

ual:

External Examiners – Guidance Handbook



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Role of External Examiner

The general role of the External Examiner is to ensure that the academic standards appropriate to the award in question are maintained, that justice is done to the students, and that in the processes of assessment students are treated fairly and equitably according to the University's policies and regulations. The External Examiner provides an independent commentary on the conduct of the assessment process and, by reporting to the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), assures the University that the procedures and regulations governing academic standards, quality and assessment were followed. The University provides full briefing and induction for External Examiners to enable them to understand the nature and ethos of the institution and the structure and organisation of the course in question. Briefing is provided by the University through documentation and, at the interim visit and other times if necessary, by Course Leaders.

The Regulations make a clear distinction between the role of the University staff who are involved in the teaching, delivery and internal assessment of the course, and that of the External Examiner. The External Examiner is not involved in the learning, teaching or internal examining process as a participant, but rather takes an external perspective on those processes, independently advising the course team and, ultimately, the University.

Responsibilities and Rights of the External Examiner

In order to meet the responsibilities of the role, the University has the following expectations which provide External Examiners with the following rights:

- to be able to make judgements on the assessment of each cohort of students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment, without being influenced by previous association with the course, the staff, or any of the students;
- to be able to compare the performance of a cohort of students with that of their peers on comparable courses elsewhere and, where appropriate, to skills relevant to the profession / area of practice concerned;
- to approve the form and content of proposed examination papers that count towards the award, and major project briefs, in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the course syllabus and regulations and in such a way that External Examiners will be able to judge whether they have fulfilled the objectives of the programme and reached the required standard;
- to be consulted about, and agree to, any proposed changes to the approved assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently on the course;
- to attend any Examiners' meetings and have reasonable access, on request, to further evidence of achievement, including evidence about a students' performance on placement where this is an assessed part of a programme;
- to normally see the work of all 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;

- to have the right to moderate the marks of the student cohort awarded by internal examiners (note: this is moderation of the entire cohort, there is no right to change individual grades);
- to ensure that the assessments are conducted fairly, in accordance with the approved programme regulations, and that the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are appropriate;
- recommendations for award are made, and ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means according with the University's requirements and normal practice in higher education;
- to formally agree to the awards recommended to be conferred through attendance at the Examination Board. (For level 5 work, whilst there is no requirement for External Examiners to attend Progression Boards, the regulations will not exclude the possibility for this to happen if it is felt to be helpful);
- to make a full report, according to the rubric set out on the University's pro forma for this purpose, that will be made available internally (including to students), and on request externally in accordance with the University's Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme, on whether the standards set are appropriate for the University awards.
- The role of the External Examiner does not include the right to participate in decisions relating to cases of suspected/proven cheating/assessment offences by students. These cases are covered by specific University regulations. However, External Examiners may be invited to participate in such decisions, or to offer advice under the relevant regulation

The External Examining Process: Timeline

Appointment and Initial Briefing

Appointment Letter

Following approval of the nomination by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), a letter of appointment is issued by Assessment and Quality setting out the period of tenure, the course to be examined, the number of visit days allocated, and the fee to be paid. All logistical arrangements, such as the timing of the visits and the dates, will be confirmed in consultation with the Course Leader and the Dean or his/her representative.

University of the Arts London Annual Briefing Letter

Assessment and Quality may send all Examiners an annual briefing letter in the summer term. The letter provides an opportunity to communicate any changes to the Examiners role or duties.

Course Briefing provided by the Dean or his/her representative

The Dean or his/her representative will provide a full briefing/induction session. In addition to this, an administrator will send each new Examiner the current course handbook, the previous year's External Examiner Report(s), the Annual Monitoring Report, and the details of any other External Examiners appointed to the course.

Dates Agreed For Interim Visit and Final Visit(s)

The Dean or Course Leader (or representative) contacts the Examiners to arrange visit dates..



Final Visit(s)

Moderation of Student work

External Examiners attend, and external moderation takes place (see guidance on moderation and sampling pp. 4-7)

Board of Examiners Asks for Formal Agreement on Results

External Examiner attend the Examination Board and confirm the awards

Annual Report Returned and Fees/Expenses Submitted

Additional report and expenses claim forms can be provided by the Secretary if necessary, or downloaded from the Assessment and Quality website (<http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/strategy-governance/public-information/guidance-for-externals/external-examiners-guidance/>)

Report Sent To Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

External Examiners should e-mail their full report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) at: examiners@arts.ac.uk as soon as possible, and always within one month of the final assessment visit.



