

# Guidance on External Examiner Procedures: April 2021

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## **Section 1 - General Information for University Staff and External Examiners**

### **Introduction**

- 1 External Examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards for taught provision and in ensuring the rigorous but fair assessment of students. This document provides generic information on the role of External Examiners at The University of Manchester and outlines the activities in which they are likely to be involved. It is sent to all new External Examiners, who should read it in conjunction with information sent to them by the School or, in the case of validated provision, the partner institution on behalf of the School for which they act as an External Examiner. The University of Manchester also recognises the important role that its own members of staff play in fulfilling External Examiner duties at other institutions.
- 2 This document applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision within The University of Manchester and partner institutions offering validated awards. It is informed by the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(2018\)](#) and also includes recommendations from the [Advance HE Handbook for External Examiners \(2019\)](#).

### **Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners**

- 3 The University of Manchester engages two types of External Examiners: Programme External Examiners and Subject External Examiners (see **Sections 2** and **3** for specific details). In some cases, an External Examiner will have a combined role, i.e. Programme and Subject External Examiner duties.
- 4 The role of an External Examiner is to act as a critical friend, not a marker. The principal responsibilities of External Examiners are to ensure that:
  - A. assessment and examination procedures have been fairly and properly implemented and decisions have been made after due deliberation;
  - B. standards of awards and student performance are at least comparable with those in equivalent higher education institutions.
- 5 The formal responsibility of all External Examiners is to the University's Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students). External Examiners' annual reports are addressed to the Vice President (although returned to Teaching, Learning and Student Development, TLD) and External Examiners have the right to make a confidential report to the Vice President at any time. External Examiners' feedback and reports are a key source of information in the monitoring of units and programmes.
- 6 External Examiner reports are shared with students as part of a transparent system of quality assurance based on partnership (see paragraph **73**). However, it is inappropriate for students to approach External Examiners directly about aspects of their learning experience: any such comments should be directed in the first instance to the School or programme team (see paragraph **72**).

### **Period of engagement**

- 7 The period of engagement for External Examiners is normally four years, from 1

October in the year of engagement to 31 December in the year of expiry of engagement. This timeframe enables External Examiners to be involved in assessments and examinations from the start of the academic year and to deal with re-sits.

- 8 In exceptional circumstances, a case may be made to extend an engagement to five years. All such cases must be approved by the Faculty, and will normally be to accommodate an External Examiner's overall period of tenure at the University in cases where two engagements are held but one has started a year after the other. It may also be appropriate for an External Examiner's engagement to be extended to five years to oversee the final year of a programme that has been withdrawn. Cases based on the fact that there is a small pool of available External Examiners will not normally be considered as grounds for extending engagements since the School should have taken steps to identify a replacement in good time (and also because the issue is liable to reoccur in future years if not addressed). Similarly, extensions will not normally be granted because a programme does not run in all four years of the term of engagement and the External Examiner is not, therefore, actively engaged for the entire period. On approval, the Faculty Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students should notify the TLD via email of any extensions from four to five years so that a revised letter of engagement can be sent to the External Examiner. If the extension also involves additional or amended duties, the Additional or Amended Duties Form should also be completed (see **Section 6**).

### **External Examiner Briefing and Induction**

- 9 As part of the University's offer of engagement letter, there is enclosed an outline of the core duties of External Examiners (see **Sections 2 and 3**) and potential grounds for termination of the engagement (see paragraph **27**); but the detailed role of each External will vary according to the discipline, the custom and practices of the Examination Board, and the distribution of responsibilities among the group of External Examiners.
- 10 This guidance document is generic, and so Schools and Programme Teams should provide a localised induction for all External Examiners that outlines institutional and School level procedures, practices and expectations clearly. This may involve either External Examiners attending an induction event held within the relevant School or the information being supplied to the External Examiner in an appropriate form. The induction should be coordinated by the School, or a nominee, as soon as possible after the engagement is confirmed.
- 11 The induction process should also include information about the following:
- A. for Programme External Examiners: information on the programme, to include the programme handbook, the programme specification and other regulatory material;
  - B. for Subject External Examiners: the above, plus unit specifications for those units within their remit;
  - C. the names of other External Examiners on the Examination Boards and the names of the units/programmes for which they are responsible;
  - D. the conventions used by the Examination Boards;
  - E. the calendar of events over the coming year, e.g. deadlines for submission of

work to Externals and for its return, dates of Examination Board meetings.

- 12 The newly engaged External Examiner should also be provided with the opportunity to meet with students, as part of their familiarisation with the programme, or at any other time at the request of the External Examiner. Programme teams should do everything possible to facilitate such requests.
- 13 Where appropriate, the programme team should also ensure that newly engaged External Examiners are sent copies of the preceding three years of External Examiner reports. This will provide the new External with an oversight of the programme.
- 14 External Examiners may ask the Chair of the relevant board for additional information.

