

External Examining

Policy

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Author: Aisling Burke
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1. Introduction

This Policy sets out the principal responsibilities of External Examiners appointed to modules and programmes offered by the University of the Built Environment. It covers:

- procedures relating to appointment;
- induction;
- reporting and other duties;
- involvement with Boards of Examiners (made up of the Module Board and Progression and Award Boards for the University programmes);
- remuneration; and
- circumstances relating to the termination of appointment.

These statements have been informed by [External Examining Principles \(Quality Assurance Agency, 2022\) \(opens new window\)](#) which were published as agreed by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance (UKSCQA), the Fundamentals of External Examining (Advance HE, 2019) and benchmarked against other such guidelines in the sector. They apply to all taught programmes offered by the University at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. They are supported by an External Examiner site within the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) containing further documentation and guidance.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to University undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, and the London School of Architecture (LSA) MArch Designing Architecture programme. This Policy does not apply to research degree programmes.

3. The Role of External Examiners

As the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) guidance explains within the [guiding principles](#) 'External examiners perform an essential function in supporting diversity of subjects, acting as constructively critical peers. For example, they support course teams to ensure that students are assessed fairly and transparently by offering independent advice and support on modes of assessment and learning outcomes.' (QAA 2022, p1).

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The role of an External Examiner is to:

- Advise on whether the University programmes meet relevant frameworks such as the [OfS Sector-recognised Standards](#) and relevant qualification and subject benchmark statements.
- Comment on whether the University programmes meet industry needs and the requirements of any relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- Advise on the comparability of student work and achievement with those at other institutions.
- Confirm that student achievement meets the threshold standards set out in national qualification frameworks.
- Assist the University in ensuring that assessment processes are rigorous and fair and are conducted in line with the University policies, procedures and regulations.
- Assist in enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and assessment by commenting on areas for improvement and also through identifying areas of good practice for wider dissemination.
- Comment on the design of new programmes or changes to existing programmes.

Through acting as a 'critical friend', the role of the External Examiner (EE) is one of the most effective means of monitoring standards and maintaining the academic and professional relevance of programmes through quality enhancement.

4. Programmes Requiring External Examiners

No qualification arising from a programme offered by the University will be awarded without participation in the assessment process by at least one External Examiner to ensure the appropriateness of the academic standards being applied.

The number of External Examiners appointed to each programme will reflect the numbers of component modules and elements of assessment, and also any requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) with which the programme is associated. External Examiners normally are drawn from both academia and professional practice relevant to the subject matter of the programme. Where appropriate, the same External Examiner may be appointed to two or more cognate routes within a single programme.

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The same External Examiner may be appointed as award examiner to more than one award when it is appropriate to do so for example, when student numbers are low, or when modules are common across programmes. Similarly, separate External Examiners may be given responsibility for different groups of cognate modules within a programme.

External Examiners are responsible to the University Academic Board, on whose behalf appointments are made by the External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (QSEC).

The University operates a two-tier system with the Board of Examiners being made up of a Module Board and then a Progression and Award Board. All External Examiners are allocated modules for which they have oversight and are therefore invited to the relevant Module Boards. External Examiners may be invited to take on the role of Award Board Examiners where they will be responsible for certain awards and invited to attend the Progression and Awards Board. Attendance at Boards is an important aspect of the role of the External Examiner to ensure thorough involvement throughout the academic year.

Resubmission Progression and Award Boards are held following the resubmission period. External Examiner attendance at the Resubmission Progression and Award Boards is organised on a rota basis. External Examiners should be willing to attend at least one Resubmission Progression and Award Board over their tenure.

5. External Quality Assurance (EQA) External Assessor

Apprenticeship programmes with an integrated End-point Assessment (EPA) require an External Quality Assurance (EQA) External Assessor. The function of the role is to ensure that the EPA is planned, delivered and assessed in an appropriate manner so that:

- apprentices are assessed effectively.
- each EPA is valid and reliable.
- the completion, achievement and certification of apprenticeships is credible and reliable.

