



## Handbook for Schools about processes and practices relating to external examining

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Quality and academic standards at the University – the role of external examiners

**1.1.1** The academic governance framework, which includes our Quality and Academic Standards (QAS) Office, is provided by the Directorate of Academic and Corporate Governance. Our [quality framework website](#)<sup>1</sup> provides the relevant guidance and policies for matters relating to quality and academic standards.

**1.1.2** University oversight of quality and academic standards is provided by the Senate Quality and Academic Standards Committee (QASC). The QASC is convened by the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) and comprises the School Associate Deans (QAS), the President and Deputy President of our students' association, the Director of QAS, the Director of Registry and other relevant Professional Services staff. It oversees all areas relating to quality and academic standards including periodic programme reviews, approval of new taught provision, approval of new collaborative arrangements, changes to taught provision, external examiner appointments and external examiners' reports.

**1.1.3** The views of external examiners are a key component of our approach to the setting and maintaining of academic standards. We ask our external examiners to provide formal annual reports which are reviewed by the relevant programme teams, School committees (including student representatives) and the Director of QAS on behalf of the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching). A commentary on each report is provided by the Director of QAS to the Schools. The Director of QAS produces an annual review of the external examiners' reports for consideration by the QASC in order to address any issues arising from the reports as well as to share and disseminate areas of positive practice.

**1.1.4** This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's [Assessment Policy for Taught Provision](#)<sup>2</sup> and the [Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes](#)<sup>3</sup>.

**1.1.5** A checklist for management processes for external examining of taught programmes is provided in Appendix 1.

**1.1.6** For further advice or guidance, please contact the QAS Office: (Ext 84019); Alison Glassey (Ext 86465); Debbie Smith (Ext 83178); or email

[qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk).

### 1.2 Outline of the role of the external examiner

**1.2.1** Chapter B7 of the UK Quality code sets out three general principles, an expectation and several indicators of sound practice relating to the UK external examining system.<sup>4</sup> The general principles and the expectation are as follows:

**Principle 1:** In the UK higher education system, each institution with degree awarding powers has responsibility for setting the standards of its degrees within the context of common

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/policy-taught-provision/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/quality-and-academic-standards/assessment/external-examining/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/part-b>

guidelines (that is, Subject Benchmark Statements, professional body requirements, and so on) and is subject to internal quality assurance procedures and external review by an independent agency (QAA). This should continue to be supported and strengthened. External examining is only one part, albeit a very important part, of this system.

**Principle 2:** Notwithstanding their autonomy, it is right that institutions' degree-awarding bodies should be accountable for the way in which they exercise their responsibility for setting and maintaining standards. The principal mechanism for this is Institutional Review, which should test whether or not external examining is working in practice. External examining arrangements should remain one of the key areas for Institutional Review and a critical factor in determining the outcome of Institutional Review.

**Principle 3:** The role of the external examiner should be comprehensible to students, the media and the general public. Explanations of it should be articulated clearly and simply at all times. More nationally consistent, developed and supported external examining expectations will improve the effectiveness, transparency and credibility of the system, especially with external audiences.

**Expectation:** Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

**1.2.2** The University's approach to external examining is aligned with the principles, expectation and indicators of sound practice set out in the UK Quality Code. Specifically, we ask our external examiners to provide an independent and impartial view of our academic standards including comparability with other higher education providers, the quality of our assessments and opportunities for enhancement.

**1.2.3** University awards are agreed by Boards of Examiners. External examiners are full and key members of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners. The University will only make an award where there has been participation by at least one external examiner in the examining process. Senate has approved contingency arrangements for emergency situations where external examiners are unable to fulfil their duties (Appendix 2).

### 1.3 Induction

**1.3.1** Induction for new external examiners is carried out by the Schools<sup>5</sup>. Deans or Associate Deans will ensure that external examiners are properly briefed and that an appropriate induction programme is in place to support both new and experienced external examiners. In practice this may be delegated to a Head of Discipline or the programme leader. Appendix 3 shows the areas that the briefing and induction should normally cover.

**1.3.2** We encourage Schools/disciplines to provide external examiners with the opportunity to visit the University before the assessment period starts. External examiners normally find it useful to meet staff and students and familiarise themselves with the programme and local procedures in advance of engaging with assessment.