### **Examination Board types and responsibilities**

- 15 In general, the University has four types of Examination Boards: Pre-Board, Moderation Board, Award Board and Progression Board. Please note that there may be local variation in the number and name of Examination Boards. See summary table below:

Name of Board	Responsibilities	External Examiner presence required	When they meet ( <i>may be subject to local variation</i> )
Pre-Boards	Optional but considered good practice for a Chair and PSS support staff member to review marks before the Board to identify any potential problem cases.	No	Prior to other Boards
Moderation Board	Moderates marks, by unit (rather than by individual student)	It is <i>recommended</i> that <b>Subject External Examiners</b> attend meetings but submission of a report is an acceptable alternative.  <b>Programme External Examiners</b> are <i>not</i> required to attend.	After every assessment period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feb – Semester 1;</li> <li>• May – Semester 2;</li> <li>• August – resits;</li> <li>• October – PGT dissertations</li> </ul>
Progression Board	Considers marks by individual student for purposes of deciding on progression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Years 1 to 2;</li> <li>• Years 2 to 3 (UG);</li> <li>• Years 3 to 4 (integrated Masters);</li> <li>• Diploma to Dissertation (PGT).</li> </ul> Ratifies Moderation Board decisions.	<b>Programme or Chief External Examiners</b> must ratify the decisions where students have not been allowed to progress. They are <i>not</i> required to attend in person to do so.  <b>Subject External Examiners</b> are <i>not</i> required to attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer – UG Years 1 and 2 and PGT;</li> <li>• August - resits</li> </ul>
Award Board	Decides upon and issues final awards.  Ratifies Moderation Board decisions.	Attendance is <i>required</i> by <b>Programme External Examiners</b> to ratify all award decisions.  If a Programme Examiner is unable to attend for unforeseen and exceptional circumstances, the School/Programme can make alternative arrangements in consultation with TLD.  <b>Subject External Examiners</b> are <i>not</i> required to attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June – UG;</li> <li>• October/November- PGT</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Examination Board Types and Responsibilities**

## **The role of External Examiners at an Examination Board**

- 16 External Examiners are full voting members of all Examination Boards. External Examiners may advise the Board on the general standard of student performance in relation to those elements of assessment that they have scrutinised. They should be made aware of the outcome of any previous meeting to consider mitigating circumstances. They should be satisfied that all decisions are appropriate and consistent, and that the management of the assessment and the decision-making process is appropriate and consistent.
- 17 Programme External Examiners should sign the list of results relating to the award of degrees and such results, once signed, will not normally be changed without the consent of the Programme External Examiners.
- 18 The Chair of the relevant Board should invite the External Examiners to comment generally on their view of the examining process once the detailed discussion of cases has been completed. This oral report must be recorded in the minutes of the Examination Board.
- 19 If there is disagreement among the External Examiners then the Chief Programme External Examiner shall seek to resolve the conflict by agreement. Where this cannot be achieved, the opinion of the Chief Programme External Examiner overrides that of other External Examiners.
- 20 On rare occasions, an External Examiner may not be prepared to endorse the outcome of the examination process or the decision of an Examination Board. If such occasions do occur, then every attempt should be made to resolve the conflict through discussion and negotiation. If such attempts are not successful, then the Chair of the Examination Board should contact the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students), who will review the circumstances and attempt to broker an agreement between the Chair of the Examination Board and the Chief External Examiner, who shall have powers to sign on behalf of all internal members of the Board and all External Examiners, respectively. Failing agreement, the Vice President shall have powers to determine the matter and sign the results.

## **External Examiners at Partner Institutions**

- 21 External Examiners at partner institutions must abide by the guidance set out in this document. Further advice in this area is available from TLD.
- 22 External Examiners responsible for validated provision report to and are paid by The University of Manchester. However, it is expected that the day-to-day communications with regards to the assessment process will be with a nominated individual within the partner institution where the validated programme is delivered.
- 23 Criteria for the nomination, approval, reporting and the role of an External Examiner for a validated programme are identical to those for internal programmes. It is expected that partner institutions nominate External Examiners, complete the required paperwork and then send this with a CV to the relevant School contacts who will start the approval process within the University.

- 24 The briefing of External Examiners on validated programmes should be undertaken by the chair of the Examination Board or Programme Director at the partner institution. This briefing should provide all the required programme information as well as a copy of the University Guidance. Advice must also be given in accordance with the role descriptors included in this document. These External Examiners must also be fully briefed by the partner institution as to the rationale for any deviations from the University assessment regulations that have been approved by the University for validated programmes.

### **Resignation from and termination of engagement**

- 25 External Examiners who wish to resign before the end of their normal period of engagement should write to the Head of Academic Development in TLD, giving at least four months' notice to allow for a replacement to be identified. TLD will then inform the relevant School (if the External Examiner has not already informed them) and Faculty. If Schools are made aware of an External Examiner's intention to resign early from their period of office, they are asked to remind External Examiners of this procedure and advise them to inform TLD as soon as possible.
- 26 External Examiners must notify the School and TLD immediately of any changes in their circumstances that could lead to a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved satisfactorily and that may therefore, require an engagement to be terminated. This is particularly important in cases where an External Examiner changes their home institution since this may result in more than one External Examiner in an area being based there, or to reciprocal External Examining arrangements between Manchester and the new home institution. Neither of these scenarios is permissible. Similarly, an External Examiner must resign from their External Examiner post if they take up other employment at The University of Manchester.
- 27 In exceptional circumstances, the School may recommend the early termination of an External Examiner's engagement. Such circumstances may include:
- A. failure to attend specified Examination Boards without good cause. The University recognises that it must give sufficient advance warning of the dates of Examination Boards so that External Examiners are able to confirm their attendance and carry out their responsibilities;
  - B. failure to submit an annual report within three months of the Examination Board. The University values and requires full and informative reports which follow the guidelines provided;
  - C. failure to undertake the External Examiner duties to the satisfaction of the University by providing inadequate scrutiny of proposed assessment tools and/or assessment outcomes and/or an unacceptable delay in corresponding with Programme/Subject Teams on matters concerning examinations and assessment;
  - D. cessation of, or non-recruitment to, a programme;
  - E. changes to the level of a programme on re-validation that mean that the External Examiner no longer meets the criteria for engagement;
  - F. unprofessional conduct;
  - G. failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair

the integrity of the assessment process and the independence of the External Examiner.

- 28 Before a recommendation for the termination of an External Examiner's engagement is brought forward, strenuous attempts should be made by the School and programme team to work with the External Examiner to identify and address the underlying issues. Should this fail, the Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students in the Faculty should write to the External Examiner and request that they resign. This request should be accompanied by a full account of the issues encountered and their impact on the student experience.
- 29 Should no response be received to the resignation request, or if the External Examiner does not agree to resign from their post, the Faculty should then make a formal request to the Head of Academic Development in TLD to recommend that the engagement be terminated. This recommendation must be endorsed by the relevant Vice Dean and must include all the information that has been collected and considered relating to the underlying reasons and the impact on the student experience. The agreement of the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students) and the President to the termination will then be sought via TLD and, if it is received, the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students) will write formally to the External Examiner to terminate their engagement. Such recommendations will be given full and careful consideration and may be referred back to the School and Faculty at any stage.

### **The role of External Examiners in dealing with mitigating circumstances**

- 30 Under the University's [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#), Mitigating Circumstances Panels consider requests for mitigation submitted by students and make a decision as to whether to accept the request and, if accepted, what recommended mitigation should be applied by the Examination Board. Mitigating Circumstances Panels operate on the delegated authority of Examination Boards and are constituted in accordance with a common Terms of Reference. External Examiners, as members of Examination Boards, may contribute to the discussion/ratification of recommendations from Mitigating Circumstances Panels.

### **External Examiner reports**

- 31 As stated in paragraph 18, External Examiners should be asked to make a brief oral report to the Examination Board. This report should include the External Examiner's opinion of:
- A. the assessment process including its fairness, accuracy and efficiency;
  - B. the academic quality of the cohort(s) examined;
  - C. the effectiveness of the teaching (as judged by the performance of the students);
  - D. any recommendations to the Board for improvements in the teaching or examination process;
  - E. good practice;
  - F. whether any recommendations made in previous year have been acted on properly.

A record of this oral report must be recorded in the formal minutes of the Examination



Board and approved by the Board including the External Examiner(s).

- 32 External Examiners are also required to make an [annual report](#) to the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students) using the University pro-forma report form that is relevant to their role. Names of all students and staff must be omitted from External Examiners' reports, to maintain confidentiality, except to recognise and disseminate good practice.
- 33 External Examiner reports should be returned to TLD no later than four weeks after the final Examination Board meeting has taken place (see **Table 2** below). TLD will acknowledge receipt of each External Examiner report and TLD will forwards the reports to the relevant School and Faculty contacts and, where appropriate, submits the Examiner's fee for processing.

Name of Board	External Examiner	Level	Approximate due date
Moderation Board	Subject Examiner	Undergraduate	June/July
Moderation Board	Subject Examiner	Postgraduate	November/December
Award Board	Programme Examiner	Undergraduate	June/July
Award Board	Programme Examiner	Postgraduate	November/December

**Table 2: Summary of External Examiner Report due dates**

- 34 The School, and partner institution for validated programmes, is responsible, in consultation with the Faculty as appropriate, for ensuring that any issues identified by an External Examiner in reports or during Examination Boards are considered and addressed in the appropriate forum. A formal response to each report should be sent, preferably by email, by the programme team to the External Examiner within four weeks of receipt explaining the outcome of any such considerations. This response should be copied to the School, Faculty and TLD. TLD are happy to advise the programme team on any issues that have been raised that require institutional input, but the responsibility for responding to all issues raised in reports lies with the programme team.
- 35 The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that all issues raised by External Examiners are responded to formally.
- 36 Using a sample of reports across all three Faculties, the Academic Development and Policy Team in TLD will summarise the overarching trends and issues that have been identified, and will report this to the University's Annual Review of Teaching and Learning. In addition, TLD will contact the Faculty as and when any serious and immediate concerns are highlighted within an External Examiner's report to check what action has been taken. If any such concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, TLD will agree a course of action with the Faculty. TLD may also refer any such issues, irrespective of whether they have been resolved, to the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students). If an External Examiner raises issues related to standards within the institution, and has exhausted all internal procedures including a confidential report to the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students),

they have the right to raise their concerns with the [QAA](#).