Scrutiny and Overview

Report Considered as Part of Annual Monitoring

External Examiner reports are responded to, as part of Annual Monitoring process. If serious issues are raised in a report the Deputy Vice Chancellor writes to the relevant Dean asking for an immediate response and details of action planned.

Response to College Committees and External Examiners

Responses and actions are considered and agreed via Annual Monitoring Events. The monitoring of the implementation of action is the responsibility of the Course Leader.

External Examiner Reports

External Examiners are required to write an annual report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). This should be submitted on the pro forma which is available on the Assessment and Quality External Examiner website at: <http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/strategy-governance/public-information/guidance-for-externals/external-examiners-guidance/>. The report should be addressed to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), and e-mailed to the following address: examiners@arts.ac.uk

External Examiners reports form a crucial element of the University's quality assurance system. Course teams are asked to respond to the Examiners' reports in the Annual Course Monitoring process. Therefore in order for the comments in the report to be included and addressed, reports must be returned within one month of the final visit.

For undergraduate courses, External Examiners are required to write their report on level 5 and 6 work. The report will therefore become key in helping UAL to assure the standard of work across the two levels.

Exceptionally, if the External Examiner wishes to raise matters of particular sensitivity, a confidential report should be sent to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education).

There is no prescribed length for reports, however External Examiners are asked to provide reports which are as full and as detailed as possible. They should be comprehensive, frank and informative. To note, if you refer to a member of staff within your report please use job titles rather than the individual's name.

Fees and Expenses

The number of days that an External Examiner is asked to attend will vary from course to course and is agreed on appointment by Assessment and Quality.

Fees and expenses for interim visits are paid on receipt of the External Examiner Claim Form (this must be in hard copy). For final visits, payment will be made on submission of the report (submitted electronically). External Examiners are required to have a UK bank account in order to receive payments of fees and expenses. Work completed by External Examiners must be completed in the UK (including online) in order to be paid. Also, please note the section below on other documentation to be submitted for newly appointed examiners.

The University will reimburse External Examiners for reasonable expenses in relation to interim and final assessment visits. **Original hard-copy receipts for expenditure must be submitted in order for expenses to be paid (please note, photocopies will not be accepted).**

Travel

It is expected that rail fares will normally be standard class and air fares should be economy class (air travel should only be used when alternative methods of travel are not available). Course teams or college quality representatives will liaise with External Examiners in advance of their visits to arrange booking for travel or accommodation (see point on hotel accommodation below). Car mileage is reimbursed at the rate of 40p per mile; taxi fares incurred will also be reimbursed when accompanied by receipts.

Subsistence

Any relevant subsistence will be reimbursed via the expenses claim for, as appropriate.

Hotel Accommodation

Where hotel accommodation is required the External Examiner has two options. External Examiners may

either liaise with the course teams or college equality representatives to book their travel. The University books its accommodation through Key Travel. The course administration team will book accommodation once dates for visits are agreed. Alternatively Examiners may book their own accommodation and then claim for reimbursement on the fee/expense claim form. The University will pay for accommodation up to a maximum of £125 per night (including VAT and breakfast).

HMRC, tax and national insurance, asylum and immigration act 1996, and the eligibility to work (proof of national insurance) requirements

The University employs External Examiners as individuals; it does not contract external examining services from their university or employer. The University is therefore bound by statute, as a Schedule 'E' employer, to operate the PAYE scheme, which means that Income Tax and National Insurance contributions will be deducted from Examiners' gross fees at source, through payroll. This is not a matter of personal choice, but is determined by the terms and conditions of a particular engagement. There are specific guidelines relating to External Examiners.

HMRC – National Insurance

The Inspector for National Insurance Contributions responsible for the University has ruled that the contracting arrangements for External Examiners deems individuals as employees covered by Inland Revenue (Previously Social Security) (Categorisation of Earners) Regulation 1978 and gross payment will therefore be subject to deduction of Class 1 contributions at source, through Payroll; this is irrelevant of any other status examiners may hold personally, or any other contributions you may make due to other income (i.e. those registered as self-employed paying Class 2 and possible Class 4 contributions).

