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Academic Services  
Code of Practice:

## External Examiners



A Guide for Staff and Students

2019-20





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## DISCLAIMER

Swansea University has made all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information contained within this publication is accurate upon publication, and reserves the right to make updates and enhancements during the lifespan of the publication. Every effort will be made to notify interested parties of changes as they occur.



**Please Note:** the contents of this document are designed to be accessed via an interactive website and are reproduced in this booklet format for accessibility. Some features and functions may not be available in this format (e.g. search facility). Please use this document in conjunction with the [website](#).

## Appointment of External Examiners

### The Appointment Process

- Colleges/Schools should approach a possible External Examiner to seek their agreement in principle.
- College/School staff should fill out the relevant nomination form (depending on whether overseeing an [undergraduate](#) or [postgraduate taught](#) programme).
- Staff should submit the completed form with a current CV and copy of passport (and visa, if appropriate) to [Academic Quality Services](#) for initial scrutiny. Please note that Colleges/Schools may request that all nominations be routed through a central College/School Office first).
- The Chair of the Progression and Awards Board or PVC Education (as appropriate) will review the proposed nomination.
- If approved, the External Examiner is sent a contract letter by Academic Quality Services confirming what they are contracted to oversee. Academic Quality Services will notify the College/School when the External Examiner accepts the appointment. Work should not be sent to the External Examiner until this notification is received.
- Colleges/Schools should send the External Examiner relevant information about the programme, including scrutiny of draft assessments/assessed work.
- Academic Quality Services will invite External Examiners to participate in an annual induction event.
- Colleges/Schools can only appoint an External Examiner or extend the contract/add additional programmes for existing External Examiners using the approved appointment procedures.

## Appointment of External Examiners

### Criteria for Appointment

External Examiners must meet the criteria specified in the [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#). These criteria are appended as a checklist to the nomination form and should also be completed.

There are restrictions around being appointed as an External Examiner of taught programmes. A justification may be made for accommodating special cases. See the section Conflict of Interest.

External Examiners must be eligible to work in the UK and provide the relevant evidence to the University prior to appointment.

### Non-approval of Nominations

If the nomination is not approved, reasons will be given and the College/School may submit further information and justification in support of the nomination. The PVC Education has the final decision. See the section Extensions to the Period of Appointment or Accommodating Special Cases.

### End of an External Examiner's Period of Office

Academic Quality Services staff will contact the Head of College/School, usually in the January prior to the end of an External Examiner's contract. Please contact [Academic Quality Services](#) at any time for details about current External Examiners and periods of office.

### When to Appoint an External Examiner?

Every programme of study that leads to a Swansea University award must have an External Examiner. The External Examiner oversees those modules and compo-

## Appointment of External Examiners

nents that contribute to the award. At undergraduate level, an External Examiner is often not required until the second year of the programme. However, External Examiners are appointed to oversee the first year of Foundation Degrees. External Examiners oversee all elements of postgraduate taught programmes.

When new programmes are approved, programme proposers are reminded that they must allocate the programme to an existing/new Board of Studies and initiate the External Examiner nomination process.

### Extensions to the Period of Appointment or Accommodating Special Cases

If a College/School wishes to appoint or continue to appoint an External Examiner, who, in exceptional circumstances, contravenes the general criteria for appointment, the College/School must submit justification with the nomination / extension form which details why the new/continued appointment is necessary. The College/School should submit its justification to [Academic Quality Services](#), where staff will scrutinise the request. Incomplete or ineligible requests for extension will be returned to the College/School for further information/re-nomination of an alternate.

In appointing special cases, the term of office is typically one year. Completed and valid requests for extension/special circumstances will be examined by the Chair of the Progression and Awards Board (for extensions of office up to a fifth year) or the PVC Education for all other special cases. Where nominations are not approved, the College/School may re-submit the nomination providing further details to justify the nomination.

Decisions on nominations which are not approved are retained by Academic Quality Services.

## Appointment of External Examiners

### Programme Structure Changes and/or Increase in Student Numbers

External Examiners' contracts and fees for undergraduate programmes are based on information provided by Colleges/Schools at the time of appointment. Should these arrangements change significantly, please contact [Academic Quality Services](#) with the relevant information so that the contract might be amended accordingly.

The maximum fee payable per External Examiner at undergraduate and post-graduate taught level is £750. Should fees reach this maximum figure, Academic Quality Services will contact the College/School to recommend that an additional External Examiner be appointed to share the load.

### Adding an Additional Module/Programme or Extending the Contract Period

Additional modules/programmes can be added to an External Examiner's load, provided the numbers of students are not excessive and the number of concurrent External Examiner posts held by individuals is not above the "normally only two" rule. Only two External Examiner appointments should be held at any one time. The College/School should contact the External Examiner to query whether they are content to take on further duties. Colleges/Schools should then contact Academic Quality Services to request an extension form /additional modules form / additional programme form, as appropriate.

## Appointment Criteria

### Person Specification

The criteria for appointment are benchmarked against the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: External Expertise](#). These criteria are included on the nomination form.

1. Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
2. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof.
3. Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate.
4. Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures.
5. Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers.
6. Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed.
7. Fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that External Examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements).
8. Meeting applicable criteria set by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

## Appointment Criteria

9. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
10. Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
11. Nominations for External Examiner appointments should normally be from within the higher education system and possess appropriate levels of academic and, where appropriate, other professional expertise, and experience in relation to the relevant subject area and assessment approaches.
12. Retired staff can be considered if they provide sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question, and with current developments in higher education teaching, learning and assessment.
13. Examiners from outside the higher education system may exceptionally be appointed as External Examiners, provided that such persons possess the relevant expertise and experience to fulfil the requirements for appointment as External Examiners. Such External Examiners shall not have sole responsibility for a programme of study.
14. New External Examiners who have not held the position before at another institution, or are from outside the higher education system, should normally shadow the outgoing External Examiner during the final year of their tenure.

