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*This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.*

## 6P - External Examiner's Handbook

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### 1. ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

The principal role of external examiners is to provide an independent view to help ensure that the academic standards of the University's awards are appropriately set and maintained; the performance of students is comparable with that of their peers on similar programmes elsewhere in the sector; the assessment processes are sound and fairly operated; the quality of the learning opportunities is maintained; and the provision meets the requirements of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

#### ***Sector expectations of external examining***

The University recognises the importance of the role of external examiners for higher education institutions. External examiners should:

- comment on the form and content of proposed examination papers and an agreed sample of coursework and other assessments that count towards the award, and the relevant marking criteria, to help ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the programme syllabus and in such a way that external examiner(s) will be able to judge whether the assessments are appropriate for the subject(s), the level(s) and in relation to the anticipated intended learning outcomes;
- be provided with samples of available assessed work which have been independently marked in order to comment whether the assessment processes are robust and the students have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the programme and reached the required standard.
- have access to the work of students proposed for the highest available category of the award and for failure, and samples of the work of students proposed for each category of the award;
- consider students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment, without being influenced by previous association with the programme, the staff, or any of the students;
- comment on whether the academic standards for the programme(s) are set and maintained in line with the requirements within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (including the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).) and, where applicable, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and/or professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements;
- compare the standards of the award and performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere in the UK;
- confirm that the assessments have been conducted in accordance with the University's standard assessment regulations, and any formally approved exceptions to these for the programme(s)/unit(s) to which their appointment relates;

- based on moderation, advise Assessment Boards on the adjustment of whole sets of marks awarded by internal assessors subject to the agreement of the Unit Board;
- have the right to observe a *viva voce* examination of any candidate in order to comment on the assessment process;
- participate in the meetings of Assessment Boards where internal examiners are present and external examiner involvement is required;
- be satisfied that all Assessment Board recommendations have been reached by means according with the University's requirements, including those relating to exceptional circumstances or academic offences, and normal practice in higher education;
- participate as required in any reviews of decisions about individual students' awards taken during the examiner's period of office, including Assessment Board Chair's action and appeals;
- provide expert and impartial feedback to the programme management team to inform ongoing monitoring and to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of the provision;
- comment on best practice and innovative learning, teaching and assessment practices and the enhancement of learning opportunities provided to students.

In addition to the above, whilst in post external examiners may be invited to offer an independent view regarding the provision to which their appointment relates in a number of ways:

- to provide advice for use in programme review or have an advisory role to play in the development of additional provision;
- to comment on proposed changes to the programme structure or content, applying judgement in regard both to the assessment of the modified programme(s)/unit(s) and to its appropriateness to the level of the award;
- to comment on the suitability of the University's assessment policies, procedures, and regulations, having due regard to its autonomy as an awarding body.

### ***Mentoring***

The role of the mentor is to provide advice and guidance on the University's processes where required. External examiners normally get together prior to an Assessment Board and discuss all the programmes so the mentoring is likely to mainly take place at this point and then there may be an email or telephone call during the year if the new external needs advice on a particular academic question. The University does not offer an additional fee for mentoring as this is not likely to incur a significant amount of extra work and is therefore covered by the standard basic fee.

## **2. FACULTY ENGAGEMENT**

### ***Documentation you need***

Following the commencement of your appointment, the Programme Leader will normally be the main contact for academic matters pertaining to the provision. The relevant Programme Support Officer (or HE Co-ordinator/ equivalent in partners) will be the main contact for all practical arrangements, including preparation for Unit and Programme Boards. If the academic and administrative contact details change during your tenure, you will be informed as appropriate.

The Faculty will provide you, at a minimum, with the following Faculty/partner and programme level information at the beginning of your appointment:

- Programme Specification, Unit Specifications, and Student Handbook(s);
- Latest available annual monitoring reports;
- Assessment criteria;
- List of main academic and professional and support contacts at Faculty, partner and programme team level.

