



External Examiners Guidance Notes

September 2018



Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The *Guidance for External Examiners* are intended to provide you with information about your role as an External Examiner and some of the activities that you will be involved in during the year.

You can also find more information about the role and importance of external examining in the following Quality Assurance Agency documents:

- QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and
- QAA Chapter B7 - External Examining.

If, at any point during the year, you have any questions about your appointment or duties asked of you, please contact Karen Harris in the first instance.

1.2 External Examiner System

The primary purpose of the external examiner system is to:

- Ensure the academic standards of the School's degrees are consistent with the Level 7 qualification descriptor stated in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Masters Degrees in Business and Management.
- Ensure that the School's assessment processes are rigorous, fair and fairly operated.
- Ensure the standards of the School's awards are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions.
- Share expert advice on good practice, either from experience of assessment procedures at other institutions, or as identified within the School.

External Examiner appointments are exclusive to a subject area and you will normally assigned to work on a collection of degree programmes. However, there will be times during the year that the School will ask you to examine draft assessments and student work for other degree programmes as part of your role as an External Examiner. For the most part the School will consider this as a normal part of the duties, unless the volume of work results in a substantial increase overall and in comparison to other subject areas. The School will not ask you to perform examining for other subject areas.

Each degree programme also has a Lead External Examiner who oversees the entire programme. Information about core courses will be shared at the end of each term, and Lead Examiners are asked to comment on the composition and balance of the degree in their annual report.

1.3 Appointments

The School makes External Examiner appointments in accordance with the requirements specified in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B7, External Examining) and the School's own established processes.

The Subject Area Chair is responsible for nominating new appointees and providing the appropriate information for consideration. The Subject Area Chair must confirm that the nominee meets the person specification and has no conflicts of interest. The Chief Examiner has the authority to approve or reject a nomination on behalf of the School.

1.4 Person Specification

External Examiners are required to show appropriate evidence of the following:

- Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
- Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof.
- Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate – at LBS it is required that external examiners would usually be senior lecturer or above.
- Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating 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 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.
- Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

1.5 Conflicts of Interest

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) identifies the following as conflicts of interest to the External Examiner role:

- A member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners.
- Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study.
- Anyone 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.
- Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question.
- Former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).
- A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution.
- The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution.
- The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.
- External examiners should be aware that they should normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

1.6 Periods of Appointments

In accordance with QAA requirements, the period of appointment can be for a maximum of five years. The School will normally appoint Externals Examiners for an initial three-year period and extensions beyond this will be by mutual agreement.

The External Examiner appointment period normally starts in September/October with examining of the autumn term courses. The period ends around September, once the examining of all summer term courses is complete.

If you need to resign before the end of your appointment period, you should formally notify the Chief Examiner and Head of Quality Assurance of your intention to resign giving sufficient notice for the School to identify a replacement.

On rare occasions, there may be cause for the School to terminate the appointment before the end of the period. Reasons for termination may include:

- A failure to perform the required duties (for example non-attendance at board meetings or non-submission of annual reports).
- A breakdown in the relationship with the School.

In accordance with external requirements, an External Examiner who has completed a term of office cannot be re-appointed until a period of five years has elapsed.

1.7 Confirmation of Appointment

Once confirmed, the School will send the new External Examiner a letter that confirms the terms of the appointment. Other information that the School will provide to the new External Examiner is:

- The *Guidance for External Examiners*.
- The relevant QAA guidance materials on External Examining.
- Copies of the School's regulations.

If you would like to have an individual briefing, or to discuss any matters relating to your appointment, please contact Karen Harris, Head of Quality Assurance.

1.8 Fees and Expenses

External Examiners receive an annual fee paid at the end of the academic year upon receipt of the annual report. Payments are by electronic transfer to the bank account nominated by the External Examiner. Please note the School does not deduct income tax from fee payments and National Insurance deductions are excluded from payments.

Expense claims (for travel and incidentals) must be submitted within two months and original receipts must be provided. Please note reimbursed expenses are not subject to income tax.

2: External Examining

2.1 Core Duties

The core duty of an External Examiner is to review and approve assessments for courses offered by the School. The assessed work will often be an examination but may also be another substantial piece of coursework or a research / business project.