However, if an Examiner is already working for another Schedule E employer and paying the maximum Class 1 contributions in that employment, you may be able to obtain from your HMRC Contributions Agency branch office a Deferment of Contributions Order (Form CA2700 or equivalent) which must be renewed annually at the responsibility of the examiner.

If you obtain this exception order, please send the form with your other documents to Assessment and Quality. Payroll will operate a noncontributory status, and refund any previous deducted contributions within the dates specified on the deferment order, or the whole tax year, as appropriate.

Asylum & Immigration Act 1996 – Section 8(5)

Under this Act, the University needs to verify evidence of your right to work in the United Kingdom before you commence your employment. Therefore we ask that you bring of either a passport, visa or British birth certificate (**original**) on your first visit to the College. A member of staff will make a verified copy of this and give it back to you.

The University also requires proof of your National Insurance number; a **copy** of either a National Insurance Card, a P45, a P60, a pay slip, or an officially marked tax letter displaying your NI number, will suffice. If you live outside the UK and/or do not hold a British National Insurance number please contact the Assessment and Quality office to discuss the documentation needed.

Unfortunately, without these documents we cannot process your payment. If you have any queries about the above information, please contact Carlos Reyes on 020 7514 6203 or c.reyes@arts.ac.uk

University Equal Opportunities and Diversity Framework

The University has an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Framework to which External Examiners' attention is drawn. The Policy can be found on the University's website at: <https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/public-information/equality-objectives-and-reports>

The document specifies that 'student assessment, achievement and progression' is a key area of the University's activities to which the Policy applies and therefore External Examiners have an important role in monitoring its implementation and application in this area. In particular, the University invites External Examiners to comment on any relevant issues that might be perceived. Examiners are reminded that if they wish to raise a matter of particular sensitivity on this, or any other aspect of examination or assessment, a confidential report may be submitted to the Deputy Vice Chancellor.

Guidance Note on External Moderation

Introduction

The University of the Arts London external examiner regulations cover external moderation under section 2.2. on the role, responsibilities and rights of external examiners (para 2.2.2.7) where it states that external examiners have the right “**to have the right to moderate the grades of the student cohort awarded by internal examiners (note: this is moderation of the entire cohort; there is no right to change individual grades)**”. This note gives further guidance on external moderation. It is intended to help both course leaders and external examiners.

What is External Moderation?

Through its approach to assessment the university seeks to ensure that students are assessed against the learning outcomes of the unit and course and given a grade that reflects their performance based on the University’s classification descriptors. Marking is expected to be in line with sector norms and fair to all students in a cohort and over time. All courses operate systems of internal moderation which allow for some adjustment of marks to ensure this parity and accurate marking. External moderation is a final check, by external subject experts, that the marking is at the right level for the type and level of course. External moderation may lead to a decision to change grades.

Information Needed to Decide on Moderation

The Sample - To make a judgment about the standard of marking externals read or view a sample of student work. A separate University of the Arts London guidance note covers the selection and size of the sample. However the basic principle is that external examiners need to see enough student work to be able to make a judgment about the standard of marking undertaken by the internal examiners.

The Standards - Externals are making a judgement about marking against the standards set for that course and unit as defined in the learning outcomes. Generally externals will be referring here to the course handbook but may also need to take account of specific assessment briefs which they should already have seen.

The Marking - Externals need to understand how internal examiners arrived at the grades. This will normally be through discussions with the course team.

Exercising the Right to Moderate

Although discussion about external moderation should take place with internal staff before the exam board the final decision on moderation should only take place at the exam board itself. External moderation can take a number of forms:

- Raising or lowering the letter grades of all students in a unit, or only some students (e.g. all 2.2s);
- Moving a grade boundary, in which case they may say that all students on a specific letter grade should be moved up or down to the next grade (e.g. all students on B be moved to B+)

Moderation of Cohort

External examiners moderate a cohort of students rather than individual students. In exercising any of the methods outlined above the result will normally be changed marks for some students and no change for others: this is moderation of the cohort. External examiners do not have the right to adjust individual student marks. Only internal examiners or the full exam board can make a decision to adjust an individual student's mark. Where externals disagree with the internal mark for any particular student they have sampled that may lead the externals to investigate further whether the cohort marks need to be changed under external moderation.