Other information provided to external examiners during their term, includes draft examination papers and samples of assignment briefs for coursework, programme level marking criteria, and students' assessed work which has been independently marked.

### ***Institutional guidance for external examiners***

You will be invited to a briefing seminar for newly appointed external examiners, which will provide you with an overview of the assessment regulations and how to use the Virtual Learning Environment.

You will be provided with opportunities to become familiar with the external examining and assessment procedures, so that your duties can be carried out effectively.

You will be sent links to the following institutional regulations, policies, procedures and guidance with your appointment letter:

- 6A - *Standard Assessment Regulations*;
- 6N - *External Examining: Policy and Procedure*;
- 6D - *Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure*;
- 6F - *Generic Assessment Criteria: Procedure*;
- 6K - *Assessment Boards: Policy*
- 6L - *Assessment Board Decision-Making, Including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*.

### ***Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)***

External examiners are provided with full access to the University's VLE from the start of their appointment.

You will be sent your login information and guidance notes by email shortly after your appointment. Support and training to help navigate the University's VLE can be organised by e-mailing the Faculty's Learning Technologist, or alternatively by contacting Library and Learning Support (LLS): ([learningtechnology@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:learningtechnology@bournemouth.ac.uk)).

Where appointments relate to provision at a Partner, you may be provided with access to the Partner's local VLE instead. In such cases you should be informed of any arrangements directly by the programme team.

### ***Review of Assessment Briefs and Marking Criteria***

Faculties/Partners and external examiners should agree which of the proposed assessments are to be reviewed but as a minimum, examiners should receive all assessment briefs which contribute toward classification in order to have an opportunity to review them, therefore normally excluding Level 4 assessments (but including Level 4 of Foundation degrees and awards which are designed to terminate at Level 4). To include:

- all examination papers (including resit papers);
- all assignment briefs\* (including reassessment where appropriate);
- marking schemes for the above;
- specific guidance associated with professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

\* A sample of assignment briefs which are assessed by 100% coursework (including those assessed by one formal element worth 100% or those assessed by a number of sub-elements worth 100% in total) **must be reviewed**.

A copy of the assessment guidelines, schedule and independent marking plan should also be provided for information. Arrangements for review of assessments will be made between the external examiner and the Faculty.

### ***Meeting with students and the programme team***

External examiners are encouraged to meet with students and members of the team during the academic year, either through a mid-year visit or before the Assessment Board meeting. Mid-year visits are encouraged as these facilitate more frequent contact and can allow issues and

enhancements to be identified, discussed and actioned within the current year. Where a programme has more than one examiner, all examiners are encouraged to attend a mid-year visit on the same day.

### ***Arrangements for the review of assessed students' work and moderation***

External examiners are required to review assessed students' work to judge that the assessments are appropriate, to test the intended learning outcomes, and to review internal consistency and external comparability of standards. The requirements for moderation are detailed in *6D - Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure*.

To facilitate moderation, the agreed sample must clearly identify the independent marking audit trail and the first and second markers must be identifiable to the external examiner.

Arrangements for review of assessed students' work will be agreed between external examiners and the Faculty.

External examiners may, on the basis of moderation, make recommendations to the Assessment Board for the adjustment of marks awarded by internal assessors. These should be recorded on a Moderation Recommendation Report in advance of the Assessment Board meeting (see Appendix 2 of *6D - Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure*).

## **3. ASSESSMENT BOARDS**

Faculties should agree the dates for the Assessment Boards (Unit and Programme Boards) in consultation with the relevant external examiners and ensure that you are aware of the dates, times and places of the Boards (or the online arrangements as applicable). The University's Common Academic Structure means that Undergraduate assessment boards are usually in June and July. Postgraduate assessment boards are usually in September and October or January and February. Arrangements will normally be made for external examiners and the programme team to meet prior to Boards.

Where an external examiner does not deem it appropriate to endorse Assessment Board outcomes and will not sign the Board report, the matter should be referred to the Chair of Academic Standards and Education Committee for resolution prior to students' results being released.