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout this document reference is made to communication between the School or the School Office and external examiners. For some of our larger Schools responsibilities may be devolved to discipline units. Schools will ensure that external examiners are advised about such arrangements as part of the appointment process.

## 2. External examiner appointments

### 2.1 Appointment criteria

**2.1.1** The University's programmes take account of the relevant [national subject benchmarking information](#), the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#) and the [Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](#), and we normally expect external examiners to have the appropriate background and experience to evaluate our approach to quality and standards within the context of those frameworks.

**2.1.2** Proposals for external examiner appointments are endorsed by the Dean or Associate Dean (QAS) of the School. The Dean has responsibility to ensure that prospective appointments fulfil, as far as possible, the criteria set out in the University's [Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes](#). The QAS has overall responsibility for ensuring that external examiner appointments are appropriate, acting on behalf of the University Court and Senate.

**2.1.3** The University's criteria for the appointment of external examiners are aligned with the indicators of sound practice described in Chapter B7 (External examining) of the UK Quality Code. We ask Deans, Associate Deans (QAS) and programme leaders to ensure that nominations for external examiners are for individuals who can demonstrate appropriate evidence of the following:

- competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality, including relevant subject benchmarks and the SCQF;
- relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- competence and experience in the design and operation of a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject as well as assessment procedures;
- sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers;
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements);
- meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
- awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula; and

- competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

**2.1.4** Former staff or students of the University are not eligible for appointment as an external examiner unless a period of five years has elapsed from the date of demitting office or graduation respectively, and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).

**2.1.5** We expect that our external examiners should not normally hold simultaneously more than one other external examinership for undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes during their period of appointment.

**2.1.6** Reciprocal arrangements should be avoided. An external examiner should not normally be appointed from a department<sup>6</sup> of another institution in which a member of staff of the Dundee discipline is serving as an external examiner.

**2.1.7** The external examiner should not succeed a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution.

**2.1.8** More than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution should not be appointed.

**2.1.9** External examiners should not have any direct interests or ties to the University which might be sufficient to cast doubts upon their independence. Specifically, individuals in any of the following categories should not normally be appointed as external examiners:

- members of the University Court or other University Committees, employees of the University (including individuals with honorary or emeritus appointments) or employees of collaborating partner institutions;
- anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
- anyone who, if appointed, would be required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study beyond the examination; and
- any individual significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research or teaching activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question.

**2.1.10** Where there are compelling reasons to make any exceptions to the University criteria for the appointment of external examiners, proposals for exceptions must be discussed and agreed between the programme leader and/or Dean (or Associate Dean for QAS or Learning and Teaching) and the Director of QAS so there is confidence about the strategy to mitigate any real or perceived risk to robust external oversight of the University's approach to the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

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<sup>6</sup> In the context of this guidance 'Department' means an institutional unit that encompasses the relevant discipline e.g. Law, Geography, History, Psychology etc.

**2.1.11** The QASC has overall responsibility for ensuring appropriate external examiner appointments, acting on behalf of the University Court and Senate. The QASC may be asked to consider the merits of any case that stands outside the University's Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes.

## 2.2 Period of appointment

**2.2.1** External examiners are normally appointed for a period of four years. External examiners may be appointed for no more than four years, although under exceptional circumstances (e.g. when a programme is coming to an end), a further one year extension may be considered to ensure continuity. No person who has held office for a continuous period of three or more years is eligible for reappointment until a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

**2.2.2** Any request by a School for the early termination of an external examiner's appointment will only be considered under exceptional circumstances by the Director of QAS in consultation with the relevant Dean or Associate Dean (QAS). Early termination of a contract will normally only be considered if conflicts of interest have arisen, where there has been an irrevocable break-down in communication between the programme team and the external examiner or if an external examiner fails to fulfil their duties. Disagreement between the external examiner and the programme team about quality issues would not constitute grounds for the termination of an external examiner's appointment.

## 2.3 The appointment process

**2.3.1** When a vacancy arises the School Dean or Associate Dean (QAS) should ensure that there is appropriate consultation about a proposed new appointment, normally through consultation with the School QAS Committee and/or the School Board.

