

EXTERNAL EXAMINING OF TAUGHT PROGRAMMES HANDBOOK

4. Reviewing Academic and/or Professional Standards

4.1 Review of Alignment with Sector Recognised Standards

4.1.1 In discharging their roles and responsibilities, External Examiners **should** provide assurance that the academic standards, and where relevant, professional standards of the modules, programmes and awards to which they are allocated are aligned to sector recognised standards including:

- i. The sector-recognised standards that relate to general ongoing condition B5 (Sector-recognised standards) of the University's registration with the Office for Students (OfS) (see [Sector Recognised Standards \(OfS\)](#));
- ii. The Characteristic Statements for different types of Higher Education awards, which set out what can normally be expected of a graduate in terms of what they may know, understand and be able to do when they receive a particular award (see [Characteristics Statements \(QAA\)](#));
- iii. The Subject Benchmark Statements that describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, defined in terms of what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their studies (see [Subject Benchmark Statements \(QAA\)](#));
- iv. If applicable, the professional standards established by the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) which accredit the programme(s) to which they are allocated; and
- v. If applicable, the professional standards set out within the relevant Apprenticeship Standards, as approved by Skills England, where the programmes(s) to which they are allocated form(s) part of a Degree Apprenticeship (see [Apprenticeship Finder \(Skills England\)](#)).

4.1.2 In addition to the above sector recognised standards, the External Examiner **should** also provide assurance of alignment with sector recognised standards by comparing the in-year/stage attainment and final award classifications of the students on the programmes to which they have been allocated. This includes through consideration of module and programme-level data provided by the University, and outcomes for students undertaking similar programmes of study at other UK Higher Education institutions of which they have experience, both past and present.

4.2 Review of University Policies and Procedures

4.2.1 In discharging their roles and responsibilities, the External Examiner **should** provide assurance that the academic, and where relevant, professional intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the modules and programmes to which they have been allocated have been assessed consistently, appropriately, credibly and fairly and in accordance with the policies and procedures set out in the University's [Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook](#) and/or any Departmental or programme-specific.

4.3 Review of Assessment Briefs and Examination Papers

4.3.1 The External Examiner **must approve** the methods of assessment, assessment criteria and feedback processes for all summative assessments which contribute to the final award classification as follows:

- i. For all assessments delivered within a limited time-frame, during which students have no recourse to immediate academic assistance, primarily examinations, the External Examiner should approve the form and content of prepared questions/tasks. In exceptional circumstances, Department Directors of Education and Student Experience (DESE) may approve examination papers when the External Examiner is not able/not available to be consulted in time.
- ii. For assessments delivered over a longer time-frame, during which it is possible for students to submit and receive responses to academic enquiries, primarily coursework, it is sufficient that the External Examiner review the planned form of the assessment only, which should include the format, length, ILOs covered, as set out in the relevant Module Descriptor.

4.3.2 Should the External Examiners wish to see assessment and/or examination papers from summative assessments that do not contribute to the final award classification, usually those taken in stage/year one of undergraduate programmes, they may request that these be provided. In addition, External Examiners may be asked to review these for new programmes or where modules have been significantly amended since they were last assessed/examined.

4.4 Review of Marking and Moderation of Coursework and Examinations

4.4.1 The External Examiner, or groups of External Examiners for larger programmes of study, **must** review a representative body of work from all summative assessments on constituent modules of the programme(s) to which they are allocated, where these contribute to the final degree classification or other award (see section 3.3 of Chapter 3 for exceptions in relation to first year/stage 1 work, which has a 0% weighting in relation to the final classification)

4.4.2 The External Examiner may be provided by Education Support Services (ESS) with a selected, representative body of student work, whether electronically or as hard copies, or may self-select from all available work for a particular examination or coursework assessment via the Exeter Learning Environment (ELE2). In all cases, the following principles **must** be adhered to:

- i. The body of student work reviewed **must** be representative and cover the full range of marks and grade boundaries at 40% (undergraduate only), 50%, 60% and 70%, including, where applicable, some fails (less than 40% and less than 50% for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes only) and some high 1st Class/Distinction level work at 80+%.
- ii. The body of student work reviewed **must** include some work that has been internally moderated and some that have not been internally moderated, with moderation comments/dialogue provided/made available or accessible for the former.
- iii. The body of student work reviewed **should** be from range of markers, if the module has more than one marker, due to the size of the cohorts of students taking a particular module, to ensure consistency of approach.
- iv. A minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 examination scripts or items of coursework **should** be reviewed for any one summative assessment, depending on the number of students completing the assessment in a given academic year, to allow for timely and efficient feedback and reporting.

4.4.4 The External Examiner has the right to see all summative items of assessment for the modules(s) and programme(s) they have been allocated to review, on request, if they have significant concerns about academic and/or professional standards that have been evidenced by the representative body of work provided to them or originally

selected by them. Where areas of concern are identified, these should be reported to the relevant [Hub/Info Point](#) of ESS as soon as possible.

- 4.4.5 If responsible for an integrated Degree Apprenticeship programme, the External Examiner **should** undertake sampling of apprenticeship assessment, including where appropriate a separate End Point Assessment (EPA) which forms part of the associated qualification, and of the internal quality assurance processes, to confirm that national standards have been achieved and upheld.
- 4.4.6 The External Examiner has the right to see Module Record Reports (MMRs) for all for all constituent modules of the programme(s) to which they have been allocated. The are usually presented during the P/DAPAC of which the External Examiner is a core member. Advance access may be provided on request by the relevant [Hub/Info Point](#) of ESS.
- 4.4.7 The External Examiner is expected to verbally confirm the decisions made regarding scaling of module marks, progression and awarding as recommended by the Programme/Department Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (P/DAPAC) and an appropriate minute made. This confirmation may be provided in advance to the Chair of the P/DAPAC or during the main meeting of the P/DAPAC. An associated commentary should be included in the External Examiner's Annual Report.
- 4.4.8 In any case of disagreement amongst members of the P/DAPAC in relation to decisions taken made regarding scaling of module marks, progression and awarding, that cannot otherwise be resolved, the External Examiner must be consulted, and their views considered by the Chair of the P/DAPAC, whose decision is final.
- 4.4.9 For integrated Degree Apprenticeship programmes, additional requirements may be made of the External Examiner to confirm that the programme is delivered in line with the published Standard and Assessment Plan, and that completion and achievement of apprenticeships is credible, reliable and reflects sector developments.
- 4.4.10 For programmes subject to specific requirements by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB), additional requirements may be made of External Examiners to confirm that programmes are delivered and assessed in line with the published requirements of the relevant body. This may include some observation of teaching, learning and/or assessment in the practice environment such as for Initial Teacher Training.

4.5 Student Contact with External Examiners during the Review of Academic and/or Professional Standards

- 4.5.1 Individual students should not contact External Examiners during the period when they are objectively reviewing the academic and/or professional standards of their programme(s) of study. Such unsolicited contact is prohibited and will be treated as an offence under the [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#). External Examiners are requested to inform Education Policy, Quality and Standards (EPQS) via externalexamining-qs@exeter.ac.uk should such an occurrence take place.
- 4.5.1 An opportunity will be provided at least once per academic year, where possible, for an External Examiner to meet impartially with Student Representatives from the programme(s) to which they are allocated, in order to gather impartial feedback on their experiences of teaching, learning and assessment. This meeting may be online or in person.