Specifically, the School asks External Examiners to:

- Provide comments the extent to which the assessments cover the syllabus and whether they enable students to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes.
- Consider, comment upon, and approve (or otherwise) the marking schemes for individual assessments, including the marking criteria and model answers.
- Confirm if the standard of marking is satisfactory by scrutinising a sample of scripts across the range from each course and to ensure that assessment is conducted fairly.
- Comment upon the achievement of students and the comparability of this achievement to standards at other institutions.
- Comment upon threshold standards of the proposed awards and their comparability to similar awards at other institutions.
- Make known any causes for concern in relation to academic standards achieved by students, the standard of courses and the standards of awards, should the need arise.
- Provide independent opinion where there is a significant unresolved difference between the first marker and moderator.

As an External Examiner, you will have a less tangible role in encouraging good practice, either from experience of assessment procedures at other institutions, or identified within the School.

2.2 Moderation of Draft Assessments

External Examiners review draft assessments in advance of the students completing the assessment. The School will provide marking schemes, assessment criteria and model answers for the review. Where it is not possible or appropriate to provide model answers (for example, in question papers that are essay based or require qualitative answers), a 'skeleton answer' or indication of the length, style and content of the desired answer should be provided.

In reviewing the draft assessment, the External Examiner should be satisfied that it is:

- Appropriate to the level of the programme (i.e. master's level).
- An appropriate means of testing whether candidates have achieved the stated learning outcomes of the course.
- Fair – that is, that some candidates will not be at an advantage other than by virtue of their academic ability and commitment.

Where your review indicates the possible need for alterations to the draft assessment, please state this clearly in your report (note, please ensure you put any comments in the report and not the email). In the first instance the feedback will be shared with the faculty member and they will be asked to provide a response and, if appropriate, an indication as to whether the assessment will be amended.

In the event that the answer you receive from the School is insufficient and/or an agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be referred to the Head of Quality Assurance for formal action as appropriate. In reviewing the matter, the School will consider the issues raised by you and the faculty member's viewpoint, and decide whether to approve the draft assessment in its current form or make amendments to it.

In instances where issues are raised (either informally or formally), the feedback will be collated and there will be an opportunity to discuss it in more detail at the next Board of Examiners meeting.

2.3 Moderation of Assessed Work

After students have completed the assessment and the internal marking processes are complete, the External Examiner will be asked to moderate and comment on the marking. The School does not expect you to perform marking duties as a matter of course, however, in exceptional cases we may occasionally ask for your assistance in determining an appropriate mark where internal markers disagree.

The School will provide you with a sample of the assessed work including:

- A selection of work from across the entire class (the top, middle, and bottom of the range).
- Students with borderline grades (both pass and fails).
- Students with grades of A+.
- All fails.

A fundamental principle of the moderation process is that External Examiners should have sufficient evidence to determine and be satisfied that the internal marking is of an appropriate standard and has been consistently, and fairly applied to all students. To that end, External Examiners have the right to examine any script or other piece of assessed work as they require.

As with draft assessments (see 3.2), where your moderation indicates the possible need for a review and/or adjustments to the marking, this should be clearly stated in your examining report (note, please ensure you put any comments in the report and not the email). In the first instance your concerns will be raised with faculty member and internal moderators, and formally if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved.

In instances where issues are raised (either informally or formally), the feedback will be collated and there will be an opportunity to discuss it in more detail at the next Board of Examiners meeting. The Board has discretion as to whether to remark all scripts or to scale marks in relation to agreed benchmarks.

3: Boards of Examiners

3.1 Core Duties

In addition to the moderation of assessments, a core duty of External Examiners is to be a member of the School's Board of Examiners, and consider and approve the award of degrees to students.

Specifically, the remit of the Board of Examiners is to:

- Consider the award of degree report and approve awards to students.
- Consider requests to continue beyond the normal duration.
- Approve withdrawals from the programme due to academic failure.
- Have particular regard to matters of consistency across programmes leading to the award.
- Ensure the consistent application of programme regulations.

For more information about the eligibility for the award of degree, please refer to section 3.4.