**2.3.2** Before making a recommendation for an external examiner appointment the Dean, Associate Dean (QAS) or programme leader should normally establish, by informal enquiry to the proposed appointee, that he/she is willing to serve as external examiner.

**2.3.3** Following endorsement of external examiner appointments or extensions to appointments by the Dean or Associate Dean (QAS), the School Manager (or appropriate nominee) should submit the completed and signed proposal to the University's QAS office, Level 6, Tower Building, using the University's standard External Examiners' Appointment Form/Extension to Appointment Form available at:

[www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/external-examining/](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/external-examining/)

The signed nomination form will be held on file in the QAS Office.

**2.3.4** After the appointment has been formally approved at the level of the University, the QAS Office will send the external examiner a letter of appointment with the name of the programme(s) and/or module(s) that he/she being invited to be external examiner for, the period of appointment and an indication of the annual fee. The QAS Office will also provide the external examiner with a copy of and web-link to the University's Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Programmes and Modules.

**2.3.5** External examiners are asked to confirm acceptance of the appointment to the QAS Office ([qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk)).

**2.3.6** The QAS Office, in collaboration with the Registry, will ensure that appropriate records of external examiner appointments are held centrally and are recorded through the student management system (SITS). The details of each appointment, including the fee to be paid, shall be entered into the relevant module of SITS by the QAS Office. Schools will be notified by the QAS office once the external examiner appointment has been agreed. Access (through eVision) to the appointment details as well as the external examiners' reports will be given to appropriate staff in each School Office.

**2.3.7** Schools currently have responsibility for setting (and paying) reasonable external examiner fees and appropriate consideration should be given to national norms (insofar as this information is available) and the relative workloads, including any requirements to visit placements where applicable.

**2.3.8** Note that the QAS Office should normally be provided with a single point of contact from each School for the administration and management of external examiner appointments. It is not manageable for the QAS Office to be dealing with many different individual programme/discipline managers or administrators from each School.

**2.3.9** Once the School has been alerted that the external examiner appointment has been confirmed, the School shall provide the external examiner with relevant information to support them in undertaking their role including: name(s) and contact details of academic and administration leads; the student handbook(s); relevant programme and module specifications; degree regulations; assessment criteria; list of modules associated with the role; an overview of the expected workload, anticipated student numbers; academic semester dates; dates of the meetings of the Board of Examiners; and the timescales for providing reports. The School will also arrange for an appropriate briefing and induction for external examiners (see Appendix 3).

**2.3.10** The School shall request a colour copy of the external examiner's passport (front cover and photograph page) as proof of eligibility to work in the UK and ask that they bring either their passport, residence permit, visa, birth certificate or biometric ID card when they first visit the University. Due to legislation on the right to work in the UK the University cannot pay the external examiner fee without this documentation.

**2.3.11** For external examiner appointments made prior to 1 October 2019 only, and for an initial three year period, provided that external examiners have been fulfilling their roles appropriately, it is usual for Schools ask external examiners to extend their appointments for a fourth year. If an external examiner has indicated informally to the School that they would be willing to serve for a fourth year (and the School is content that the external examiner has participated appropriately in the examining process and has provided useful and regular annual reports) the School should send the completed and signed extension request *pro forma* to the QAS Office for formal approval and sign-off. Unless there have been any issues with the initial three-year appointment (including non-submission of the formal annual reports), the QAS Office will send a formal invitation for the fourth year extension to the external examiner and alert the School office when this has been confirmed.

## 2.4 Personal data

**2.4.1** The personal data that is supplied by external examiners must be held in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. It must be held securely and for no longer than is necessary.

No information should be disclosed to any party outside of the University without the external examiner's consent unless the University is required to do so by law.

**2.4.2** The name(s) and institution(s) of the external examiner(s) should be communicated to students, normally through publication in student handbooks or being made available on the Virtual Learning Environment. This is in the interests of transparency about the external examining process and is not an invitation for students to contact external examiners directly. This should be made clear in student handbooks and other media from the School that describes the external examining system. Students and/or student representatives must not contact external examiners directly.

