identified samples and statistical profiles for external scrutiny. In order to ensure appropriate oversight, the University expects the external examiner to identify any specific issues, comments and areas of good practice for each of the individual partner organisations.

USING EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

50. External Examiners' reports are an essential feature of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University. Discussions of External Examiner reports are incorporated specifically within the processes of annual evaluation and periodic review, and through SSLCs, where they are formally discussed with student representatives.
51. The process for receipt of, and responding to, External Examiner reports is as follows:
 - Copies of reports are sent to the Director of Quality and Educational Development (Chair of ASQEC) who produces an overview report to Academic Board and responds to all institutional issues raised by External Examiners, normally following the process of considering reports through the University committee processes, and in consultation with relevant University colleagues including Head of School.
 - Reports are also sent to the Head of School, Course Manager/Leader and other members of the University as deemed appropriate (normally determined by School structure, for example, Heads of Department).
 - Reports on courses taught collaboratively with partners are copied to the head of the partner organisation (normally the Principal of a further education college) and HE Manager or equivalent, and University Link Tutor.
 - An initial response to any issues raised in the External Examiner report is prepared by the Course Leader, formally signed off by Head of Department, and forwarded to the External Examiner, normally within six weeks of receipt of the report.
 - External Examiners' reports and the course team responses to these, is discussed with students at SSLCs along with the Course AER, which also highlights any issues regarding University procedures for the attention of the University's committees responsible for academic quality. The Course AER is forwarded to the External Examiner for information.
 - External Examiners' reports are considered for general as well as specific issues by senior managers within the School and, as appropriate, these may be referenced in the School's annual Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Evaluation and Development Plan.
52. Full information on the [AER process](#) can be found on the AQU webpages.

TYPICAL TIMESCALES FOR RECEIPT OF AND RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS

53. The process is the same for undergraduate and for postgraduate awards, although, in the case of the latter, final examination boards are generally held in September or early October and so the early stages may occur slightly later.
- June/July/September (following examination boards, typically): Reports received by the AQU.
 - July/August/September/October: AQU acknowledges receipt of report.
 - August/September/October: Course Leaders provide an initial response to issues raised.
 - October: course teams and student representatives discuss External Examiner reports and other data on academic standards and quality, for example, assessment outcomes, at SSLC and confirm full response and actions.
 - November/December: course teams submit Annual Evaluation Report to Head of Department (see [Annual Evaluation Process](#) pages for full details).
 - December/January: External Examiner receives the full Annual Evaluation Report, including full response/actions arising from the External Examiner report.
54. ASQEC receives a report reviewing all External Examiner reports, including responses to institutional issues.

FEES AND EXPENSES

55. External Examiners have no employment relationship status with the University, from a legal perspective. However, HMRC require External Examiners to be paid via payroll for tax purposes. External Examiners must provide their bank details to our HR department (via the New Starter Forms) so that the University can assign a payroll ID to enable fee payment and reimbursement of expenses.
56. **Annual Fee Payment:** The annual fee will be processed automatically, through the University's on-line expenses system ([Access ACloud](#)), upon receipt and circulation of an appropriately completed annual report from the External Examiner. The fee for External Examining is set out in the letter of appointment. However, if we agree with an External Examiner that they will take on significant extra duties, we will usually pay an additional fee.
57. **Expenses:** Expenses incurred in the course of External Examiner duties, including claims for visits to the University and/or to partner institutions, will be reimbursed through Access ACloud. Receipts must be produced for subsistence, rail and taxi travel claims, to ensure payment is made. Expenses should be submitted as and when they are incurred; expenses that are greater than three months old may not be claimed.
58. **Mileage Rates:** Individuals should consider if their journey can be made by public transport in the first instance and use this where it is practical and economic. If this is not possible, mileage can be claimed as long as the requirements of paragraph 55 are met.
59. In claiming mileage, the external examiner confirms they have the correct motor insurance which includes business travel, a valid MOT certificate, valid road tax and the appropriate driving license for the vehicle they are using. The University reserves the right to inspect copies of relevant driving documents. Please note that the general rule when travelling to or from a third party is that mileage can be claimed based on the lesser of third party to/from University versus third party to/from home. Please note that no reimbursements will be made for trips between University campuses/sites, either mileage claims or bus/taxi fares.
60. Reimbursements are made at the following rates for personal vehicles:
 - Cars and Vans – first 10,000 miles in tax year: 45p per mile.
 - Cars and Vans – each additional mile over 10,000: 25p per mile.
 - Motorcycle: 24p per mile.
 - Bicycles: 20p per mile.

RAISING CONCERNS

61. External Examiners have the authority and a responsibility to report directly to the Vice Chancellor of the University if they believe there to be serious concerns about an award, 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.
62. Occasionally a concern or issue may arise that needs to be reported outside of the annual reporting process. Depending on the nature of the concern or issue, External Examiners may follow the process set out in Annex 3 below to attempt to resolve the matter. Upon receipt of a report indicating serious concerns, an investigation is carried out and a written response provided to the External Examiner within ten working days.
63. The University hopes to resolve, and address notified serious issues both effectively and speedily. Where this is not the case, and an External Examiner has serious concerns about systemic failings, has submitted a report to the Vice Chancellor and received a report of the investigation and outcomes which, in their opinion, does not address the concern, External Examiners may consider notifying the [Office for Students](#) or informing the professional body.

TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

64. The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of any External Examiner where there is just cause. This could be, for example, be in the following circumstances:
 - Where the University no longer requires the services of an External Examiner for academic reasons, for example, because the course an External Examiner reports on is closing.
 - Where the External Examiner has failed to fulfil all duties of their role as set out above. Such action will only be taken where there is evidence that key duties are not being carried out, resulting in a lack of evidence regarding the standards of University awards, and normally following efforts to rectify the situation. Such actions include repeated non-receipt and/or significantly delayed receipt of an annual report or routine non-attendance at Board of Examiner meetings.
65. Attempts to rectify late or non-submission of a report may include the following escalation route:
 - Contact by the Course Leader.
 - Contact by the Head of Department.

- Contact by the Academic Quality Officer (External Examiners).
 - Contact by the Head of Academic Quality.
66. If these attempts to obtain a satisfactory report fail, the Head of Academic Quality may invite the External Examiner to resign.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Please find below a summary of common terms and acronyms used within the University of Worcester.

AER	Annual Evaluation Report (annual course monitoring)
Access ACloud	Online Expenses System
APPG	Academic Planning and Portfolio Group
APSC	Apprenticeship Programmes Sub Committee
ASQEC	Academic Standards Quality and Enhancement Committee
AQU	Academic Quality Unit
Blackboard	University of Worcester's Virtual Learning Environment
CAPSC	Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee
CES	Course Experience Survey
DDS	Disability and Dyslexia Service
DPR	Departmental Periodic Review
EDD	Evaluation and Development Document
DQED	Department of Quality & Educational Development
EB	Exam Boards
EPA	End Point Assessment (Apprenticeships)
EE	External Examiner
FdA	Foundation Degree Award
JL	Jenny Lind Building, City Campus
KSB	Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour (Apprenticeships)
L&T	Learning and Teaching
LTSEC	Learning, Teaching, Student Experience Committee
LTQE	Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement
PAT	Personal Academic Tutor
Pebblepad	e-portfolio
PSRB	Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies
SAP	Students as Academic Partners
SJC	St John'
SOLE	Secure Student Portal (Online Learning Environment)
SU	Students' Union
TCRF	UW Taught Courses Regulatory Framework
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
UEB	University Executive Board
UW	University of Worcester
WiP	Working in Partnership