- 37 TLD pursues the non-submission of an External Examiner's report. TLD will contact the School in the first instance to confirm whether they have received the report directly from the Examiner. If the Examiner has sent the report directly to the School or programme team, the School should forward it to TLD as quickly as possible since receipt of the report within TLD triggers the fee payment. If the School informs TLD that they have not received the report, TLD will contact the Examiner on three separate occasions via email to request it. If after the third attempt TLD have still not received a response, they will inform the School and Faculty. The School should then establish why the report has not been received and, based on the outcome, whether the Examiner has the capacity to carry out their role and, in consultation with TLD, whether any further action is required. If an Examiner cannot send in a report for reasons such as sickness or maternity leave, TLD should be informed immediately to prevent the Examiner from being chased unnecessarily.

## **Section 2 – Duties of Programme External Examiners**

### **Duties**

- 38 The work of a Programme External Examiner relates to a degree programme (or group of cognate programmes), and the Examiner has specific responsibilities for the whole programme or group. Where more than one Programme Examiner is engaged, one of them should be assigned to the role of Chief Programme External Examiner and will be responsible for resolving any disputes or differences of opinion amongst the other Programme Examiners.
- 39 A Programme External Examiner may also be a Subject External Examiner. When there is only one Programme Examiner per programme, these roles are combined and this has an impact on the duties the Programme Examiner carries out.
- 40 The duties of Programme External Examiners are to (see **Figure 1**):
- A. where appropriate, review project reports and dissertations, or a sample thereof, to check whether marking is consistent across the programme;
  - B. have responsibility for the moderation of dissertations when engaged for postgraduate taught programmes;
  - C. attend Award Boards at which the student achievement in the programme/s for which they are responsible is classified and degree awards are recommended;
  - D. ratify and endorse, by signature, all award decisions and decisions where students have not been allowed to progress;
  - E. be involved in any decision taken by Chair's Action following an Examination Board that could affect a student's progression and/or classification. This includes actions taken as a result of the consideration of student appeals and complaints cases.
  - F. submit an annual report(s) using the pro-forma that is relevant to their role (see paragraph **32**);
  - G. where appropriate, provide evidence to demonstrate that the requirements and standards of professional bodies are being met, including in practice;
  - H. highlight and encourage good practice;

- I. comment on the programme's relationship to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and any relevant Subject Benchmarks;
- J. advise the Examination Boards on dealing with difficult cases.

### **Programme Examiner's role in Classification Review**

- 41 Programme External Examiners can also have a role in 'Classification Review' when deciding a student's final award or classification.
- 42 Classification review is used when students fall into the boundary zone of a classification and does not satisfy the additional criteria for increasing the class of the award. Schools can undergo a process of internal classification review for that student, overseen by the Programme External Examiner. In this case, the Programme External Examiner oversees the process by which the classification review is undertaken and can make recommendations with regards to the final classification. The process of classification review cannot change individual unit marks.

### **Assessment of Dissertations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes**

- 43 The assessment of dissertations for postgraduate taught programmes is carried out by two internal examiners and reviewed by a Programme External Examiner.
- 44 The role of the Programme External Examiner is to comment on the overall standard of the assessment of dissertations by reviewing:
  - A. a sample, which mirrors the internal sample as set out in the University's [Policy on Marking](#), of all dissertations;
  - B. any dissertation that has been assessed as a fail;
  - C. any dissertation that was the subject of substantial disagreement between the internal examiners;
  - D. the dissertation of any student who may be considered for the award of a distinction.
- 45 The Programme External Examiner should not change any individual marks.