## 2.5 Fees and expenses

**2.5.1** Schools are responsible for ensuring that external examiners' fees and reasonable expenses (e.g. travel costs, accommodation and subsistence) are paid. The School Office should provide external examiners with the appropriate claim forms which, once completed by the external examiner, should be returned to the School Office through the named contact that they have been given by the School. **Note that the external examiner fee should only be paid after the QAS Office has received the annual report from the external examiner.** The timing for submission of reports is provided in the guidance that accompanies the reporting template. The School should advise their external examiners on any exceptions to the University norms.

**2.5.2** HM Revenue and Customs regulations require that payments for external examiners of undergraduate programmes are processed differently to payments for external examiners of postgraduate programmes.

**2.5.3** External examiners of undergraduate programmes or modules join the University's payroll and are required to complete a 'Casual Payment Form'. Tax is deducted at source under PAYE.

**2.5.4** External examiners of postgraduate programmes or modules are required to complete the University's 'External Examiners Claim Form - Postgraduate' where there is the option for them to choose to be treated as an employee of the University (with tax deducted at source) or to be treated as self-employed where they have responsibility for their own tax.

## 3. The role and responsibilities of external examiners

### 3.1 Overview

**3.1.1** The primary role of the external examiner is to provide an external and unbiased perspective on the fairness and appropriateness of the University's student assessment processes as a key element of the University's procedures for the quality assurance of its academic programmes. External examiners also have an important role to play in quality enhancement by identifying positive practice and suggesting areas for development.

**3.1.2** For taught provision, the term 'external examiner' is slightly misleading as the role does not normally include examining or assessment of individual students or groups of students.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For a small number of our programmes (e.g. Law and some clinical specialities) there remains an expectation that external examiners should be involved in the actual examining of elements of the programme. Certain Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs) may also have specific



Rather the role is to act as an external moderator to support the internal examining team and ensure that assessment has been fair, rigorous and conducted with integrity; and that the academic standards and student performance are appropriate and comparable with other higher education institutions. This is normally achieved by sampling assessed work through the range of student achievements.

**3.1.3** Part of the role of the external examiner is also to act as a ‘critical friend’ of the programme team and give constructive feedback on areas that could be improved as well as highlighting areas that are working well.

### 3.2 The role of the external examiner in assessment

**3.2.1** In order to discharge their role effectively it is important that external examiners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the University’s [Assessment Policy for Taught Provision](#) and the [Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes](#). Schools should ensure that their induction and briefing processes for external examiners cover the pertinent areas.

**3.2.2** External examiners have the right to see any element of assessed work that contributes to the relevant University qualification. As part of the induction process the sampling of assessed work should be agreed between the external examiner and the School/discipline. For our undergraduate honours programmes, the level of scrutiny for assessed work at Scottish higher education (SHE) levels 1 and 2 (which do not normally contribute to the degree classification) should be agreed between the external examiner and the School/discipline as described in the [Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes](#). Certain programmes have separate external examiners for oversight of standards and achievement at SHE levels 1 and 2. Schools/disciplines should provide its external examiners with information about any other external examiners for the programme/module(s).

**3.2.3** In addition to the role in providing oversight of the quality and standards of assessed work we ask that external examiners also provide oversight of the approach to the setting of assignments for the assessment of the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) and/or module(s). Schools/disciplines should normally consult with external examiners about the setting of assignments for assessment.

**3.2.4** External examiners are full and key members of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners. Whilst their opinions should be listened to, fully considered and recorded, they are part of the decision-making of the whole Board rather than the final arbiter. If, after careful consideration and discussion with the Board of Examiners, one or more external examiner felt unable to endorse the decisions of the Board of Examiners, a full report should be made to the School Board (or designated subcommittee) and the Director of Academic and Corporate Governance. See also Section 4, The External Examiner’s Annual Report.

**3.2.5** One or more external examiners should also be invited to be a member of the Mitigating Circumstances Committee, although not necessarily expected to attend meetings of the committee in person. Their input may be through written comments, consultation with the Convener of the Mitigating Circumstances Committee before meetings of Boards of Examiners

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requirements of the role that do not reflect the general sector norms. Where this is the case, Schools must ensure that external examiners are provided with appropriate guidance.

or web or tele conferencing. We expect that our external examiners have appropriate oversight of decisions made around mitigating circumstances. Management of mitigating circumstances is described in more detail in Section 7 of our Assessment Policy.