3.2 Boards of Examiners

The Chief Examiner, Professor Joao Cocco, oversees the Board of Examiners activities. The School has two streams of Examiners and you have been assigned to a stream based on the collection of degree programmes that you normally examine (MBA/MSc/MRes). In addition, Internal Examiners represent their subject areas.

The dates for the Board of Examiners meetings for 2018/19 are as follows:

Stream	Dates
MBA	Wednesday February 2019
	Wednesday 29 May 2019
	Wednesday 31 July 2019
MSc / MRes	26 September 2018
	27 February 2019
	25 September 2019

The School asks that you attend the meetings in person, where possible. If this is not possible, please let us know in advance so that we can explore other options.

3.3 Comments

The School invites you to share your views of working with the School at the Board meetings. In addition to general comments, this may include specific comments about the following:

- Your opinion of the assessment process, including its fairness, accuracy, and efficiency;
- Your opinion of the academic quality of the cohort(s) that you have examined.
- Your opinion of the quality of teaching, as judged by the students' assessment.
- Any recommendations to the examination board for improvements to the teaching or assessment processes.
- Your opinion as to whether recommendations from previous years have been appropriately resolved.

Where an issue is not resolved at the time and/or further action is required, the School will provide you with a formal response after the meeting or at the next scheduled meeting.

In the event that the School fails to respond to any critical comments raised in a positive or satisfactory manner, please refer the matter to Karen Harris, Head of Quality Assurance.

3.4 Award of Degree

The School's Programme Offices will present students to the Board of Examiners for the award of degree. In limited circumstances, and with exceptional reasons, the Programme Director may ask the Chief Examiner to consider the award in advance of the next scheduled meeting.

To be eligible for presentation to the Board of Examiners for the award of degree students must:

- Have fulfilled the minimum requirements of the programme as stipulated in the programme regulations; and
- Have met the requirements for the programme within the normal duration or have received approval to extend the programme; and
- Not be subject to any ongoing disciplinary proceedings or sanctions; and
- Not be in debt to the School in relation to tuition fees.

In addition, the Board has the authority to consider awarding, at its absolute discretion, the degree with distinction to the top 10% of students (percentage based on the incoming cohort number). In the event no clear line can be drawn at 10% (i.e. some students have the same score to two decimal places) the percentage may be increased by a maximum of 2%. Further details of the formula used to calculate the weighted score is provided in section 5 of the Academic Regulations.

The decisions taken by the Board of Examiners, and any discussions that occur during the meeting, will be formally noted in the minutes of the meeting. External Examiners will be required to endorse the degree pass lists, affirming their agreement for the award of degree.

Section 4: Annual Reports

4.1 Core Duties

External Examiners are required to submit an annual report at the end of the academic year. The report forms an essential part of the School's quality assurance framework and the enhancement and development of our courses and programmes.

The School asks External Examiners to provide comments on the following:

- Your opinion on the School's academic standards, particularly with regard to the QAA requirements and in comparison to other institutions.
- Your views on the assessments that you examined during the year, particularly with regard to the course materials, review of the draft assessment and sample of marked assessments.
- Your view of the Board of Examiner meetings, particularly with regard to the conduct of meetings and the outcomes.
- Any commendations or recommendations relating to learning, teaching and assessment.

The School asks you to note that External Examiner reports are not confidential so please ensure that your report does not name or otherwise identify individuals. The School asks that comments related to a serious concern, sensitivity or person(s) are raised separately with the Quality Assurance Team for the attention of the Chief Examiner and/or Dean.

4.2 Reports

External Examiners complete annual reports during the first part of the autumn term. The Quality Assurance team will manage the process and make the report template available to External Examiners in September, for completion by mid-October. Submission of the report will trigger the fee payment to the External Examiner.

The information provided by External Examiners made available to relevant stakeholders at the School, as appropriate. Where comments relate to an individual department and require a response, that department will provide their response before the committee meeting. The committee will decide whether to approve the response or refer it for more information/action. In instances where comments are related to a School policy or the wider School, the committee will decide what, if any, action is required and by whom.

The committee minutes will record of the committee discussions and any associated actions. The Quality Assurance team will monitor completion of actions and provide a progress update to the committee as appropriate.