## Programme External Examiner Duties within the Assessment Life Cycle

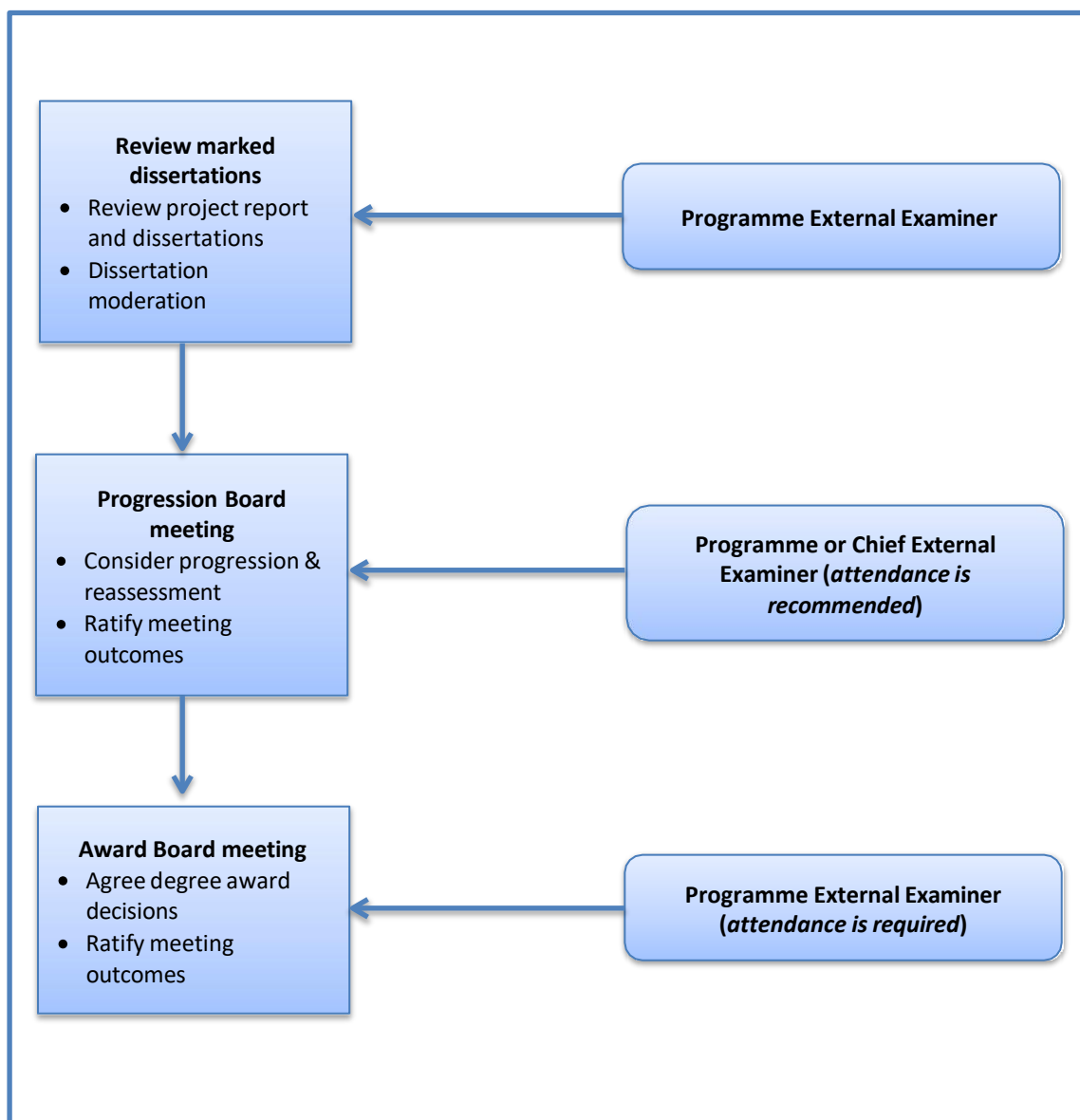


Figure 1: Programme External Examiner duties within the assessment life cycle

### **Section 3 – Duties of Subject External Examiners**

#### **Duties**

- 46 A Subject External Examiner has responsibility for a set of units that may contribute to more than one programme, which could cover both Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught provision.
- 47 All significant assessed work that leads to the degree class is to be considered by the Subject External Examiner before it is completed by students. This includes all draft core assessment, including examination papers, and any other significant assessment at the discretion of the School or at the request of the Subject External Examiner.
- 48 The duties of Subject External Examiners are to (see **Figure 2**):
- A. before their completion by students, review all assessment briefs for all elements of a unit that contribute to the degree class;
  - B. moderate the sample of marked examination scripts that has already been moderated internally in line with the Policy on Marking;
  - C. moderate the sample of assessed coursework, including any online assessed coursework, that has already been moderated internally in line with the Policy on Marking;
  - D. attend Moderation Boards that consider unit results and endorse, by signature, the agreed outcomes of the meeting;
  - E. submit an annual report(s) using the pro-forma that is relevant to their role (see paragraph **32**);
  - F. where appropriate, provide evidence to demonstrate that the requirements and standards of professional bodies are being met, including in practice;
  - G. where appropriate, examine OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations) in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health;
  - H. highlight and encourage good practice;
  - I. comment on the discipline's relationship to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and any relevant Subject Benchmarks;
  - J. advise the Examination Boards on dealing with difficult cases.

#### **Subject Examiner's role in moderating draft assessed core work**

- 49 All draft assessed core work that leads to the degree class is to be considered by the Subject External Examiner prior to it being completed by the students. This can normally be done via correspondence.
- 50 The draft question paper should normally be accompanied by outline answers except in disciplines for which more discursive answers are appropriate, alongside marking/grading criteria. In these latter cases, the Subject External Examiner should, on request, be given an indication of the expected length, style and content of the desired answer.
- 51 Subject External Examiners should satisfy themselves that the question paper:
- A. is appropriate to the level of the unit;
  - B. is an appropriate means of testing whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the unit;

- C. covers the scope of the unit content appropriately;
- D. is fair, i.e. that some students will not be at an advantage other than by virtue of their academic ability and commitment.