## Terms of Office

External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of four academic years, with a possibility of re-appointment for a fifth year subject to the approval of the Chair of the Progression and Awards Board.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, an External Examiner cannot be re-appointed before a lapse of at least five years since their last period of appointment.

## Appointment Criteria

The number of External Examiner posts held by candidates being considered for nomination as External Examiners should not normally exceed two during the External Examiner's period of appointment.

## Conflicts of Interest

To avoid potential conflicts of interest, External Examiners should not be appointed if they are any of the following:

- A current employee or member of the Court of Swansea University or current employee or member of the governing body of any of Swansea University's collaborative partners.
- Have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study.
- Anyone closely associated with the sponsorship of students on the programme.
- Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study.
- Anyone in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study.
- Anyone involved in current or recent substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) of modules in question.
- Former members of staff or students cannot be invited to be nominated for appointment as an External Examiner before a lapse of at least five years from the date of departure, or sufficient time for students taught by that member of staff or associated with that student to have completed that programme of study, whichever is the longer.
- The making of reciprocal arrangements for external examining with staff teaching similar programmes of study at other institutions is not permissible.

## Appointment Criteria

- An External Examiner cannot normally be succeeded by another from the same home department and institution.
- Only one External Examiner may be appointed from the same department of the same institution.

## Right to Work in the UK

In order to comply with UK Immigration Law, all External Examiners must be eligible to work in the UK and must provide the relevant evidence to do so.

The University will conduct a Right to Work check to verify that every individual working for the University is eligible to work in the UK, prior to them commencing any work with the University. This requirement includes External Examiners and is in accordance with [UK Visa and Immigration \(UKVI\)](#), a department of the UK Government Home Office. The External Examiner will be asked to present or email a copy of their identification to [Academic Quality Services](#), usually a passport (and visa, if relevant), before they commence work with the University. The original documentation will be verified by the University's Human Resources team.

Please refer to the following link for further information:

<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/jobs-at-swansea/uk-visa-immigration/>

## External Examiners' Period of Tenure

Four academic years is the normal appointment period, with a fifth extension year possible. In some special cases, the term would be for one year only.

The period of office for undergraduate programmes is usually the academic year, **1 October to 30 September**. The cessation date for postgraduate taught programmes would usually be **31 December** of the relevant calendar year.

## Appointment Criteria

See also [Appointing an additional module/programme or extending contract period for further details](#).

There should normally be at least a five year lapse since an External Examiner's last period of appointment before they can be reappointed.

## Number of External Examiner Roles Held Concurrently

An External Examiner is only permitted to hold two External Examiner posts concurrently. See the sections [Terms of Office](#), and [Extension to the Period of Appointment or Accommodating Special Cases](#).

## Types of External Examiner

The University has two types of External Examiners:

**Subject External Examiner** – oversees the standards of the discipline and in almost all cases oversees a specific named programme. In some cases, examiners are appointed to oversee stand-alone modules which typically do not contribute to a specific named award. The subject External Examiners represent the majority of External Examiners.

**Chief External Examiner** – appointed in situations where a team of External Examiners has been appointed to consider a collection of related programmes/subject areas for multidisciplinary programmes and/or stand-alone modules. A Chief External Examiner may also be appointed if the team of External Examiners is made up of a significant number of non-academic examiners and/or those with limited experience as External Examiners. The Chief External Examiner is appointed in specific areas of the University's provision, namely in the Swansea University Medical School and in some areas of the College of Human and Health Sciences.

## Appointment Criteria

Chief External Examiners for the MBBCh programme in the Swansea University Medical School will be appointed to cover Phase 1 (Year 1 and Year 2) and Phase 2 (Year 3 and Year 4). See also the Role and Responsibilities of the External Examiners

### Number of External Examiners to be Appointed

There is no set number, but Colleges/Schools need to be aware of the total student FTEs enrolled on the programme, the subject diversity of the programme and any professional body requirements as these will influence how many External Examiners Colleges/Schools may need to appoint.

### Number of External Examiners Required for a Joint/ multi-disciplinary Programme

Colleges/Schools will need both subject-based External Examiners, along with a Chief External Examiner who will oversee the standards across each of the disciplines. The Chief External Examiner may be one of the subject examiners or some one else appointed to oversee the programme.

### Termination of External Examiner Contracts

#### By the University

Contracts with External Examiners can be terminated before their term of office has expired. Reasons for termination might include:

- the External Examiner failing to fulfil their duties and responsibilities (including, specifically, non-submission of an annual report per academic year, non-attendance at an Examination Board without valid reasons, lack of involvement with the assessment process);

## Appointment Criteria

or

- following the discontinuation or non-recruitment to the relevant programme of study.

The PVC Education is authorised to issue letters of premature termination upon the recommendation of the Chair of the Progression and Awards Board.

#### By the External Examiner

If the circumstances of an External Examiner change and/or a conflict of interest arises during their term of office and they wish to resign, a formal letter of resignation should be directed to the PVC Education. A three month period of notice will be required.

### Termination of Contract Mid-academic Year

Should the termination of contract arise during the academic year, or an External Examiner wishes to temporarily suspend their involvement due to personal reasons, a temporary appointment will be made to cover the rest of the duties during that academic year until a permanent nomination is obtained, where necessary.

## The Role of the External Examiner

The role of the External Examiner includes, amongst other duties, consideration of examination papers and assessment questions. In addition, External Examiners are expected to review and ensure the consistency of items of assessment, including examination scripts, course assignments, projects or dissertations and supplementary examinations. External Examiners are also required to review changes to curricular. External Examiners are expected to submit a full and frank report to the University, summarising the standard of questions, the standard of the examination process, the conduct of the examination process and the quality of the students.