### 3.3 The role of the external examiner in enhancement

**3.3.1** A key element of the external examiner's role is to provide advice on enhancement of the quality of our taught provision. This will normally be through discussions during the meeting(s) of the Board of Examiners and as part of their formal annual report.

**3.3.2** The types of areas they may wish to comment on for enhancement could include curriculum design, innovations in the delivery of the programme, the approach to online learning and assessment, assessment types, innovations in assessment, the use of assessment criteria, the approach to providing feedback to students, the approach to internal moderation of assessment and student support. This is not an exhaustive list of suggestions and they are at liberty to give suggestions about any aspect of the programme(s)/module(s).

### 3.4 Additional roles of external examiners

**3.4.1** External examiners may be consulted on recognition of prior learning and/or articulation agreements where credit obtained elsewhere contributes to an award from the University of Dundee. They may also be required to provide oversight of student placement activities where these are integral to the award.

**3.4.2** External examiners may be consulted by Schools/disciplines on proposals for the introduction of new programmes or modules within their area of expertise.

**3.4.3** Where substantial changes are proposed to programme(s) and/or modules, external examiners should normally be invited to provide a view about the proposed changes as part of the consultation process.

**3.4.4** External examiners may be consulted by Schools/disciplines in connection with internal periodic programme reviews (usually carried out on a five-yearly cycle) and/or accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

### 3.5 Collaborative taught provision

**3.5.1** The University currently has a very small number of collaborative programmes. External examiners who have been appointed for any joint, double or dual taught awards should be provided with bespoke advice on their responsibilities by the School.

## 4. The annual external examiner's report

### 4.1 Overview

**4.1.1** The role of external examiner requires the submission of a formal annual report that can be considered by the programme team, students, the School and the University. The report should be submitted by external examiners to the QAS Office using the University's reporting template available at:

[External Examiner Report Form : Qf : University of Dundee](#)

**4.1.2** Schools must ensure that external examiners are provided with the up-to-date reporting template and/or the relevant web-link as part of their induction and briefing for external examiners, and as part of their ongoing communication with their external examiners. It is important that external examiners use the template provided as it contains a checklist that is

aligned with the indicators of sound practice described in Chapter B7 of the QAA Quality Code and provides prompts for comments about specific areas that are important for the University's oversight of the external view of its approach to quality and the setting and maintaining of academic standards. Guidance on completing the template (as well as the annual deadlines for completion) is provided as an appendix to the template. Note that copies of informal comments that have been given to programme leaders or Schools cannot substitute for the formal report to the University.

**4.1.3** External examiners' reports are reviewed by the School who will provide a response to the report. This might be a comprehensive statement or an acknowledgment depending on the comments and feedback provided by the External Examiner. The response should be reviewed by the Associate Dean for Quality and Academic Standards and be made available within 6 weeks of receipt from QAS

**4.1.4** External examiners' reports along with commentaries from the Director of QAS are provided to the School through Sharepoint. The QAS Office will alert the nominated School contacts when the reports become available. In addition, all of the external examiner reports are available on request to the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) and QASC members.

**4.1.5** Schools should ensure that external examiner fees (and any outstanding expenses) are paid once their annual report has been received. Schools are responsible for recording payments appropriately.

**4.1.6** The formal annual reports from external examiners should be reviewed by the relevant Associate Dean(s) (QAS and Learning and Teaching) from the participating School(s), the relevant programme/module leaders, teaching teams and students. Associate Deans (QAS) of Schools are responsible for ensuring that there is appropriate sharing, consideration and School oversight of external examiner reports.

**4.1.7** If any matters of particular concern are highlighted in an external examiner's report, the Associate Dean (QAS) may direct such issues to the School Dean, School Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) or the Director of QAS depending on the nature of the issue.

**4.1.8** The QAS Office will provide a prompt to the Schools (through the designated contact for administration of external examining) to follow-up with their external examiners where formal annual external examiner reports have not been received within the expected timeframe. It is the responsibility of the Schools to liaise with their external examiners to ensure that the formal annual reports are provided within the expected time-frame.

**4.1.9** Schools must ensure that an appropriate response to any issues raised by external examiners and/or suggested areas for enhancement is provided in a timely fashion.