### Subject Examiner's role in moderating marked assessments

- 52 Marked examination scripts will be subject to internal processing that may range from simple checking to blind double marking, as appropriate; Subject External Examiners will *not* be involved in marking except in the case of OSCEs. Samples of the range of scripts will be provided for the Subject External Examiner to moderate, either before or during their visit for the Moderation Board meeting. Subject External Examiners will wish to discuss with internal examiners the arrangements for moderating the internal marking to satisfy themselves that standards are appropriate and that students are being treated fairly. This discussion should take place at the earliest opportunity and both internal and Subject External Examiners should work together to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements. The sample will normally mirror that which was marked internally, based on the University's [Policy on Marking](#).
- 53 The scripts must be accompanied by the comments of the internal examiners and the overall mark-sheet covering all students.
- 54 In the majority of cases, the Subject External Examiner will be able to confirm the agreed internal marks for the whole group of students. Where moderation by the Subject External Examiner indicates concern over the marking of an individual script, then the whole unit should be internally remarked. **Subject External Examiners must not change individual marks.** The Subject External Examiner's role is primarily to benchmark overall marking standards. Any changes must be reported to the relevant board.
- 55 Where moderation of scripts, or an analysis of the distribution of the marks, indicates the need to review the marks for the whole group, the Subject Examiners have discretion on whether to:
  - A. request that all the scripts in the cohort be re-marked;
  - B. scale the marks for all students in relation to agreed benchmarks. Any recommendations for scaling must be approved by the Moderation Board.
- 56 The marks agreed by the Subject External Examiner after any moderation will not be altered by a Programme External Examiner or any of the Examination Boards.
- 57 Subject External Examiners have the right to see any items of coursework produced by a student by any method. However in practice they normally only see a sample of coursework. The process for sampling and moderating coursework is set out in paragraphs **52** to **56**. Subject External Examiners may also ask to vet draft substantial coursework tasks.
- 58 Where assessment is online, the programme team must ensure that the Subject External Examiner has access to the work, in order to make informed judgements on the marking and standards.

### **Subject Examiner's role in Classification Review**

- 59     Subject External Examiners can also have a role in 'Classification Review' when deciding a student's final award or classification.
  
- 60     Classification review is used when students fall into the boundary zone of a classification and does not satisfy the additional criteria for increasing the class of the award. Schools can undergo a process of internal classification review for that student, which is overseen by the Subject External Examiner, who can make recommendations with regards to the final classification. The process of classification review cannot change individual unit marks.