### Role, Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners

All External Examiners are expected to:

- Comment upon the standards of modules/awards and that modules/awards are comparable to all appropriate nationally recognised standards. External Examiners are primarily directed to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements (see [qaa.ac.uk](http://qaa.ac.uk)). Oversight may include modules which do not directly contribute to a student's classification results, but are nevertheless important in defining the academic standard;
- Ensure that assessment methods are fair, that assessment is operated fairly and in accordance with University Regulations External Examiners are directed to the Code of Practice for Learning, Teaching and Assessment;
- Review the assessment performance of students as a cohort;
- Consider and approve all draft examination papers, including supplementary examination papers, all in-programme, practical and other assessments that contribute 50% or more of the assessment for a module;
- Receive examination scripts/access to GradeMark, in-programme assessments, practical assignments, evidence related to oral examinations/presentations and project reports/dissertations upon which marks have been awarded. Where

## The Role of the External Examiner

the cohort size exceeds ten students, a sample of examination/assessment will be submitted from all levels of performance. This is to ensure that there is robust moderation of assessments. External Examiners must not be involved in marking student work;

- Verify that the University's policy on moderation of marks has been applied and provide comment on the evidence provided;
- Comment on the way in which feedback on assessments is being provided to students to promote learning;
- Comment on any other opportunities provided to enhance the quality of the students' learning opportunities;
- Comment on examples of good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment;
- Attend and make recommendations to Examination Boards relating to the awards of degrees, diplomas and certificates or the confirmation of results for stand-alone modules Where there is a reconvened Examination Board to reconsider, for example, the result of an appeal, attendance is not required. The External Examiner should, however, be consulted about, and make their views known on, any proposed amendment to the classification;
- Be consulted on curriculum development, including the introduction of new programmes of study and revisions to the existing programmes of study;
- Make a full report on the assessment process to the University on an annual basis.

External Examiners should immediately report any circumstances relating to allegations of academic misconduct in writing to the Chair of the Examination Board concerned. External Examiners are not required to give approval to degree classifications or overall module marks where the decision has been deferred due to issues relating to unfair practice or if an administrative error has occurred with respect to the recording of marks or calculation of result. External Examiners will have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and

## The Role of the External Examiner

classifications are of an appropriate standing and are consistent. They will review a sufficient amount of work of the candidates to enable them to arrive at a judgement that might be applied to the assessment as a whole.

### Role of the Chief External Examiner

A Chief External Examiner may be appointed in situations where a large team of External Examiners has been appointed to consider a collection of related programmes and/or standalone modules. A Chief External Examiner may also be appointed if the team of External Examiners is made up of a significant number of non-academic examiners and/or those with limited experience as External Examiners.

The Chief External Examiner will be expected to:

- Review a cross section of assessed work in order to ensure equity across modules and quality assure the programme as a whole;
- Identify areas of good practice or concern across the programme;
- Assess practice and provide comment on the quality assurance of all assessment practices;
- Liaise with other Chief External Examiners to gain an overview of the standards across the whole programme;
- Chief External Examiners for the MBBCh programme will be appointed to cover Phase 1 (Year 1 and Year 2) and Phase 2 (Year 3 and Year 4);
- Attend practical examinations (for MBBCh).

### Oversight of the Moderation Process

The role of the External Examiner is to ensure that the University's policy on moderation of marks has been robustly applied and not to second mark assessments.

## The Role of the External Examiner

Consequently the External Examiner may not expect or encourage an Examination Board to raise or lower marks for individual students if only a sample of work has been submitted to the External Examiner. The External Examiner may wish to see a larger sample from the assessment or a wider range of assessed work if there are any concerns about the marking and moderation process.

On the advice and suggestion of the External Examiner concerning the alteration of marks for the entire cohort, the Examination Board will consider the relevant approach to be undertaken (through arithmetic re-checking of marks, re-marking or rescaling or amendment of assessment/teaching approaches for future cohorts). Any adjustments should be reported to, endorsed and minuted fully by, the College/School Examination Board.

For information on the handling of disputes, see Disputes Involving the External Examiner.

### Volume of Assessed Work to be Scrutinised

All or a sample of assessments are made available to the External Examiner in order to check that assessment and moderation procedures have been adhered to. The volume of assessments sent to the External Examiner will depend on the following factors:

- The number of students in the cohort - ensuring representative distribution of marks for the cohort, i.e. samples in each classification band, including fails and exceptional performance;
- Whether this is the first cohort of a newly approved programme. Sampling arrangements will normally allow External Examiners to see a representative sample of scripts or assessed work from each class (including FAIL, where appropriate). A representative sample of approximately 10% of the total number

## The Role of the External Examiner

of scripts or assessments for the module should be selected, subject to a **minimum** of five scripts and a **maximum** of twenty scripts. If the cohort is less than 10 students, all work should be made available to the External Examiner. However, a norm of ten pieces of assessment per module is suggested. In addition to actual assessments, the feedback provided on the work should also be available for scrutiny, alongevidence of the moderation process. The role of the External Examiner is to verify that the University's policy on moderation of marks has been robustly applied. It is **not to second mark** assessments.

See the Postgraduate Taught Masters Degrees Regulations 'Examination of the Dissertation' for more information on sampling of dissertations.

The role of the External Examiner is to verify that the University's policy on moderation of marks has been robustly applied. It is **not to second mark** assessments.

### Oversight of the Assessment Process

The External Examiner will review and approve all draft examination papers and topics for continuous assessment where these contribute at least 50% towards the module's overall mark. The External Examiner can recommend the modification of questions if it is felt that these do not adequately assess the intended learning outcomes and/or reflect the relevant standard for the level of study

### Meeting with Students, Including Viva Voce Examinations

External Examiners may, but are not required to, meet with students on subjects or programmes that they are examining, e.g. to obtain general feedback on the quality of teaching, clarity of information, academic/personal support, etc. Viva voce examinations are not permitted for the purpose of determining degree

## The Role of the External Examiner

classifications for candidates pursuing initial degrees.