All EQA External Assessor appointments are approved by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (QSEC) and also subject to final approval by the Designated Quality Body. All appointments will normally run for a period of four years subject to annual review and reappointment.

The EQA External Assessor can be the same individual as the programme External Examiner as long as they meet the skills and experience required for the role.

6. External Examiner Appointment

6.1 Appointment Criteria (all programmes)

The University ensures that it appoints External Examiners in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on External Expertise as follows:

- Have a higher degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK higher education sector (Academic EEs only).
- are appropriately experienced in course design and student assessment at the level of the award (Academic EEs only).
- have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development (All EEs).
- are experienced in acting as an external examiner or are supported by the provider in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring (All EEs).
- are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the provider and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant partners (All EEs).
- do not personally benefit from any student outcomes, nor have any connection to any student being assessed (All EEs).
- have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively (Academic EEs only).
- are drawn from a relevant variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the course benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny (All EEs).
- comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate (All EEs).
- normally hold a limited number of concurrent external examining engagements (for example either one or two) (All EEs).

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For the LSA MArch Designing Architecture, the following criteria applies:

The Architects Regulation Board (ARB) expects that at least one external examiner for each qualification will have had experience of externally examining an ARB accredited qualification of the same level or higher in the UK within the last five years (at least half of the external examiners, in the case of joint/dual subject qualifications).

In addition, external examiners for each qualification must include individuals with experience of delivering or assessing an accredited qualification in the UK and experience of UK practice within the last five years (this can be satisfied across external examiners, where more than one).

External Examiner's application forms / CVs will be shared with the ARB and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as part of their annual monitoring processes.

6.2 Conflicts of Interest

Before appointing an External Examiner, a review is undertaken to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. The University will not appoint an External Examiner under the following circumstances due to actual or perceived conflicts of interest:

- They are or have been in the last five years a:
 - Member of the University Board of Trustees or deliberative committee
 - Member of a collaborative partner institution
 - A University or London School of Architecture (LSA) employee including an Associate Lecturer
 - A University or LSA student.
- They have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a University or LSA member of staff or student on the programme concerned. This includes employers of University apprentices or LSA students.
- They work for an institution where the University or LSA has a member of staff acting as External Examiner within in the same School / Faculty.
- The succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution or the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department and institution.
- They already hold two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes or modules.

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For the purposes of avoiding reciprocal arrangements the University holds a register of staff commitments to external examining, which is reviewed and updated when a change arises with a full review on an annual basis by the External Examiners Appointments Subcommittee.

Where a new or replacement External Examiner is required, nominations will be made by the relevant Programme Leader. Nominations are put forward for approval by the External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee and reported to QSEC. The University provides the appointee with a briefing in respect of the terms of the appointment and their role, powers and responsibilities.

Any changes to the terms of an External Examiners appointment must be approved by the External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee.

7. Length of Term

An External Examiner appointment will normally be for a period of four years from the commencement of the first semester. This may be extended by one year under certain circumstances. Such circumstances may include ensuring that there are not two new appointees in a single academic year/semester or to mentor an inexperienced External Examiner. The appointment is subject to annual renewal, triggered by the receipt of the External Examiner's report.

At the end of the term of office the External Examiner will be formally thanked by the Board of Examiners and will be requested to submit an overview within their annual report looking back over the term of office.

An External Examiner may be appointed to another programme after a minimum period of five years has elapsed or may be re-appointed to the same programme in exceptional circumstances after the same minimum five-year period has elapsed.

7.1 Dealing with Conflicts of Interest

Notwithstanding the information contained in section 5.3 , above, a conflict of interest may arise at some stage following the appointment of an External Examiner. Should a conflict of interest arise, for example as a consequence of a relative or employee of the External Examiner taking the programme, or due to attachment by an employer as a counsellor or mentor to a student under a professional qualification scheme, the External Examiner should declare this information to the Academic Registry Manager as soon as it is known. Normally, the External Examiner will be required to be absent from any point within a meeting of a Board when that student's results are considered.

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Conflicts of interest may also build up over time through repeated engagement with the same provider.