## Subject External Examiner Duties within the Assessment Life Cycle

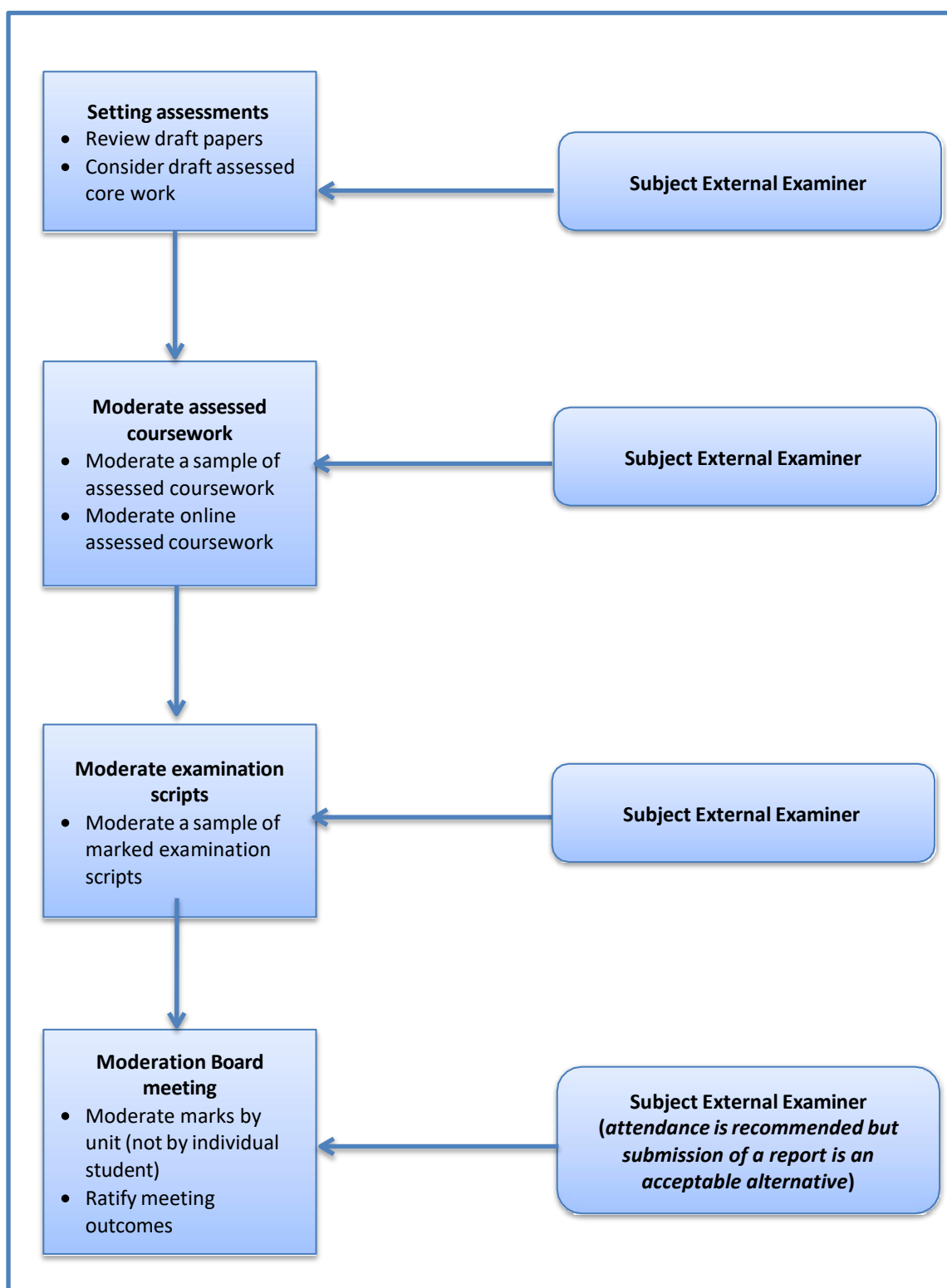


Figure 2: Subject External Examiner duties within the assessment life cycle



#### **Section 4 – Criteria for the nomination of External Examiners**

61 It is the responsibility of the nominating School (or partner institution) to check that a proposed External Examiner meets the criteria for nomination listed below. Where the criteria are not fully met, a written case for an exception must be submitted with the nomination form for consideration by the relevant Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students.

- A. External Examiners are people of seniority and experience who are respected in their subject areas and conversant with assessment procedures in higher education. Notwithstanding this expectation, a nominee with no previous experience as an External Examiner should not be automatically excluded from engagement. However anyone nominated in this capacity should normally have held an engagement in the institution concerned for at least three years and should, if possible, join a team of experienced External Examiners where more experienced External Examiners can mentor them. Briefing and support should be provided by the relevant programme team where necessary, such as first time External Examiners shadowing more experienced External Examiners at Examination Boards.
- B. Retirees can be considered as External Examiners providing they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.
- C. External Examiners are normally members of other UK higher education institutions, although it may be appropriate to engage External Examiners from outside higher education where particular professional expertise is required. A rationale must be submitted by the School with the nomination in such cases.
- D. External Examiners should normally reside in the UK. Approval to engage an Examiner from outside the UK will be granted only exceptionally and on consideration of a rationale submitted by the School.
- E. Former students or members of staff of the University must not serve as External Examiners for at least five years from the time when their relationship with the University ended (or until all the students taught by that member of staff have left the University, whichever is longer). For validated provision, this same principle applies to former students and staff of the partner institution(s).
- F. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, External Examiners should not be engaged if they are covered by any of the following categories:
  - Governor;
  - near relative of a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
  - anyone closely associated with the sponsorship of students on the course;
  - anyone closely associated with placements or training;
  - anyone in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study.

- G. In relation to a new programme, a School should not nominate the External Advisor (who has assisted in the development of the new programme) as the first External Examiner.
  - H. A School (or partner institution) may not nominate an External Examiner from an institution where a member of staff of that School (or partner institution) is currently serving as an External Examiner within the same subject area.
  - I. External Examiners should have no conflict of interest with the University (or partner institution), arising from personal or family relationships, or from other direct ties to members of staff or students.
  - J. A team of External Examiners should not normally include more than one person from any single institution.
  - K. An External Examiner should not normally be from the same institution as their predecessor.
  - L. External Examiners should not normally hold more than two External Examiner engagements at first degree level, except where an additional External Examiner engagement has an overlapping period of only one academic year. External examining of individual candidates for research degrees is not counted for the purposes of this requirement.
  - M. An External Examiner who has completed a term of office at the University should not be re-engaged until five years have passed.
- 62 In order to meet UK Immigration Legislation requirements, External Examiners for taught provision are engaged by the University as members of casual staff. As a result, the institution is not in a position to allow them to start work until they have provided evidence that they are entitled to work in the UK. These checks are carried out by TLD as part of the offer of engagement process.

### **Procedure for the engagement of External Examiners**

- 63 Schools (or partner institutions) are responsible for nominating appropriate persons to act as External Examiners. The School (or partner institution) should ensure that a nomination form, summary CV, and associated summary of role and responsibilities is completed by the appropriate member of staff, signed by the Chair of the Examination Board and the Head of School, and forwarded to the designated Faculty administrator. The Faculty administrator ensures that the relevant Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students considers the nomination against the University's criteria for the engagement of External Examiners for taught provision, on behalf of the relevant Faculty committee. Responsibility for approval is delegated to the Vice Dean for Teaching Learning and Students by the University's Senate. The Faculty administrator, or TLD, can be contacted to discuss the eligibility of a possible nominee.
- 64 The designated Faculty administrator facilitates the process of engagement and ensures that a summary of each nomination (name, home institution and programme or subject area) is reported to the appropriate Faculty committee.

- 65 Most nominations will be straightforward and the Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students will be able to approve them on behalf of the Faculty committee. However, a Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students who has any concerns about a particular nomination may refer it to the appropriate Faculty committee for wider consideration. The Faculty committee may subsequently refer the nomination to the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students) if the concerns remain unresolved. If the nomination is not approved by the Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, then it is the designated Faculty administrator's responsibility to write to the School/nominee explaining why.
- 66 Approved nominations should be emailed to TLD for processing. The External Examiner's annual fee should be calculated using the External Examiner Fee Models (see **Section 6**). TLD will be unable to process the External Examiner nomination if it has not been approved by the appropriate persons or does not have the fee amount stated clearly on it.
- 67 TLD then processes the External Examiner nomination by adding the External Examiner's details to a central database of all engagements and sending an offer of engagement letter. Included with the offer letter are a copy for signature and return, and other information that is required in order to set the External Examiner up as a member of casual staff.
- 68 The number of External Examiners per programme should be sufficient to cover the full range of studies and to cope with the number of students. Programme External Examiners may also cover a group of cognate programmes.
- 69 External Examiners who have limited experience of higher education may be engaged if their presence is balanced by more experienced External Examiners for at least the first year of their engagement.
- 70 Engagements to a team of External Examiners should be staggered to ensure continuity.