Further details on Assessment Board practice can be found in *6K - Assessment Boards: Policy*

## **4. ANNUAL REPORTS**

External examiners report annually to the University on issues pertaining to standards and quality of the provision to which their appointment relates and receive a fee on receipt of their annual report.

Students have access to external examiners' annual reports through relevant programme management team meetings which include student representation<sup>1</sup>.

The arrangements for the external examining of collaborative provision are outlined in the relevant policies and procedures which form part of the partnership agreement.

You are required to report to the University on the programme(s) and units to which your appointment relates, normally on an annual basis although reporting periods may differ for non-standard delivery patterns (e.g. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes).

A separate report is required for each location of delivery.

At the end of your term of office, you will be required to provide an overview of your appointment period, including any trends and key issues.

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<sup>1</sup>An exception to this is where a confidential report is received directly by the Vice-Chancellor.

The report should be produced electronically using the an online form. The link is provided annually by the programme support officer/partner equivalent.

The report is submitted to the University online within two weeks of the meeting of the Programme Board. Use of the standard online report template is mandatory, including those external examiners for Higher National programmes delivered under the University's Pearsons licence. Academic Quality will then forward a copy of the report to the relevant Faculty and, where required, also to the relevant partner HE Co-ordinator (or equivalent). Where external examiners are appointed on behalf of professional bodies, the relevant PSRB may also request receipt of reports.

As external examiners' reports will be in the public domain, they should not refer to staff or students by name and will be made anonymous by the University, if required, prior to publication.

### ***Causes for concern***

External examiners may report directly to the Vice-Chancellor [vice-chancellor@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:vice-chancellor@bournemouth.ac.uk) confidentially on any unresolved matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standards and/or quality of the provision to which their appointment relates, particularly, where external examiners have concerns regarding standards of assessment or student performance, or where external examiners consider that assessments are being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the award. Any concerns received through this route will receive a full and prompt response from the University, including any proposed actions as appropriate.

Where internal procedures have not resulted in a satisfactory outcome, and there are deemed to be systemic failings to address concerns regarding the standards of the University's awards, external examiners may [raise a notification with the Office for Students](#). Alternatively or additionally, the external examiner may wish to raise a concern directly with the relevant professional body.

## **5. CLAIMS AND EXPENSES**

### ***Fees and expenses***

Expenses and fees will be paid annually in accordance with the current fee policy. You will be asked to complete a payroll details form on appointment. Payments will be made by bank credit transfer and will be subject to tax.

All claims must be submitted on the standard claim form which must be signed and emailed to [externalexamining@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:externalexamining@bournemouth.ac.uk). Academic Quality will authorise the payment on receipt of the annual report.

Academic Quality will be the main contact for the receipt of external examiners' annual reports and for the payment of external examiners' fees.

### ***Hotels and travel***

Hotel bookings will normally be made by the Faculty after consultation with you. Provided the recommended hotels are used, the account in respect of dinner, bed and breakfast will be sent by the hotel to the University for payment. You must pay any personal expenses before leaving the hotel.

Faculties should liaise with you regarding your travel arrangements. If you wish to make your own arrangements, this should normally be by 2nd class rail transport. Travel by air is permitted where the cost is cheaper or the journey is more than 300 miles. External examiners are asked to discuss use of their own vehicle in advance. Assistance with specific arrangements should be requested from the relevant Faculty/partner administrator.

## **6. ENDING OF APPOINTMENTS**

Where, during the appointment period, the relationship between the University and the external examiner has changed so that it may be deemed to compromise independence (see Section 5.3), any interest or involvement should be declared so that a judgement can be made on the continued appropriateness of the appointment. Academic Quality should be contacted for advice in all cases.

The appointment of an external examiner may also be terminated early by the University if Academic Standards and Education Committee judges that the responsibilities of the appointment have not been or cannot be fulfilled in a manner consistent with the standards required by the University. Examples of these include failure to attend a scheduled Assessment Board without prior notice and/or alternative arrangements, or failure to submit an annual report, or submission of more than one inadequate annual report.