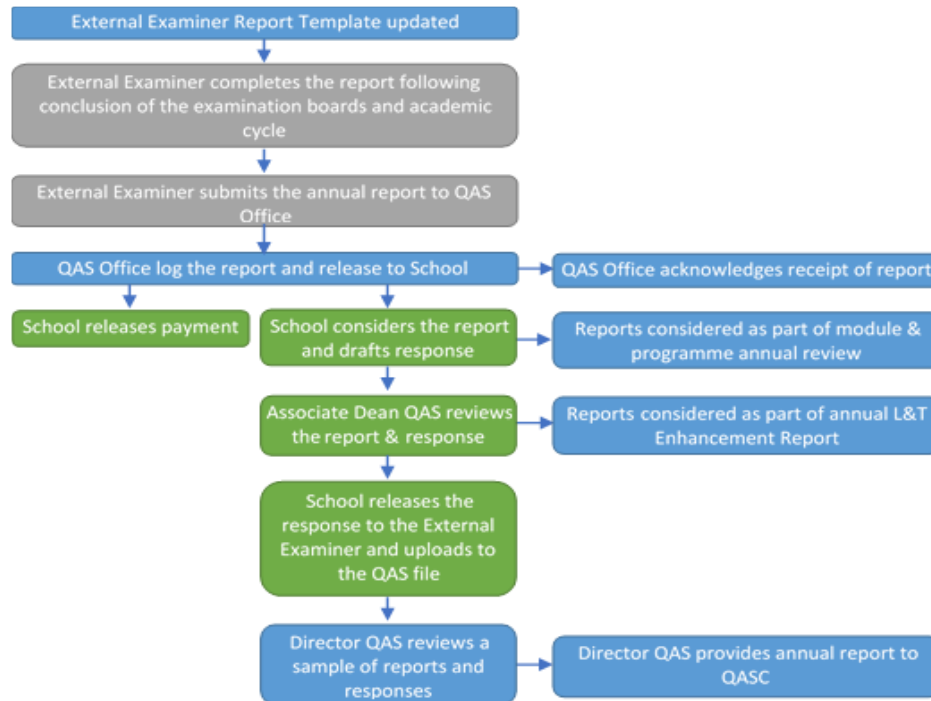
## **4.2 Concerns**

**4.2.1** External examiners are invited to express any concerns about academic standards or quality of the student learning experience that have not been addressed appropriately by the School to the University's Director of QAS ([e.hensens@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:e.hensens@dundee.ac.uk)) in the first instance. They are advised that, if necessary, a separate confidential report may be sent to the Principal.

**4.2.2** Should serious concerns relating to systemic failings with academic standards of a programme or programmes fail to be addressed by the internal procedures of the University, including the submission of a confidential report to the Principal, external examiners may

invoke the QAA's concerns scheme: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/concerns>. Note the subsection for the process to be followed in Scotland.

### External Examiner Reporting Process



## Checklist for management processes for external examining of taught programmes

### 1. Approval and recording of external examiner appointments

#### 1.1 To be carried out by School Office

- Submit signed copy of External Examiner's Appointment Form/Appointment Extension Form to QAS Office for approval. Following formal approval at the level of the University, the QAS Office will send a formal letter of appointment (or amendment to the duties/extension to the period of appointment) to the external examiner, copied to the School, together with a copy of and web-link to the Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Programmes and Modules.
- Once the School receives formal notification from the QAS Office regarding the external examiner's acceptance of the appointment, the School will provide the external examiner with the relevant information to support them in undertaking the role including:
  - Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes including the conduct of Examination Boards (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/quality-and-academic-standards/assessment/external-examining/>);
  - Assessment Policy (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/documents/details/external-examiner-report-form.php>);
  - Annual Report Form (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/documents/details/external-examiner-report-form.php>);
  - Casual Staff Payment Form or External Examiners Claim Form: Postgraduate and expenses claim form (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/finance/forms/>);
  - Communication regarding operational matters associated with the appointment;
  - Name(s) and contact details of academic and administration leads;
  - Relevant programme and module specifications;
  - Degree regulations;
  - Programme/student handbook (updated to include the name of the External Examiner(s) where relevant);
  - Assessment criteria;
  - Academic semester dates;
  - Overview of expected workload and student numbers;
  - Dates of Board of Examiner meetings;
  - Timescales for submission of external examiner reports.
  - Request a colour copy of the external examiner's Passport (front cover and photograph page) as proof of eligibility to work in the UK, along with a request that the external examiner brings to the University either Passport, Residence Permit, Visa, full birth certificate or biometric ID card.