#### **Additional information / amendments to an External Examiner engagement**

- 71 On occasion it may be necessary to add additional duties or make amendments to an External Examiner's engagement, for example a Programme Examiner taking on Subject duties. The process is similar to that of Nominating an External Examiner (see link to pro forma in **Section 6**).

#### **Publicising details of External Examiners to Students and External Examiner/Student contact**

- 72 Details of the name, position and home institution of External Examiner(s) are to be included within unit or programme information. Schools must make it clear that it is inappropriate for students to make direct contact with External Examiners, in particular regarding their individual performance in assessments, and that other appropriate mechanisms are available, such as lodging an appeal or a complaint or contacting the [UMSU Advice Centre or the Student Support Adviser](#). In cases where a

student *does* contact an External Examiner directly, External Examiners have been requested not to respond. Instead, External Examiners should report the matter to their School contact who will then discuss with the student other avenues available to them.

### **Sharing External Examiner reports with Students**

- 73 Schools are required to share Programme External Examiners' reports with students. This should be done either through student representatives at appropriate groups or committees or other forums identified by the programme team or School. Discussion of External Examiner reports should be added as a standing item to the relevant group's agenda. Details of the reports and any actions taken in response to External Examiners' comments should be reported at this forum. The only reports that should not be made available to student representatives are those of a confidential nature that have been sent directly to the Vice President (Teaching, Learning and Students). If students require any further information regarding External Examiner reports, they should contact their student representatives in the first instance.

## **Section 5 - Information for External Examiners**

### **External Examiner Nomination**

- 74 When TLD receive a new Nomination form from a Faculty, it processes it and sends an offer of engagement letter to the new External Examiner. Included with the offer letter are a copy for signature and return, and other information that is required in order to set the External Examiner up as a member of casual staff.
- 75 External Examiners are asked to confirm that they accept engagement and that they will fulfil the University's specified requirements. This entails the signing and returning of the copy letter. At this point External Examiners are also asked to certify that they have the right to work in the UK – without such proof, the University is unable to allow the External Examiner to undertake any work.
- 76 The forms requesting personal and bank details also need to be completed and returned to TLD, as, without this information, fees cannot be processed.

### **External Examiner Annual Report**

- 77 External Examiner [report pro formas](#) can be found on the TLD website. There is one pro forma for Subject External Examiners, one for Programme External Examiners, and one for External Examiners with combined Programme and Subject duties. Programme teams should remind External Examiners to complete and submit report forms.
- 78 Completed, final External Examiner reports should be emailed to [external.examiners@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:external.examiners@manchester.ac.uk) no later than four weeks after the final Examination Board has been held (see paragraph **33** and **Table 2**). Once the report has been received, the central External Examiner team will send an acknowledgement email to the Examiner confirming receipt.

### **External Examiner Fees and Expenses**

- 79 Upon receipt of the External Examiner report, the Examiner's annual fee for that academic year will be processed. This fee payment can only be processed if TLD has received the necessary paperwork as stated in paragraph **76**.
- 80 External Examiners' expenses are processed by TLD on receipt of an expenses claim form (see **Section 6**), and all original receipts must be attached.
- 81 External Examiners who are retired will need to send their Certificate of Age Exception form to TLD.
- 82 External Examiners based outside of the UK who do not wish to be paid their annual fee in pounds Sterling will need to provide their Bank Name, IBAN number and their preferred currency when returning the required form.

## **Section 6 – List of Supporting Documents**

1. External Examiner Considerations and Checklists for Schools and Faculties
2. Nomination and Engagement Form
3. Fee Model for External Examiners for UG & PGT provision
4. Additional or Amended Duties Form
5. Report Pro Formas
6. External Examiners' Expenses Claim Form

<b>Guidance on External Examiner Procedures</b>		
<b>Version amendment history</b>		
Version	Date	Reason for change
3.0	October 2020	Updating of some hyperlinks, references to the use of viva voce exams have been removed, and references to TLSO (the former Teaching and Learning Support Office) have been amended to TLD (Teaching, Learning and Student Development).
3.1	April 2021	Replacement of 'European Economic Area' with 'UK' in paragraphs 62 and 75.
3.2	August 2025	Update Fee Model

<b>Document control box</b>	
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Date approved:	April 2021 (*new fee model approved by DSE Aug 2025)
Approving body:	TLD
Implementation date:	April 2021
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations / Policies	N/A
Related Procedures and Guidance:	Universities' Policy and Guidance website: <a href="https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/">https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/</a> Information on External Examiners – <a href="https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/external-examiners/">https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/external-examiners/</a>
Policy owner:	
Lead contact:	Mohammed Atiq, Teaching and Learning Officer