Guidance Note on Sampling

Introduction

The University of the Arts London external examiner regulations cover sampling under section 2.2 on the role, responsibilities and rights of external examiners (para 2.2.2.6) where it states that external examiners have the right **“to normally see the work of all 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”**. This note gives further guidance on the extent of the sample, upper and lower limits of the sample size, and other matters. It is intended to help both course leaders and external examiners.

What is the sample for?

The choice of sample must meet the formal regulations and should take account of the advice in this guidance note; however if there is any doubt then consideration of the basic principle of sampling should be enough to resolve the issue. External examiners need to see enough student work to be able to make a judgement about the standard of marking undertaken by the internal examiners and therefore be able to confirm that the marking is in line with that of similar courses elsewhere or, where necessary, to exercise their right to moderate marks.

Who chooses the sample?

The Course Leader should choose the sample which should be based on the placement of a particular student within the range of marks on the full mark sheet rather than on the nature of their work.

What work is sampled?

External Examiners are required to sample work from level 5 and level 6 for BA (Hons) courses. For FdA courses external examiners should sample final year work only. This is not to say that external examiners are forbidden from seeing the work of students from earlier years on a studio tour at interim or final visits. However it should be made clear that any viewing of work of earlier years is for general briefing and to help external examiners get a feel for the course and is not sampling.

For Grad Cert, Grad Dip and for postgraduate courses structures vary and the sample will be drawn from the units that contribute to the calculation of distinction on the particular award in question.

Sample on Unitised Courses

All UAL courses are unitised. All units that could contribute to the final award must be externally examined (for BA (Hons) this is level 5 and 6 work). Where there is a team of external examiners it is acceptable for individual units to be externally examined by just one examiner. However the final major project unit or equivalent should be examined by all examiners from the relevant specialism.

Size of Sample

All fails should be included in the sample for all courses. All firsts or distinctions should be included in the sample for most courses. However on a large course it is permissible to provide a sample of the first/distinction category. This would generally be true where a cohort has more than 60 students or where there are more than 6 firsts or distinctions. For the other categories the sample should be taken from the top, middle and bottom of

the band so will be at least 3 and would not normally need to be higher than 6 for each band. From this general guidance it can be seen that no matter what the size of the cohort the sample size will generally be between 12 and 45. For cohorts of 12 or fewer students this may mean external examiners are seeing the work of all students and this is permissible. ***The sample should include a selection of work that has been internally moderated (as defined in section 3.5 of the University Course Regulations) and provide enough information for the external examiner to make a judgment on how the process has operated.***

Please note that this table is for guidance only to help course teams make judgements on an appropriate size sample for external examiners to consider.

Number of Students in Cohort	Under 12 Students	12-30	30 - 60	60-100	100+
1 st /Dist	all	all	all	6-10	6-10
2.1/Merit Plus	all	3	4-5	6	10
2.2/Merit	all	3	4-5	6	10
3 rd /Pass	all	3	4-5	6	10
Fail	all	all	all	all	all
Total Size of Sample	Up to 12	12-15	20-25	Up to 30	Up to 45

Adding to the Sample

External examiners should be given the full mark sheet for the entire cohort along with the sample work or when they are viewing work. External examiners may, if they wish, ask to see more samples of work. This may be needed when the examiner feels unable to come to a conclusion on the standards of the course from the original sample and will generally be needed if there is the possibility of external moderation.

Sampling on Text Based Units/Courses

The sample should be sent to the External Examiner(s) in advance together with the full mark sheet for the cohort for that unit or the whole course. It is good practice to anonymise the mark sheet by using only the numeric part of the student ID code.