### Involvement in Practical or Oral Assessments

Where the approved method of assessment for a particular module includes an oral or practical examination, External Examiners may be invited to observe such examinations.

### Academic Misconduct

If, following the review of assessed work/examinations, the External Examiner considers that a student has engaged in an academic misconduct assessment practice, they must immediately report the circumstances in writing to the Chair of the Examination Board concerned. The Chair of the Examination Board will initiate the University's Academic Misconduct Procedures.

#### Participation and Attendance at Examination Boards

External Examiner(s) must be present at the subject-level College/School Examination Board at which the examination results in the subject(s) in which they have been involved are determined.

If an External Examiner, exceptionally, cannot attend an Examination Board, they must be available for consultation with the Chair of the Examination Board by telephone, video network or other suitable means. Examination Board. The External Examiner must have all relevant documents necessary for the due performance of the business of the meeting.

If unable to attend, the External Examiner will submit, in advance, a written report on their findings to the Chair of the Examination Board which should be distributed to all members of the Board and be considered in finalising module marks.

## The Role of the External Examiner

The External Examiner(s) are required to attend Interim Examination Board meetings but may do so if they wish. Consultation will take place by correspondence or other appropriate means.

External Examiner(s) will be available for consultation for the Progression and Awards Board, at which credit is awarded, progression issues are determined and degrees are awarded.

### Confidentiality and Security

External Examiners are reminded that all draft assessment questions and student work submitted is confidential and that appropriate arrangements should be made to ensure its security.



## Information and Support

External Examiners play a crucial role in assuring standards and the University is committed to supporting them to do this in accordance with the [QAA's UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise](#). For full details see section *Preparation of External Examiners*.

If further information is required please contact [Academic Quality Services](#).

### University Resources

The Academic Regulations which contain the University's policies on:

[Accuracy of Published Marks Procedure](#)

[Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

[Regulations for Academic Appeals](#)

[Policy on Moderation](#)

[Feedback and Assessment Policy](#)

Programme/Assessment Regulations for Taught Programmes:

[Undergraduate Assessment Regulations](#)

[Regulations for Initial Degrees & Undergraduate Awards](#)

[Taught Postgraduate Assessment Regulations](#)

[Postgraduate Taught Awards Regulations and Procedures](#)

[Foundation Degree Regulations](#)

[Assessment Regulations for the MB BCh Degree](#)

[Academic Regulations for the Degree of Master of Research \(MRes\)](#)

[Academic Regulations for the Degree of Professional Doctorate](#)

[Programme/Assessment Regulations for Research Programmes](#)

## Information and Support

The [Code of Practice for Programme Design, Development, Approval and Review](#) contains policies and procedures relating to approving, monitoring and reviewing programmes.

The [Code of Practice for Learning, Teaching and Assessment](#) includes information on:

- Moderation and markers disputes;
- Penalties for exceeding word limits;
- Marking of final year projects.

Additionally, External Examiners should have received (if appropriate) a copy of the report and College/School Response of the previous External Examiner for the programme with their appointment letter. Please contact [Academic Quality Services](#) if this is not the case.

### College/School Resources

Colleges/Schools are expected to provide each External Examiner with various documents. An External Examiner should receive:

#### Programme Overview

- Relevant subject benchmark statements (these can also be accessed at the QAA's website );
- Programme specifications for the relevant programme(s);
- Minutes of the relevant examination board meeting(s);
- Comparative statistics on student performance;
- A summary of degree classification results (these are available to Colleges/Schools on the University's Sharepoint site);
- The mean mark for modules over the past few sessions and the mean mark across all modules. Centrally, such modular statistics are provided through the

## Information and Support

Swansea Insights website and made available to Colleges/Schools.

### Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Assessment marking criteria;
- College/School and/or Subject Handbook and Assessment Policy (including marking criteria, late penalties, extenuating circumstances, moderation practices and details of the modules etc.);
- Copy of the syllabus for the modules and the assessment schedule (if not included in the Student Handbook).

### Procedures for allegations of breaches of academic integrity and academic misconduct

- Procedures for the consideration of extenuating circumstances.

### Logistical matters

- Timetable of key activities/duties during the year;
- Information on the likely number of scripts/pieces of assessed work to oversee and comment on the moderation process (see the section Volume of Assessed Work to be Scrutinised in the Regulations).

Colleges/Schools should tell their External Examiners who to contact within the College/School and discuss with them communication channels and how they prefer to receive material. In addition to the above documents, External Examiners should also be informed of the following:

- The date of the Examination Board meeting(s), preferably at the start of each academic year;
- Procedures for the submission of draft examination papers and other assessments for approval;

## Information and Support

- Arrangements for the approval of supplementary assessments. It is considered good practice to submit main and supplementary examination papers for approval at the same time;
- Anticipated dates of the receipt of the assessed work (if hard copies are used), and the required date of return to the College/School and the format of submission (paper or electronic);
- The date when access to BlackBoard will be granted for work that is submitted electronically.

External Examiners should be familiar with any electronic systems used as part of the marking process.

For postgraduate taught programmes in particular, Colleges/Schools should notify the External Examiner of the anticipated dates when the pieces of work submitted following their directed independent learning would be submitted for their oversight of the moderation process.

Subject level Boards are usually held a few days prior to the University Progression and Awards Boards.

### New External Examiners

New External Examiners must shadow the outgoing External Examiner during the final year of their period of office. At a minimum, you should attend the College/School Examining Board(s) but will not have any other duties as an External Examiner that session. You will not receive a fee, but will be reimbursed any expenses incurred for your attendance at the Examination Board.

## Information and Support

External Examiners with no prior experience of Higher Education may not have sole oversight of a programme.

### Induction for New External Examiners

The usual expectation is that new External Examiners will participate in the annual induction event.