Where it is not possible to resolve a conflict of interest, it is normal practice for the External Examiner to resign. However, the University reserves the right to terminate the appointment as a final resort to protect the integrity of the external examining process.

8. Interruption of Appointment

There may be circumstances where an External Examiner is unable to undertake their duties in the current year of appointment (for example due to pregnancy or illness) and wishes to interrupt their appointment for a defined period, up to a maximum of twelve months. This period of interruption will still count towards their four-year period of appointment. There will be no fees paid to the External Examiner during the period of interruption.

To request to interrupt their appointment External Examiners must provide written notification to the Quality Assurance Officer and allow reasonable notice for the University to appoint an interim External Examiner who may be from the same provider/company (although this is not a requirement)".

If at the end of the period of interruption the External Examiners is unable to return to their duties, then the interim External Examiner may be appointed for the remaining tenure.

9. Termination of Appointment

9.1 External Examiner resignation

An External Examiner, who wishes to resign from their duties with the University, must write to the Quality Assurance Officer stating the reasons for termination of appointment (in line with the External Examiners Statement of Appointment) within 3 months of the effective date of termination.

9.2 Termination of appointment by the University

The University reserves the right to terminate an External Examiners appointment or not re-appoint in the following circumstances, without notice:

- Where the External Examiner is not seen to be performing duties satisfactorily i.e. by not returning comments on draft assessments, not attending Boards of Examiner meetings sufficiently regularly, or the failure to submit a correctly completed annual report in a timely manner.
- A conflict of interest arises during the term of appointment which cannot be managed effectively.
- If the University believes that there has been unprofessional conduct on the part of the External Examiner.
- the University perceives there to be an irretrievable breakdown of the relationship.
- If the programme closes or changes are being made to the programme that make the appointment no longer applicable.
- If the External Examiner relocates outside of the UK.

In the above cases and once all reasonable steps have been taken to alleviate the situation a decision to terminate or not to re-appoint an External Examiner is approved by the Chair of the External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee and Chair of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee.

10. External Examiner Induction and Development

All appointees are obliged to undertake an induction that includes a briefing on University processes. This is offered online via the External Examiner area of the VLE. An additional induction webinar or session(s) will also usually be offered, as appropriate. The induction and development of External Examiners aims to give an overview of the University practices and procedures as well as equipping the appointee to be an effective External Examiner.

Engagement with this process is monitored by the External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee; non-completion within a reasonable period of time (normally, three semesters) may result in the appointment not being renewed for the following year.

Where the University appoints an External Examiner with no previous experience of external examining, the University will seek to arrange mentoring guidance during

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the first year of appointment by teaming them up with an experienced External Examiner.

External Examiners will be provided with access to the following information via the External Examiner VLE area:

- QAA and Advanced HE resources for External Examiners including details of the Office for Students (Ofs) Notifications Procedure
- University Policies and Procedures
- University Academic and Programme Regulations;
- Programme Specifications;
- Boards of Examiners Terms of reference;
- Access to the online External Examiner report form, and guidance on how to submit;
- Annual programme review scorecards;
- copies of previous External Examiners' reports for their allocated programme (if available);
- schedule of key dates for the next academic year.

The following information will also be made available to enabling them to undertake their duties:

- a complete set of draft summative assessment papers prior to the scrutiny meeting with a proforma report form;
- an invitation to review a sample of assessment scripts the day before the University Module Board or Progression and Award Board.

10.1 Programme development

External Examiners may be consulted on proposals for the introduction of new programmes or in relation to changes to existing programmes in line with the Programme Development and Validation and Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Policies. External Examiners normally should be consulted about proposed amendments to programmes that may affect assessment or progression.

10.2 Scrutiny of draft summative assessment

External Examiners are invited to scrutinise and approve summative assessments. Draft summative assessment and, where appropriate, marking guides are provided to External Examiners and they normally have a two week period to

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make comment and propose changes. Any accessibility issues should be reported to a member of the Quality Control Team at QualityAssessment@ube.ac.uk

10.3 Assessment sampling

An appropriate sample of marked assessment scripts should be made available to the External Examiner in advance of the Board of Examiners meeting.