### 1.2 To be carried out by QAS office

- Where necessary, submit to the QAS Committee for consideration and agreement any nominations standing outside the University's Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes.
- Send formal letter of appointment (or amendment to the duties/extension to the period of appointment) to the external examiner, copied to the School, with the name of the programme(s) and/or module(s), the period of appointment and an indication of the annual fee. The QAS Office will also provide a copy of and web-link to the Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Programmes and Modules.
- Notify the School once the QAS Office has received acceptance of the appointment including a copy of the signed External Examiner Appointment Form/Appointment Extension Form;
- Store a copy of external examiner appointment, extension and amendment documentation.

## **2. Annual reporting and payment of fees and expenses**

### 2.1 To be carried out by School Office

- Annually, Schools will send a reminder email, prior to their final meeting of the Board of Examiners requesting the annual report to be submitted to the Director of QAS ([qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk)), (normally April for undergraduate programmes and October for postgraduate programmes) including:
  - Web-link to the External Examiner Report Form:  
[www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/external-examining/](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/external-examining/)
  - Web-link to Casual Staff Payment Form (UG)/External Examiners Claim Form: Postgraduate/Expenses Claim Form  
<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/finance/general/forms.htm>
- The UG report is normally due to be submitted by mid-August; PG report normally due to be submitted by the end of November (the exact dates are updated annually and provided within the guidance that is part of the report template). Any exceptions must be communicated by the School to the external examiner.
- Process External Examiner fees and expenses, which will be triggered on receipt of the External Examiner Annual Report, forwarded to the School by the QAS Office. The budget for external examining will be reflected at School level.
- Record payment of external examiner fee and expenses in the appropriate way.
- Following consideration of the external examiner's annual report by the programme leader/team, the School will provide a response to the external examiner explaining how any comments/issues raised have been/will be addressed.

### 2.2 To be carried out by the QAS Office

- Record receipt of External Examiner Annual Reports, inform the relevant School and provide them a copy of the report with updated QAS log.
- Director of QAS highlights concerns or matters of note arising from Annual Report; Schools will be informed when comments are made available for download from SharePoint.

- Responses to reports detailing serious concerns will be co-ordinated by the Director of QAS in collaboration with the relevant School, prior to the drafting of a formal response to be sent to the external examiner.
- Prepare and issue a letter of thanks to the external examiner, on behalf of the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching); forward the letter of thanks to the School administrative contact requesting that the letter is forwarded to the named cc recipient(s).
- During the reporting period the QAS Office will regularly report to Schools on the status regarding reports received, and any outstanding reports.

### **3. Guidance on reclaiming expenses:**

- Wherever possible accommodation, travel costs and other associated costs should be approved by the Dean of School or other designated School budget holder in advance of the costs being incurred;
- Normally, only train fares are payable unless the external examiner can secure a comparable price for a flight or alternative mode of transport;
- Only reasonable, out of pocket expenses, directly connected to the work done for the University will be reimbursed, e.g. alcohol, telephone, newspapers etc. would not be claimable.
- Where overnight accommodation is required this will normally be sourced and always paid by the University (via the School);
- Expenses must be claimed using the relevant University's claim form.

## Contingency arrangements for situations where external examiners are unable to fulfil their duties

### 1. Non-attendance by external examiners at meetings of Boards of Examiners.

The duties of external examiners include attendance at Boards of Examiners.<sup>8</sup> Where necessary, attendance may be by video/telephone link. Where unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance, the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), in consultation with the Director of Academic and Corporate Governance, should agree on arrangements to ensure there is appropriate external oversight of assessment for the programme in question. This could take the form of written comments being submitted by the external examiner for consideration by the Board.