External Examiners in their second year who were unable to attend the previous year's induction event are welcome to participate as are staff within the University. **Information about External Examiners**

In line with the [QAA's UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise](#), the name, position and institution of External Examiners will be included in College/School handbooks. Students should not contact External Examiners. In the event that this happens, External Examiners should contact [Academic Quality Services](#).

### Disputes Involving the External Examiner

External Examiners shall be bound by the academic and assessment regulations of the University. These are published in the University's [Academic Regulations](#).

External Examiners offer advice and comments regarding the standards of the cohort and the assessment process. The External Examiner has equal power with internal members of the Examination Board and may not override the collective view of the Board. Where the External Examiner is dissatisfied with decisions taken by the Board or is in disagreement regarding issues of standards on taught modules, the views of the External Examiner will be noted in the minutes of the College/

## Information and Support

School Examination Board and in the External Examiner's report. These comments can be conveyed to the institution by means of the annual report and/or by separate correspondence to the PVC (Education).

The External Examiner may appeal, in exceptional circumstances, to the PVC (Education) or another PVC (where the PVC Education is unavailable or there is a conflict of interest). The decision of the PVC is final.

When the decision of an External Examiner considering a dissertation submitted for a Master's degree by Examination and Dissertation gives rise to a case of dispute between the External Examiner(s) and internal examiners, it is within the power of the PVC (Education) to decide on the matter, at their discretion, or to appoint another External Examiner to provide an independent opinion. The PVC (Education) may take into account any written reports submitted by members of the Examination Board.

In choosing a second External Examiner the PVC (Education) may also take into account, but need not be bound by, the nomination (if any) of an Examination Board for a second External Examiner. A decision on whether or not to reconvene the Examination Board will be at the discretion of this second External Examiner whose decision on this matter will be final.

## External Examiners' Reports

External Examining is a cornerstone of the UK Higher Education system for the assurance of standards and quality. External Examiners' reports are vital to the University to confirm that this function has been fulfilled, to identify any areas for improvement along with features of innovative practice that may be worthy of sharing and adoption elsewhere.

### Completing the External Examiner's Report

The report should be completed using the University's electronic submission system. The report template can be found at: <https://intranet.swan.ac.uk/ExternalExaminers/>

Reports should be sufficiently detailed, addressing each of the items raised in the report form template. Where a report is deemed to be lacking in detail, it may be referred back to the External Examiner for revision.

### Aspects to be Covered by the Report

The report draws extensively on the relevant Advice and Guidance of the QAA's UK Quality Code: External Expertise. External Examiners' comments on the examining process are required, including observations on the structure and content of the programme of study and its delivery, and also areas of good practice and opportunities to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities. Topics include:

#### Assessment Practice

- Appropriateness and comprehensiveness of assessment methods to the curriculum and whether or not these are clearly demonstrated in the evidence reviewed;

## External Examiners' Reports

- Quality and appropriateness of the examination papers and coursework materials and usefulness of feedback to students;
- Sufficiency of number and range of papers from the whole cohort to enable External Examiners to determine that the internal marking was appropriate and consistent;
- The adequacy of moderation arrangements;
- Examples of good, interesting or innovative practice.

### Quality and Standards of the Programme

- The appropriateness of the aims and intended learning outcomes for the programme and its structure and content;
- Student achievement/performance (e.g. pass rates, quality of work etc); and
- Comparison with national standards (subject benchmarks, Qualifications Framework and the requirements of Professional Bodies).

### Administrative Arrangements

- Was adequate information provided on the programme/course aims;
- The syllabus and marking schemes used to assess it;
- Were questions for approval received (and in good time);
- Were model answers provided;
- If appropriate, were arrangements for Examination Boards satisfactory;
- Arrangements for inspecting examination material or other forms of assessment, opportunity to meet students (if appropriate);
- Adherence to Assessment Regulations.

### Collaborative Arrangements

- If an External Examiner's duties have been extended to include consideration of students under an associated collaborative agreement, please comment on any specific issue relating to collaborative arrangements not covered in the above sections.

## External Examiners' Reports

### What not to Include in a Report

External Examiners are politely requested not to identify individual students or staff in the report, except in exceptional circumstances where the recognition of noteworthy practice or exemplary performance is felt to be important.

### Reports on Postgraduate Taught Programmes

External Examiners are encouraged to wait until they have moderated the dissertations to submit one complete report that covers both Part One and Part Two.

### Due Date of Reports

For College/School Examination Boards held in June (undergraduate programmes), the report is due within six weeks of the date of the Board (usually **July 31**). If the Examination Boards are held at times other than June, the reports are expected within a period of one month following the meeting.

Reports for postgraduate taught programmes are due by **6 December**.

For postgraduate taught programmes, we ask that External Examiners communicate any urgent matters relating to the taught modules following the June examination board so that changes may be made prior to the next teaching of those modules. However, a specific report form is not required for this activity. Such issues, and the response to them, should be summarised in the External Examiner's Annual Report which covers Part One and Part Two which is to be submitted to the University by 6 December.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Non-submission of Report

If an External Examiner does not submit a report, the PVC (Education) will take such steps as appropriate to the circumstances to obtain it, and/or may choose to issue a letter of premature termination as a result.

Failure to submit reports or situations of unsatisfactory performance can lead to an informal warning or the premature termination of an External Examiner's contract. Fees are not paid until a satisfactory report is submitted.

### Reports on Collaborative Programmes

External Examiners' reports for collaborative programmes are reviewed in exactly the same manner as for programmes taught directly by the University. A copy is sent to the appropriate member of staff at the Collaborative Partner and it is expected that there will be a joint development of a response to the Examiner's report.

### Overview Reports at End of Term of Office

At the end of the period of appointment, an External Examiner is expected to provide an overview in their annual report of issues that have arisen which will be conveyed to their successor.