If an External Examiner wishes to look at a particular assignment outside of the sample, they should contact a member of the Academic Standards team with this request.

Any accessibility issues should be reported to a member of the Academic Standards team at academicstandards@ube.ac.uk.

External Examiners should have seen sufficient assessment to assure themselves that internal marking and the identification of award classifications are of an appropriate and consistent standard.

The record of the internal moderation process must be made available to the External Examiners. It is the role of the External Examiner to ensure that the University's Policy on moderation of marks has been correctly applied and not to second mark assessments.

The outcome of this review is that the External Examiner confirms the marks for the module or requests that the work be remarked or recommends that the marks are adjusted.

External Examiners are asked to comment as part of their annual report on whether marking criteria is properly and consistency applied, that marking and grading are fair and reliable, and the quality and standard of feedback given to students is consistent.

10.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

External examiners are expected to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of their role, including the review of assessment design, marking practices and student outcomes. Examiners should identify any elements that could unintentionally disadvantage particular student groups and comment on the inclusivity and fairness of assessment processes within their annual report. Further information is provided within the University's commitment to EDI in the [Commitment Statement](#) on our website.

10.5 Attendance at meetings of Boards of Examiners

External Examiners are full members of the Board of Examiners. Arrangements and protocols concerning attendance by External Examiners at meetings of Boards of Examiners to which they have been appointed are set out in the University's Boards of Examiners Policy.

Alternative arrangements can be made for External Examiners to view a sample of work and make comments prior to the Board if there is good reason why they cannot be present at a meeting of an examination board. Circumstances may arise where an External Examiner may not be able to attend a meeting of either a Module Board or a Progression and Award Board. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of the External Examiner concerned to liaise with their fellow External Examiner(s) in order to aid in the discharge of their duties.

Wherever possible, the University will seek to arrange an appropriate alternative time for the External Examiner to review students' work and other relevant documentation in order to inform the deliberations of the Board of Examiners and the completion of their report(s).

External Examiners who are unable to attend are required to complete an Absence Form provided by the Academic Standards team to confirm that they have reviewed the necessary paperwork.

10.6 Academic Misconduct

In exceptional circumstances External Examiners may be consulted over cases of suspected academic misconduct.

10.7 Mitigating circumstances

External Examiners normally are not expected to adjudicate on cases of mitigating circumstances submitted by students. These are considered by the University's Mitigating Circumstances Panel which meets prior to the Boards of Examiners. The recommendations of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel are presented at the meetings of Module Boards; however, to ensure the confidentiality of such mitigating circumstances the exact nature and student names would not be disclosed unless the committee was unable to reach a decision due to lack of evidence, or a need to consider the student's performance as a whole, rather than at a module level.

Further guidance relating to decisions regarding candidates with accepted mitigating circumstances is provided in the University's Boards of Examiners Policy.

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10.8 Awarding prizes

The External Examiner may be asked to advise the Progression and Award Board on prizes to be awarded to outstanding candidates.

10.9 Confirmation of results

Following the Board of Examiners meeting the External Examiners are required to confirm in writing that they are satisfied that for the modules or programmes they have been invited to examine the outcomes of the assessment are fair. External Examiners sign a proforma to confirm the marks and that the decision has been made in accordance with the regulations.

10.10 Viva voce examinations

External examiners may be required to conduct viva voce examinations or to agree in advance whether this option will be used in certain circumstances.

10.11 The role of External Examiners in quality enhancement

A key part of the role of the External Examiner is to identify areas of good practice for wider dissemination as well as identifying areas for further enhancement. External Examiners are asked to comment on strengths of the programme and to identify any areas for improvement or development.

The feedback from External Examiners is used to inform annual programme review and areas for enhancement are included within quality enhancement plans.

11. External Examiner's Report

External Examiners' reports are an important part of the University's quality assurance processes, reflecting the significance placed upon them by QAA and by PSRBs.

Informal feedback may be provided by an External Examiner to the University and/or the relevant programme team at any time during the academic year (for example, at the end of the first semester of study).