The agreed award decisions made by the Board of Examiners must be signed off by an external examiner. Where no external examiner has been able to attend the Board of Examiners in person, the award list must be sent by post to the relevant external examiner for his/her endorsement of the Board of Examiners decisions. A scan of the signed copy will be accepted by Registry as evidence of the external examiner's endorsement, and the signed hard copy must also be returned to the Registry. Convenors may sign the award list as an interim measure (with an explanatory note to the Registry) in order to allow progression of operational matters in preparation for graduation but counter-signature by one external examiner is required for the award of a University degree.<sup>9</sup>

### 2. Situations where external examiners are unable to participate in the examining process.

Very occasionally an external examiner may be unable to participate in the examining process through circumstances beyond their control. This may be at very short notice, and may result in one or more external examiner being unable to participate in core activities such as reviewing representative samples of assessed work; reviewing the consistency and standards of internal marking and classification of student work; evaluating whether procedures for considering mitigating circumstances, academic dishonesty and borderline cases have been conducted fairly and equitably; ensuring that recommendations of the Board of Examiners are aligned with the aims and outcomes of the programme; and providing a view on whether the standards achieved by students are consistent with standards elsewhere in the UK University system.

Such circumstances may present less of a challenge where there is more than one external examiner for the programme. Where there is a team of external examiners, the absence of participation of one (or more) external examiner could potentially be managed by reassigning

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<sup>8</sup> For certain programmes, particularly those with specific PSRB requirements, there may be several external examiners appointed to oversee modules or groups of modules that make up the programme(s) of study. Under such circumstances there may not be a requirement for every external examiner to attend the meeting of the Board of Examiners, but Schools must be satisfied that the meeting of the Board of Examiners has been appropriately informed by the views of external examiners.

<sup>9</sup> Note that where serious concerns are raised by an external examiner these should be addressed using the reporting mechanisms described in Section 11 (External examiners' reports) of the University's Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes.



principal responsibilities for oversight of quality and standards in consultation and agreement with the other external examiner(s).

Where a programme relies on the input of a single external examiner who has indicated, at short notice, that he/she is unable to participate in the examining process, the following actions should be taken:

- The School Manager (or nominee) must alert the University's Quality and Academic Standards (QAS) Office ([qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandacademicstandards@dundee.ac.uk)) of any issues as soon as possible after they have been raised.
- Schools must seek an alternative external examiner. Appointment of the replacement external examiner may either be temporary or for the normal four year period depending on the circumstances. Consideration could be given to approaching an external examiner on a related University programme (provided that the external examiner has sufficient expertise in the subject) or a previous external examiner for the programme in question. For the latter, the University would relax its requirement for 5 years to have passed since their last appointment provided that the emergency appointment was temporary.
- The QAS Office will work with the relevant Schools to ensure that the replacement external examiner appointment is formally approved at the level of the University as quickly as possible.
- If a replacement external examiner cannot be found within an appropriate timeframe, consideration must be given to rescheduling the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Under such circumstances, Schools must inform the affected students of any delay in finalising and communicating their results.

Approved by Senate, 25 May 2016

Revised QASC 17 September 2019

Revised QASC 6 February 2021

### Briefing and induction for external examiners

The briefing and induction should normally include information about the following:

- background information about the programme (e.g. when approved, the outcome of the most recent periodic programme review);
- the programme design and delivery characteristics as described in the programme specification;
- PSRB requirements where relevant;
- the programme regulations, including progression requirements and resit opportunities;
- the University's Assessment Policy;
- the University's Policy and Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes;
- arrangements and reasonable adjustments for disabled students;
- marking protocols (including internal moderation, marking criteria and the use of model answers);
- how students' work will be sampled and selected so the external examiner has effective oversight;
- arrangements for the external examiner's oversight of examination questions and coursework assignments;
- procedures for oral exams (where relevant);
- any opportunities for meeting students;
- requirements to attend meetings of Boards of Examiners;
- the conduct of Boards of Examiners;
- the composition and membership of the Boards of Examiners;
- the operation of Mitigating Circumstances Committees and the involvement of external examiners;
- the University's code of practice on plagiarism and academic misconduct;
- procedures for student complaints and appeals;
- access to previous external examiners reports and responses from the School/programme leader;
- access to minutes of previous Boards of Examiners;
- access to previous examination questions and coursework assignments;
- information about how annual external examiners' reports are used by the programme/discipline/School and the University, and how students are included in discussions about the annual reports;
- how to report any serious concerns where necessary; and contact details for key staff.

Where external examiners are appointed to oversee single modules or groups of modules, rather than a programme, the briefing will describe the external examining process in the context of the programme.