### Sensitive Issues

If the External Examiner wishes to raise a sensitive or confidential issue they may write directly to the Vice Chancellor of Swansea University.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Action to be Taken Urgently

The PVC (Education) and the Director of Academic Services receive copies of External Examiners' reports. If their attention is drawn to any issue of concern which requires urgent action, this can be dealt with outside the quality assurance committee structure, but must involve the College/School and other relevant staff. Reports on the action taken, if any, will be provided to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, as appropriate.

### External Examiners' Responsibilities

External Examiners are responsible for:

- Preparing an annual report on the College's/School's provision for which they are responsible for overseeing;
- Submitting the report in a timely manner (within six weeks of the Examination Board – for those held in June, i.e. by 31 July), or one month after the Examination Board;
- For postgraduate taught programmes, submitting specific concerns about the taught modules directly to the Programme Director/Examinations Officer shortly after the Examination Board in June and completing an annual report which includes moderation of dissertations (i.e. Part One and Part Two) by 6 December;

Ensuring that the subject team respond adequately/with justification with respect to recommendations made to assure the standards and/or enhance quality.

### Recipients of the Report

When the report is submitted via the web-based application, it is immediately available to:

## External Examiners' Reports

- The PVC (Education) who is also the Chair of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee;
- The Director of Academic Services;
- The relevant Head of College/School or nominee;
- The Director of the College/School Learning and Teaching Committee;
- The appropriate Programme Director;
- Academic Quality Services team members;
- Principal of the relevant collaborative partner institution (where appropriate).

Academic Quality Services staff will prepare a College/School Summary Report for the Chair of the Progression and Awards Board for consideration, as part of the University's Quality Assurance procedures.

### Student Access to External Examiners' Reports

External Examiners' reports are made widely available to those University and College/School Committees responsible for quality assurance. The membership of these Committees will include student representatives. Consequently, student representatives will have access to the External Examiner's report and College's/School's response to the report through the relevant committee structures and are expected to inform/contribute to the response.

The reports are also available to the wider Swansea University student community and can be accessed [here](#).

External Examiners may submit separate confidential reports on a programme directly to the Vice Chancellor. These confidential reports are not made available to students or to the relevant University Committees.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Drafting a Response – the Programme Director and Board of Study

The Programme Director drafts a response to the External Examiner's report using an on-line template and consults with members of the Board of Study. Where individual students are mentioned in the report, the programme director will act in accordance with the Policy on Redaction of Personal Identifiers from External Examiners' Reports.

If the programme is delivered collaboratively, then input from the collaborative partner is required.

Board of Studies aren't obliged to adopt/implement all recommendations made by an External Examiner. However, a strong justification for not adopting the recommendation must be made and outlined in the response template.

The response template has a section asking the programme director to reflect on the progress attained regarding the previous year's action plan. It is important for Boards of Studies and College/School Learning and Teaching Committees to monitor their action plans during the academic year.

### Reviewing College/School-wide Issues from External Examiner's Reports

The College/School Learning and Teaching Committee must approve the proposed subject level response from the Board of Study and consider any College/School-wide issues. Where possible, there should be sufficient discussion to assure the students of the rationale of any proposed actions (or inactions).

## External Examiners' Reports

The Chair of the College/School Learning and Teaching Committee can return and request revisions to the intended actions they are dissatisfied with the robustness of the proposed response. There may then be an iterative process in which further revised response templates are reviewed and considered.

Once approved at College/School level, the response template along with the report is submitted to Academic Quality Services for review. Summary reports are prepared for the Progression and Awards Board. A copy of the report and response is returned to the External Examiner for their information.

In addition to the institutional response, it is the usual expectation that Colleges/Schools keep their External Examiners informed of developments.

### Deadline for Responding to the External Examiner's Reports

Ideally, approved subject-level response templates should be submitted within one month of receipt of the External Examiner's report being submitted. For the majority of undergraduate programmes, the expected submission date is September 30.

The responses should be submitted in a timely manner to ensure that the experience of students in the next cohort is assured and, wherever possible, enhanced.

### Ongoing Monitoring of Actions

Programme Directors and Boards of Studies are expected to undertake ongoing implementation and monitoring of their actions in response to the recommendations of the External Examiner and to report upon such progress in subsequent response templates. See the Boards of Studies standard agendas. Similarly, College/School Learning and Teaching Committees should keep College/School-wide issues under scrutiny.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Colleges/Schools – the Responsibilities of Academic Staff in Responding to External Examiners' Reports

The Head of College/School has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the College/School addresses any issues of concern promptly and that a relevant course of action is agreed. Where the issue relates to a particular module, the Head of College/School must ensure that this is communicated to the module coordinator and that necessary changes are acted upon. The operational responsibility may be delegated too, for example the Chair of the College's/School's Learning and Teaching Committee.

College/School staff are required to:

- Ensure that an appropriate response (using the set template) is drafted in response to the report in a timely manner and that reasons for not adopting the recommendations of an External Examiner have robust justification;
- Consider and respond to College/School-wide issues and involve student representatives in meetings of the College/School Learning and Teaching Committee where reports and responses must be formally discussed;
- Periodically monitor that intended actions are being progressed, including College/School-wide matters;
- Programme Directors should ensure that progress towards the intended actions outlined in their response template is monitored through Boards of Studies meetings as part of the annual programme review process;
- Where collaborative programmes are involved, the Head of College/School is responsible for ensuring that the collaborative partner has also responded appropriately to issues raised and for including this information in the College/School Response Form.

## External Examiners' Reports

### How does the University Scrutinise External Reports and College/School Responses

#### The role of Academic Quality Services

Academic Quality Services will:

- Read and review all External Examiners' Reports and College/School Responses;
- Create a summary report for each College/School highlighting institutional issues, key actions and good practice.

If the response template is deemed to be incomplete or inadequate, Academic Quality Services may refer the response back to the College/School for revision. If the enhanced response is still considered unsatisfactory, the PVC (Education) may undertake further investigation of the matter with the Head of College/School.