The Director of Academic Registry or the relevant Dean- of School /Programme Leader/Module Leader will contact the External Examiner to discuss any aspect of the feedback if appropriate to do so.

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External Examiners are required to submit a full annual written report to the University by the date specified. This should be submitted on an online form available on the External Examiner VLE area.

The External Examiner will be asked to comment upon:

- Academic standards and student performance.
- The assessment process.
- The operation of the Board of Examiners.
- Access to information and support when fulfilling their duties.
- Areas for enhancement and areas of good practice for wider dissemination.

The purpose of the report is to help the University to judge whether the programme is meeting its stated objectives and to make any necessary improvements.

The LSA is required to submit explicit statements from the External Examiners each year confirming whether they were satisfied or not that all graduating students receiving the qualifications had met all the RIBA and ARB Criteria at Part 2 level.

12. Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

On receipt, External Examiner Reports are circulated to the Programme Leader and the Academic Quality Unit (AQU). The Programme Leader drafts a response to the report. All responses are reviewed by a representative of AQU before going forward to the Dean – School of the Built Environment (Academic) for sign-off. The response is then issued to the External Examiner along with a covering letter. All actions as a result of External Examiner feedback must be addressed in a timely manner and are logged and tracked on the programme quality enhancement plan.

The report and response will inform the annual monitoring process and will be made available at the Programme Committee meetings, to students and will also be provided to PSRBs on request. Matters of institutional significance will also be brought to the attention of the relevant deliberative committee. AQU compiles an annual report on all External Examiner feedback which is presented to QSEC, Academic Review Committee and Academic Board.

13. Procedures in the case of serious concerns

External Examiners are encouraged to raise concerns with their Programme Leader or a member of the support team in the first instance, however they retain the right to submit a confidential report direct to the Vice Chancellor of the University via vicechancellorsoffice@ube.ac.uk, if they have concerns relating to the value being placed on the advice given, the running of the programme or the academic integrity of the programme.

In addition to this, if they still have concerns about a serious systemic failing with the quality and standards of the programme(s) the External Examiner can refer the matter to the OfS under its [Notifications Process \(opens new window\)](#) and/or inform the relevant PSRBs.

14. Student participation

External Examiners' names, position and principal employer will be made available to students via the VLE. The University will make clear to students that they are not permitted to contact External Examiners directly; however, the University may set up formal opportunities for External Examiners and students to engage. External Examiners should have the opportunity to speak with students at least once during their tenure.

External Examiners Reports will be made available to students via the VLE except for the confidential reports made directly to the Vice Chancellor.

Student Representatives are invited to consider the External Examiner Report and the University's response as part of Student Representative meetings.

15. Fees

External Examiners are paid an annual fee encompassing scrutiny of assessment, attendance at Module Boards and completion of the External Examiner's annual report; a separate fee is paid for attendance at Progression and Award Boards and Mentoring. Fees payable may be banded relative to the number of modules or units for which an External examiner is responsible.

The University will arrange travel and accommodation for External Examiners as required in order for them to carry out their duties. Other reasonable subsistence expenses are payable in line with the University's expenses Policy.

16. Personal Data

The University will adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when dealing with personal information provided by External Examiners. Information provided in the External Examiner proposal form, including contact information, will be held in a secure internal database which will have restricted access.

The External Examiner should inform the University if their information (contact information, employment etc.) changes at any time.

Appendix A Related Policies

Benchmarked guidance

[Quality Assurance Agency, External Examining Principles \(2022\) \(opens new window\)](#)

[Advance HE, Fundamentals of External Examining \(2019\) \(opens new window\)](#)

Related Policies and other relevant documents

Academic and Programme Regulations

Boards of Examiners Policy

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25

Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Programme Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy

The University documentation relating to External Examiners' appointments

The following documents are available on request (via externalexaminers@ube.ac.uk).

1. External Examiner Nomination Form
2. External Examiner's Statement of Appointment
3. Proposed Change to External Examiner's Responsibilities Form
4. External Examiner Absence Form
5. External Examiner's Annual Report Template
6. Response to External Examiner Annual Report Template