

Sharing External Examiner reports with students

This document contextualises the QAA's requirement for universities to share External Examiners' reports with students.

The Quality Assurance Agency requires that Higher Education Institutions "*make external examiners' annual reports available in full to students, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly, and separately, to the head of the institution*".¹ This requirement is in keeping with an established, nationwide system of institutional quality assurance that is transparent and recognises students as key stakeholders and active participants. This system uses many sources of information, of which External Examiner reports are only one.

Since their output relates to the institutional quality assurance process, External Examiners are appointed by the institution, not by the School or Faculty. They are asked to report to the University every year to give their views on specific areas of provision, and in particular whether they meet or exceed nationally-recognised benchmarks. The reports will highlight areas of good practice and areas for development, and Schools are asked to ensure that all comments that are raised are responded to. This may have already happened at Examination Boards, or it may be done through a formal response that is produced within four weeks of receipt of the report.

When External Examiners' reports are shared with students at whatever forum is deemed appropriate (for example, through Staff-Student Liaison Committees) it is important that any comments made in them are contextualised through appropriate reference to discussions at Examination Boards or the School's formal response to the External Examiner. This is because some negative comments that are presented in reports may be due to misinterpretation, or a lack of local knowledge, on the part of the Examiner, or the comments may have already been recognised and something is being done to address them. Reports should therefore not be made available to students unless this is made clear, and any relevant additional contextual information should preferably be made available at the same time.

¹ [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7](#)