#### The Role of the Progression and Awards Board

The Progression and Awards Board will:

- Ensure that Colleges/Schools have considered the reports and have produced an acceptable and sufficiently detailed response and proposed actions to the External Examiner's recommendations;
- Follow up with any inadequate responses;
- Identify examples of good practice;
- Highlight any issues that need to be addressed by the College/School or to be referred to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (i.e. issues that lie outside the immediate control of the Board);

## External Examiners' Reports

### The Role of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

The Committee is responsible for:

- Undertaking the relevant quality control functions to ensure that the procedures for considering reports have been applied;
- Responding to institutional level issues that arise from the reports;
- Sharing areas of effective practice within the University.

### Policy on Redaction of Personal Identifiers from External Examiners' Reports

Any information which identifies individual students in an External Examiner's report will be redacted. Due to the volume of reports received and the instantaneous electronic availability of reports to Colleges/Schools, it is the **responsibility of the Programme Director** to review the External Examiner's report and to advise staff in Academic Quality Services of any report in which a student is identified and where redaction is necessary. Reports requiring redaction must be identified as soon as possible, preferably within two weeks of their receipt by the University.

Student names/numbers will be blanked out in the redaction process. Only specified staff in Academic Quality Services are permitted to redact information in order to retain security of the system and the confidence of the External Examiners in providing a full report.

Once redacted, a version of the report suitable for circulation to student will be made available to the College/School for internal scrutiny and response. This redacted version of the report will also be made available to the University's quality committees for consideration.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Examples of Institutional Issues

Institutional issues would encompass comments made by the External Examiner that:

- There were serious concerns about the academic standards, content and structure of the programme;
- Standards of marking or moderation were poor;
- There were serious concerns about the integrity of the assessment process;
- Assessment regulations had been incorrectly and/or inconsistently applied.

### Reporting Back to the External Examiner

When reports and responses have been scrutinised through the University's quality assurance structures, Academic Quality Services provides to the External Examiner:

- A copy of their report;
- A copy of the College/School response;
- Any additional specific comments made by the Progression and Awards Board;
- A copy of the Board's summary report.

### Action to be taken urgently

The PVC (Education) and the Director of Academic Services receive copies of the External Examiners' reports and will ensure that action is taken quickly to address any urgent issues of concern.

## External Examiners' Reports

### Deadlines for External Examiners' Reports

The table below outlines the normal timescale of full consideration of External Examiner reports (assuming submission of the report by 31st July).

Receipt of External Examiners' reports. Reports circulated by:	31st July
College/School Committees to consider reports and to address issues of concern, etc. by:	start of term
Heads of Colleges/Schools or nominees to ensure response template completed by:	30 September
Academic Quality Services and Head of College/School/nominee to draft overview report by:	Mid – November
Progression and Awards Board to consider overview reports during:	November and December meetings
Response Form copied to External Examiners	January/February

### Programmes with Irregular Start/End Dates

For those programmes with irregular start/end dates in which the cohort does not 'complete' in June, External Examiners' reports are received during the academic year. As a result, the specific deadlines outlined above are not relevant. However, the full process should normally be completed within five calendar months.

## Paying Fees and Expenses

### Payment of Fees

External Examiners of taught programmes receive a fee on submission of an annual report using the University's on-line system. Please note that External Examiners have to submit a signed claim form as the fee is not automatically generated.

The University's Finance Department issues payments around the 15th of each month. However, to meet this deadline, all claim forms must be complete and submitted by the 21st of the preceding month in order for payment to be processed the following month. Please note that you must have completed the [UKVI Right to Work checks](#) before payment can be issued.

### Payment of Expenses

External Examiners should submit a signed claim form, together with original receipts, to the address shown below either in hard-copy or scanned via email:

External Examiners  
Academic Quality Services  
Academic Services  
Talbot 177  
Swansea University  
Singleton Park  
Swansea  
SA2 8PP  
[externalexaminers@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@swansea.ac.uk)

External Examiners are politely requested to make a retain a copy of submitted receipts. Please note that receipted expenses can be claimed before a report is submitted.

## Paying Fees and Expenses

### For External Examiners commencing their duties from the 2018/19 session onwards:

A revised fee banding structure has been introduced for undergraduate and postgraduate taught External Examiners commencing their period of office in Session 2018-19, as detailed in the following tables:

#### Undergraduate External Examiners Undergraduate Taught External Examiners

BAND	Total Modules	Flat Fee
A	1	£200
B	2-6	£350
C	7-14	£450
D	15-22	£550
E	23-29	£650
F	30+	£750 (Maximum fee)

#### Postgraduate Taught External Examiners

BAND	Total Modules*	Flat Fee
A	1	£250
B	2-10	£450
C	11-19	£650
D	20+	£750 (Maximum fee)

\* Please note all dissertation modules will be worth five modules when fee is calculated.

In all cases fees are only paid following submission of your report.

## Paying Fees and Expenses

### Fees for Undergraduate Programmes

For External Examiners whose contract commenced before the 2018/19 session – the following fee structure will continue to operate:

On submission of the report, the minimum fee is £250, added to this is an amount representing the students FTE load for the modules comprising the programme.

To calculate the fee the following information is required:

Module Credit Rating ÷ Student Numbers x £3 = total fee for module

Credit Value	Credit Weighting
10 credits	1/12
15 credits	1/8
20 credits	1/6
30 credits	1/4
40 credits	1/3
50 credits	1/2.4
60 credits	1/2

#### Example:

11 modules @ 20cr with 170/6 students enrolled =	28
Plus: 1 module @ 60cr with 4/2 students enrolled =	2
Total =	30
Total fees for modules: 30 x £3 =	£90

## Paying Fees and Expenses

Maximum fee is £750. If the fee exceeds this amount, the College/School would be contacted to request that an additional External Examiner be appointed to share the work load.

In all cases fees are only paid following submission of an annual report.

This fee is set for the duration of appointment, unless additional work is undertaken. Subsequent years may have an annual incremental percentage rise (this is subject to an annual review).

### Fees for Nursing and Related Programmes

The fee is paid retrospectively. The College keeps a record of work sent to the External Examiner which is used to calculate the fee.

The minimum fee is £250 plus the total number of assignments/scripts/examination papers e.g. 1 – 15 = £10; 16 – 30 = £20; 31 – 45 = £30 is added to the minimum fee of £250. This fee is calculated every year.

### Fees for Stand-alone Modules in Nursing

The fee is paid retrospectively. The College keeps a record of work sent to the external examiner which is used to calculate the fee.

The minimum fee is £150 plus the total number of assignments/scripts/examination papers.

## Paying Fees and Expenses

### Fees for Taught Postgraduate Programmes

(including Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates, excluding MA in Translation with Language Technology)

The minimum fee is £175, added to this is an amount representing the students FTE load for the modules comprising the programme.

The Taught Masters fee is:

Part One

£15 per full-time student or £7.50 per part-time student plus retainer

The fee is calculated every year (the maximum fee is £750).

Per dissertation moderated £25.

### Fees for MA in Translation with Language Technology (MALT) Programme

This programme has a different method of payment to all the other Taught Masters programmes. All of the MALT External Examiners share the programme, therefore the fee has to be split, with the overall External Examiner having the main share. The College advises us on the proportionate amount of work.

## Paying Fees and Expenses



### Fees for Acting as a Chief External Examiner

The total fee for the Chief External Examiner (MBBCh programme excepted) is £250.

GEM MBBCh External Examiners receive a minimum payment of £250.00 plus an additional payment based on the amount of work seen in an academic session (across all levels of the programme). The fee is paid retrospectively each year on receipt of an annual report and claim form.

For Chief External Examiners in the Swansea University Medical School, any additional work is calculated as above in the section on fees for Nursing and related programmes.

## Guidelines for Reciprocal Arrangements for External Examining

Quality Assurance: Reciprocal arrangements for External Examining

### 1. Background / Summary

The University values the role of External Examiners, and the benefits for the institution and individuals concerned in terms of assurance of quality and standards and opportunity for enhancement and development.

To ensure independent and objective scrutiny and continued alignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the University ensures that there are no reciprocal arrangements between subject areas within Swansea University and other organisations in terms of External Examining.

### 2. Purpose

These guidelines ensure that there is a clear framework to ensure that there are no reciprocal arrangements for External Examining for the purposes of Quality Assurance between colleagues in specific subject areas at Swansea University and equivalent subject areas at other organisations (primarily Higher Education institutions).

The University recognises that reciprocal arrangements can impact upon the independence and objectivity which is critical to effective maintenance of quality and standards, which may adversely impact the University's reputation if not clearly defined and maintained.

## Guidelines for Reciprocal Arrangements for External Examining

### 3. Scope / Exemptions

These guidelines apply to reciprocal arrangements for any staff engaging in External Examining for the purposes of quality assurance:

- Swansea University staff acting as External Examiners for other institutions
- External Examiners from other institutions.

All other forms of External expertise are currently exempted from these guidelines.

### 4. Definitions

Terms specific to these Guidelines.

**External Examiner (Taught Programmes):** The role of the External Examiner includes, amongst other duties, providing independent, objective and expert oversight of curriculum and assessment practices, and the standards of assessment (including review of examination papers and assessment questions, review assessment marking, curriculum changes). External Examiners are expected to submit a full report to the University, summarising the quality and standards of the provision.

**Reciprocity:** The practice of one provider engaging a subject matter expert from another provider and then providing a subject matter expert from an aligned subject area in return.

## Guidelines for Reciprocal Arrangements for External Examining

### 5. Statement

The University supports the expectations of the Higher Education community and UK Quality Code for Higher Education in peer evaluation/observation/ review and this policy seeks to ensure the objectivity of External Examining in Higher Education by providing a framework to maintain standards and independence by preventing reciprocal arrangements between aligned subject areas between organisations.

The process is Quality Assured for both the University and the Higher Educational Institutions that have a relationship with Swansea. The engagement/activity must not affect the member of staff's work at the home University, involve a conflict of interest, involve a financial risk or bring the University into disrepute.

### 6. Practices

1. Swansea University staff acting as External Examiners for other organisations

The University will record any Swansea University staff acting as External Examiners for other organisations. This activity will be recorded through the University's Declaration of Outside Interests process/system (see link below) to maintain independence and objectivity. This data will be accurately maintained and reviewed by Academic Quality Services staff at the point of nomination of External Examiners from other organisations (see 2).

## Guidelines for Reciprocal Arrangements for External Examining

2. Appointment of External Examiners from other organisations

The University will appoint External Examiners from other organisations for each taught programme in line with the published appointment criteria in the University's Code of Practice for External Examiners. Nominees are required to declare any reciprocal arrangements at the appointment stage, and this will be confirmed prior to approval by Academic Quality Services. Academic Quality Services will maintain a record of all External Examiners from other organisations, which will be referenced when Swansea University staff report roles as External Examiners (see 1.).

### 7. Related Policies/Procedures

[University's Code of Practice for External Examiners Declaration of Outside interests 8.](#)

### 8. Compliance

Academic Quality Services will monitor all Swansea University staff appointments at other organisations and all External Examiners appointed to Swansea University for other organisations, to ensure there are no reciprocal arrangements, at the point of appointment.

These guidelines will be reviewed and updated by Academic Quality Services every three academic years on behalf of the Learning Teaching and Quality Committee, in line with the QAA UK Quality Code

# Policy for Reciprocal Arrangements for External Examining

for Higher Education and in consultation with Human Resources and UCU.

## 9. History

Nov 2019 Academic Quality Services Introduction of the Guidelines.