Sampling on Studio Based Units/Courses

Sampling on studio based courses varies depending on the specific nature of the discipline. Generally the external examining is carried out in the same way as internal examining and this is normally by each examiner viewing the work and coming to their own view on a mark followed by collective discussion and agreement of a mark. Whatever method is used the following outlines generally accepted practice. Internal examiners should view alone, mark and then discuss collectively to arrive at a final mark for each student before external examination takes place and this should include any process of internal moderation that is used. A sample of students should be identified. External examiners should be given the full mark sheet for the cohort with the sample students identified. External examiners should view the sample work, without the internal examiners initially, and then should have an opportunity for dialogue with the internal examiners about how they arrived at the mark.

External examiners sometimes meet with the students whose work they are viewing (again generally reflecting the practice of internal examination); while this is acceptable University rules no longer allow this to be called a *viva voce*, only internal examiners may carry out a *viva voce*, that is use the information given by the student to help them arrive at a mark. Where external examiners meet with a student in the sample it

is to help them understand the work in question. Where the work of all students is displayed it is normal for external examiners to want to view the whole show and this is of course acceptable to get a general feeling for the cohort; however a full discussion about individual students should be limited to the sample chosen by the course leader and any extended sample requested by the external examiners.

Remote Working Guidance for External Examiners

Examination Boards

Where possible, examiners should attend examination boards in person. In the event that an examiner is unable to travel but could dial into the meeting, the University may be able to arrange this given sufficient notice.

Student meetings

Examiners may meet students online if this works well for students and the examiner. These meetings should not be recorded.

Sampling and Moderation

Should an examiner be unable to attend the College to undertake sampling duties for practical work, the sample can be viewed online. Colleges are asked to consider the workload of the examiner and the potential additional time to look at work online. Size of samples may be reduced as appropriate.

Examiners will need a UAL login to access the sample. This is normally provided when the examiner submits a claim so if it's needed prior to this, please contact the Central Quality Team (examiners@arts.ac.uk).

Please note, any work that is conducted remotely must still be completed in the UK, due to regulations, working online overseas may impact the university's ability to pay Examiners for their duties.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is my role as an External Examiner at the University of The Arts London?

The role of the external examiner is to ensure that the academic standards appropriate to the award in question are maintained, that justice is done to the students, and that in the processes of assessment students are treated fairly and equitably according to the University's policies and regulations

In my role as an External Examiner can I moderate an individual student's grade?

An external examiner is not involved in the assessment of students directly but is involved in ensuring that assessment decisions have been made fairly and appropriately, and in accordance with the University's regulations. Therefore external examiners do not mark work, nor can change individual students' grades, although they may recommend to the Examination Board an overall adjustment to the range of marks based on their moderation of the internal marking. (Please refer to guidance on moderation)

In my role as an External Examiner can I converse with the students?

External examiners are not restricted from meeting students to form a general impression of the student experience. However the purpose of these meetings should be defined in that way, and not be part of the examination of an individual student.

I haven't been contacted yet regarding when I should make my first visit. Who should I call?

Practice differs within the schools. The Dean or Course Leader should normally let you know these dates. If you have not heard you should contact the Course Leader or college quality office.

I shall be travelling from far away. Can hotel accommodation be arranged?

Yes, you can either arrange the accommodation yourself and claim reimbursement (maximum of £125 inc VAT and breakfast per night) or you can contact the relevant school office who will book a room for you which will be settled by account.

Due to an emergency, I cannot attend the Examination Board. What should I do?

Contact the Dean of School, Course Leader or college quality office immediately by telephone or e-mail.

What if I disagree with the internal markers?

Where students' achievements have been evaluated against course-specific outcomes, and the Board of Examiners has had a full discussion, it is rare for internal and External Examiners to reach an impasse with regard to a decision. The minutes of the Board of Examiners will record the debate and reasons for the decision.

I haven't yet been paid for my visit. Who should I contact?

You should contact examiners@arts.ac.uk who holds a record of all reports and claims received. Fees and expenses for final visits are paid upon receipt of the annual report. Non-receipt of the report, or non-submission of certain documentation, are the most common reasons for payment not having been received.

What feedback should I expect from my report?

External Examiner reports are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring exercise which takes place in the summer and autumn of each year. Issues raised in the reports will be responded to as part of this report; you should also receive personal feedback from the Course Leader or Dean.

What should I do if I'm not satisfied that the University has adequately responded to my concerns?

If you have a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and have exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), you may invoke Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Concerns Scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body. For further details see the QAA guidance:

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint>