



leeds metropolitan university

Academic Principles and Regulations

Section C11: External Examiners and Advisers

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SECTION C11: EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND ADVISERS	1
REGULATIONS	1
C11.1 Application	1
C11.1.1 Application: Taught Awards	1
C11.2 Requirement for External Examiners	1
C11.2.1 Requirement to Have External Examiners	1
C11.3 The Role of External Examiners	1
C11.3.1 Role of External Examiners: General	1
C11.3.2 Role of External Examiners: Individual Programmes of Study (IPOS)	1
C11.3.3 Rights and Responsibilities: General	1
C11.4 Powers of External Examiners	2
C11.4.1 An Award of the University	2
C11.4.2 Confirmation of the Proceedings of the Board or Committee	2
C11.4.3 Matters of Principle	3
C11.4.4 Disagreements	3
C11.5 Duties of External Examiners	3
C11.5.1 Duties of External Examiners	3
C11.6 The Appointment of External Examiners	3
C11.6.1 Approval	3
C11.6.2 Process of Appointment	3
C11.6.3 Number of appointments	3
C11.7 Chief External Examiner	3
C11.7.1 Circumstances of Appointment	3
C11.7.2 Approval of Appointment	3
C11.7.3 Experience of Chief External Examiner	4
C11.8 Criteria for the Selection of External Examiners	4
C11.8.1 Number of External Examiners	4
C11.8.2 Subject Expertise	4
C11.8.3 Criteria for Selection	4
C11.9 External Examiners with No Previous Experience at the Appropriate Level	4
C11.9.1 Evidence of Experience	4
C11.9.2 External Examiner Teams	4
C11.9.3 Mentors	4
C11.10 Prohibitions to the appointment of an External Examiner	5
C11.10.1 Wide Variety of Contexts and Traditions	5
C11.10.2 Prohibitions	5
C11.11 Discharge of Duties	5
C11.11.1 Other Examining Commitments	5
C11.12 Structure and Continuity	5
C11.12.1 Balance of External Examining Teams	5

C11.12.2 Professional Awards	5
C11.12.3 Phasing of Appointments	6
C11.13 Period of Tenure (Term of Office)	6
C11.13.1 Normal Duration	6
C11.13.2 Cohorts of Students	6
C11.13.3 Timing of the Appointment of a Successor	6
C11.13.4 Reviews of Decisions	6
C11.13.5 Extension of Tenure	6
C11.14 Re-allocation of Responsibilities	6
C11.14.1 Re-allocation	6
C11.14.2 Consultation and Process	6
C11.15 Cessation of Appointment	6
C11.15.1 Normal Cessation	6
C11.15.2 Early Cessation	6
C11.15.3 Temporary Cessation of Appointment	6
C11.15.4 Resignation	6
C11.16 External Examiners' Reports	7
C11.16.1 Annual Reports	7
C11.16.2 Purpose of Annual Reports	7
C11.16.3 Additional Reports	7
C11.16.4 Consideration of External Examiners' Reports	7
C11.16.5 Response to External Examiners	7
C11.17 External Advisers	7
C11.17.1 External Advisers	7
C11.17.2 Approval of Nominations	7
C11.17.3 Appointment	7
C11.17.4 Duties	7
C11.18 Edexcel External Examiners	7
C11.18.1 External Examiners for Edexcel Courses	7

SECTION C11: EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND ADVISERS

REGULATIONS

C11.1 Application

C11.1.1 Application: Taught Awards

The regulations outlined below apply only to taught awards.

Regulations for external examiners for research awards are documented separately.

C11.2 Requirement for External Examiners

C11.2.1 Requirement to Have External Examiners

External examiners must be appointed for all approved Schemes or Courses leading to an award of the University.

C11.3 The Role of External Examiners

C11.3.1 Role of External Examiners: General

The role of the external examiner(s) approved by the University for Schemes and Courses is to ensure that students are assessed fairly in relation to other students on the Scheme or Course.

C11.3.2 Role of External Examiners: Individual Programmes of Study (IPOS)

External examiners may also be involved in the approval of programmes of study for individual students.

C11.3.3 Rights and Responsibilities: General

In order to exercise their rights and carry out their responsibilities, the external examiner(s) must be:

- competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher education level
- expert and/or experienced in the field of study concerned
- impartial in judgement
- properly briefed on their role, the programme and the University's requirements.

The functions and attributes of external examiners are specified below:

(A) Impartiality

Be able to judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with:

- the Scheme or Course staff
- students.

(B) Confirm Standards for Awards

Confirm that the standards set for the awards are appropriate by referencing:

- relevant national subject benchmark statements
- the framework for higher education qualifications
- the national qualifications framework
- University approval and validation documentation
- any appropriate professional, statutory and regulatory requirements.

(C) Compare Performance of Students

Be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere.

(D) Approve Assessment

Approve:

- the form and content of proposed examination papers, coursework and other assessments which count towards an award above the level of Certificate of Higher Education, except where the Certificate of Higher Education is the target award.

In order to:

- ensure that the assessments are capable of measuring achievement of the intended learning outcomes, 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.

(E) Proposed Changes to Assessment: Consultation Be consulted about:

- any proposed changes to the approved assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently on the Scheme or Course.

(F) Proposed Changes to Assessment: Consent Agree to:

- any proposed major modifications to assessment for a final award above the level of Certificate of Higher Education except where the Certificate of Higher Education is the target award.

(G) Examiners' Meetings

External Examiners have the right to attend or participate in the following meetings:

- Boards of Examiners
- Examination Committees

- any meetings in which a review of the decision about individual awards is taken during the examiner's period of office
- meetings to approve Individual Programmes of Study (IPOS)

(H) Access to Assessed Work

In order to ensure that each student is fairly placed in relation to the rest of the cohort, external examiners have the right:

- to see the work of a representative sample of students proposed for the highest available category of the award and for failure
- to see samples of the work of students proposed for each category of award
- of appropriate access to all assessed work where practicable.

(I) Moderation

External examiners have the right to moderate the marks awarded by internal examiners.

(J) Alteration to Sets of Marks

Exceptionally, the external examiner(s) may propose to the Board of Examiners or Examination Committee the moving of the threshold boundary in relation to a particular cohort of students on a particular module.

Such a proposal may be made in respect of:

- the pass/fail threshold
- other classification boundaries.

In such a case, discussion will be held with internal examiners in accordance with the provisions for the conduct of Boards of Examiners. [See Section C13 6.2 to C13. 6.4]

(K) Viva Voce Examinations

External Examiners have the right to conduct a viva voce examination of any candidate. Such a viva voce examination will be in accordance with Section C4.8: Viva Voce Examinations.

Such additional assessment can only raise and may not lower a student's marks.

(L) Attendance at Boards of Examiners

External examiners have the right:

- to attend Examination Committees in accordance with the University Regulations
 - to attend the meeting of the Board of Examiners at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made
- and
- to ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means according with the

University's requirements and normal practice in higher education.

(M) Participation in Reviews of Decisions

External examiners have the right to participate as required in any reviews of decisions about individual students' awards taken during the examiner's period of office.

(N) Return Annual Reports

External examiners are required to report annually in writing to the University and within four weeks of the date of the Board of Examiners for the award they examine on:

- the effectiveness of the assessments
- and
- any lessons to be drawn from them.

(O) Other Reports

External examiners will provide other reports as required by the University.

(P) Matters of Serious Concern

External examiners have the right to report to the University through the Chair of the Academic Board on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of the University's award, or jeopardise the fair treatment of students.

C11.4 Powers of External Examiners

C11.4.1 An Award of the University

No recommendation for the conferment of an award of the University above the level of Certificate of Higher Education may be made without the written consent of the approved external examiner(s).

Normally, this is through the signing of the spreadsheet of marks but may also be by oral agreement followed by written confirmation. [See Section C12: Boards of Examiners and Examination Committees].

C11.4.2 Confirmation of the Proceedings of the Board or Committee

Signing the spreadsheet of marks is also confirmation that:

- the external examiner is satisfied that the conduct of the Board of Examiners and/or Examination Committee has been in accordance with the regulations of the University
- and

- any further consideration of the decisions made at the Board of Examiners and/or Examination Committee is limited to the University regulations for the review of a decision of a Board of Examiners or Examination Committee and an appeal against the outcome of that review. [See Section C16: Appeal Against the Decision of the Board of Examiners or Examination Committee]

C11.4.3 Matters of Principle

On any matter which the external examiner(s) have declared a matter of principle, the decision of the external examiner(s) shall either:

- be accepted as final by the Board of Examiners or
- be referred to the Academic Board.

Any unresolved disagreement between external examiners shall be referred to the Academic Board. [See also Section C13. 5]

C11.4.4 Disagreements

(A) Between External Examiner(s) and Boards of Examiners

Any unresolved disagreement between external examiner(s) and a Board of Examiners shall be referred to the Academic Board.

(B) Between External Examiners

Where an external examiner disagrees with other external examiners, and will not agree a recommendation, it is for the Academic Board to ensure that the matter is resolved.

If the disagreement concerns only one or more individual students, the recommendations for all other students should be signed.

[See also Section C13. 5]

C11.5 Duties of External Examiners

C11.5.1 Duties of External Examiners

On appointment, external examiners are assigned specific duties, which may include:

(A) Awards and Progression

Participation in decisions about recommendations for the award(s) and student progression within a Scheme or Course.

(B) Moderation

Moderation of:

- modules of a Course

or

- groups of modules, appropriate to their subject or professional expertise.

The modules may also contribute to an award for which the external examiner is not responsible.

(C) Individual Programmes of Study (IPOS)

Participation in decisions about the approval of individual programmes of study.

(D) Changes to Assessment Regulations

Participation in decisions about changes in the assessment regulations for a Scheme or Course.

(E) Modifications

Participating in decisions and/or approval of:

- new modules
- modifications to existing modules of a Scheme or Course.

C11.6 The Appointment of External Examiners

C11.6.1 Approval

All nominations of external examiners are required to be approved by the Faculty Board (or equivalent) or by approved sub-committees on their behalf.

Final approval of external examiners rests with Academic Board.

C11.6.2 Process of Appointment

The process of appointment of external examiners must be in accordance with the current University Regulations.

C11.6.3 Number of appointments

An external examiner may hold up to two external examiner appointments within the University. These may be with two collaborative partners or one collaborative partner and a University faculty. The limits on concurrent appointments also apply in such cases, as outlined in section C11.11.1.

C11.7 Chief External Examiner

C11.7.1 Circumstances of Appointment

A chief external examiner may be appointed from within a team of approved external examiners where there is more than one external examiner.

C11.7.2 Approval of Appointment

The approval of the appointment of an external examiner who is to act in this capacity is subject to the normal criteria and the person is expected to

have had or to retain subject responsibilities within the examining team.

C11.7.3 Experience of Chief External Examiner

Where a chief external examiner is to be appointed, the nominee should have sufficient external examining experience to:

- take an overview of the Scheme or Course
- ensure that a consistent standard is maintained across the range of subjects to be examined.

C11.8 Criteria for the Selection of External Examiners

C11.8.1 Number of External Examiners

The number of external examiners to be appointed will vary from Scheme to Scheme and from Course to Course; and is specified in the relevant Scheme/Course approval documentation.

C11.8.2 Subject Expertise

The number of external examiners appointed will reflect the major subject areas of the Scheme or Course. There may also be particular requirements laid down by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies in relation to the number of practitioner and academic external examiners.

C11.8.3 Criteria for Selection

Appointment of external examiners is subject to the criteria specified below.

(A) Academic/Professional Qualification

An external examiner's academic and/or professional qualifications are in an appropriate subject and at a level appropriate for the award.

(B) Ratification by Professional/Statutory Bodies

Any professional and statutory bodies ratify, where appropriate, the external examiner appointment.

(C) Academic/Professional Standing

An external examiner is of an appropriate academic and/or professional standing to maintain the comparability of academic standards in the context of higher education.

(D) Experience

An external examiner has sufficient recent experience of examining at the required level, preferably including experience as an external examiner, or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area.

(E) Indications of Standing, Expertise and Breadth of Experience

Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- the present (or last, if retired) post and place of work
- the range and scope of experience across higher education / professions
- current and recent active involvement in research / scholarly / professional / consultancy activities in the field of study concerned.

C11.9 External Examiners with No Previous Experience at the Appropriate Level

C11.9.1 Evidence of Experience

If the proposed examiner has no previous external examiner experience or has no previous experience at the appropriate level, the application should be supported by:

- evidence that the proposed examiner will join an experienced team of examiners who will provide support to the new examiner or
- a proposal for the appointment of a mentor to support the new examiner.

C11.9.2 External Examiner Teams

Proposed examiners without experience as externals should, where possible, join an experienced team of externals.

C11.9.3 Mentors

(A) Requirement for a Mentor

The external examiner should work initially, normally for one academic year, alongside an appointed mentor, where

- there is only one external or
- the external examiner team as a whole has limited experience.

(B) The Role of the Mentor

The mentor role is to support an inexperienced external examiner in ensuring that the proper processes of assessment have taken place in terms of:

- confirmation of standards
- justice to the students.

The mentor should provide advice to the mentee on:

- moderation of examination papers and other forms of assessment
- sampling of students' work

- providing advice to the Board of Examiners
- presenting an annual report.

(C) Experience of Mentors

Normally mentors will have significant external examiner experience, but not necessarily in the Scheme/Course/discipline. It is acceptable to ask the retiring external examiner or another external examiner within the faculty to fulfil the role of mentor.

(D) Term of Office of a mentor (tenure)

The period of tenure for a mentor will be for one academic year and this is usually the first year of appointment of the external examiner.

C11.10 Prohibitions to the appointment of an External Examiner

C11.10.1 Wide Variety of Contexts and Traditions

External examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional / professional contexts and traditions in order that the Scheme or Course benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.

C11.10.2 Prohibitions

Accordingly, there should ***not*** be:

- more than one examiner from the same institution in the team of external examiners, except in a complex scheme involving a very large number of discrete subject areas and where those examiners will have no contact with each other during their period of tenure with the University, nor will they attend the same Board of Examiners during their tenure
- reciprocal external examining between University staff and external examiners on courses or in the same departments in their two institutions for the same or similar courses and Faculties should take responsibility for ensuring that this practice does not take place
- direct replacement of an external examiner by an individual from the same institution
- an examiner in any significant personal or professional relationship which may influence staff or students on the Scheme or Course concerned and it is the examiner's responsibility to declare these relationships
- an external examiner from an institution which has been the source of examiners in the same subject area in the recent past (normally five years)
- an external examiner who has been a member of staff or a governor of the University or any of its collaborative partners within the previous five years.

In addition within the previous 5 years an examiner should not have been:

- an examiner on a cognate Scheme or Course in the University or any of its collaborative partners;
- a student on a cognate scheme or course in the University or its collaborative partners, nor should an examiner become a student of the University on a cognate scheme or course in the University or its collaborative partners during the period of tenure.

C11.11 Discharge of Duties

C11.11.1 Other Examining Commitments

External examiners will not have other such extensive examining commitments that they cannot properly discharge their duties in respect of the University. Accordingly the following provisions apply.

(A) Limits on Concurrent Appointments

The examiner should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examiner appointments at other HE institutions.

(B) Exceeding this Norm

If an examiner appears to exceed this norm, the Faculty must:

- provide supporting arguments for his/her appointment, for example that the phasing of examinations alleviates the workload during an academic session
- include a commentary on the amount of work involved and the numbers of students.

C11.12 Structure and Continuity

C11.12.1 Balance of External Examining Teams

External examining teams are expected to have an adequate balance including:

- examining experience
- academic and professional practice
- a range of subject specialisms
- membership of a number of institutions of higher education
- gender.

C11.12.2 Professional Awards

If the Course is associated with, or may lead to, a professional award at least one practitioner with appropriate experience should be in the examining team.

C11.12.3 Phasing of Appointments

The phasing of appointments to an examining team should be structured to ensure continuity.

C11.13 Period of Tenure (Term of Office)

C11.13.1 Normal Duration

The period of tenure for an external examiner will normally be four consecutive years running from the 1st November to the 31st October.

C11.13.2 Cohorts of Students

The tenure will normally allow an external examiner to assess four successive cohorts of full-time students.

C11.13.3 Timing of the Appointment of a Successor

A new external examiner will normally take up appointment on or before the retirement of his/her predecessor.

C11.13.4 Reviews of Decisions

External examiners must remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.

C11.13.5 Extension of Tenure

In certain circumstances, for example in the case of a new award or in order to ensure continuity within an examining team, the period of appointment of an external examiner may be extended by a period of one year only. The external examiner must be consulted and should consent to the extension of tenure.

In order to extend the term of office of an external examiner, the appropriate University process must be followed.

C11.14 Re-allocation of Responsibilities

C11.14.1 Re-allocation

External examiners' responsibilities may be re-allocated within the period of appointment. This may be due to the award to which the examiner was first appointed ceasing to run or where it is decided by a faculty to re-shuffle the responsibilities allocated within a large team of examiners. This may also occur when there is illness or where an external examiner ceases their tenure early due to resignation or the University has sought the early cessation of duties of an examiner.

C11.14.2 Consultation and Process

In order to re-allocate an external examiner's responsibilities:

- the external examiner must be consulted and agree the proposed re-allocation
- appropriate University processes must be followed.

C11.15 Cessation of Appointment

C11.15.1 Normal Cessation

The appointment of an external examiner will normally cease at the end of their appointed tenure.

C11.15.2 Early Cessation

In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the appointment to cease before the completion of the approved period of tenure.

Examples of reasons for the early cessation of an appointment may include:

- resignation
- changes in Scheme or Course structure
- non-fulfilment of duties
- unprofessional conduct
- breakdown in relationship with staff teams or
- other cause which may disadvantage students

If such early cessation is thought to be necessary, the appropriate University Guidance provided by the Registrar and Secretary's Office will be followed.

C11.15.3 Temporary Cessation of Appointment

Examiners may request to temporarily cease their appointment, for example due to illness or maternity leave, and another suitable University Examiner should be asked to temporarily extend their duties to cover the period of absence. If this extension of duties is not possible the examiner must resign and a new examiner be appointed.

C11.15.4 Resignation

Resignations of external examiners should be made in writing addressed to the appropriate Dean of Faculty. The resignation must be notified to the Chair of the University External Examiners Sub-committee and the appropriate Faculty staff. In the case of resignations late in the assessment cycle, the University may request the external examiner to perform some or all of their duties.

C11.16 External Examiners' Reports

C11.16.1 Annual Reports

External examiners are required to report annually in writing to the Academic Board about the ways in which assessment has been conducted and on issues relating to assessment. Reports must be made using the template issued by the Registrar and Secretary's Office and submitted electronically to the designated e-mail address.

C11.16.2 Purpose of Annual Reports

The purpose of the report is to assure the University that the academic standards of its awards are appropriate to and enable the University to judge whether the Scheme or Course is meeting its stated objectives and to make any necessary improvements, either immediately or at the next review as appropriate.

C11.16.3 Additional Reports

External examiners have authority to submit a confidential report direct to the Chair of the Academic Board if they are concerned about standards of assessment and performance, particularly where they consider that assessments are being conducted in a way which jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standard of the University's awards.

C11.16.4 Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

The University requires that:

- external examiners submit their reports to the University within 4 weeks of the date of the Board of Examiners with which they are associated
- external examiners' reports are considered at Scheme or Course level and the outcomes of such consideration are formally recorded
- reports do not reference individuals by name
- reports are made publicly available
- the final report of an examiner's tenure will be shared with the incoming external examiner for the purposes of continuity.

C11.16.5 Response to External Examiners

External examiners will be provided with a written response to their comments and recommendations by the Scheme/Course Leader.

C11.17 External Advisers

C11.17.1 External Advisers

Schemes or Courses may appoint external advisers with particular subject expertise to assist the external examiners, for example language awards.

C11.17.2 Approval of Nominations

All nominations of external advisers are required to be approved initially by the Faculty Board (or equivalent), or by its sub-committees.

Final approval of external advisers rests with the Academic Board.

C11.17.3 Appointment

The process of appointment of external advisers must be in accordance with the current University Regulations.

C11.17.4 Duties

The duties of external advisers will be fewer than those of external examiners and do not necessarily include participation in meetings of Boards of Examiners. Normally, a schedule of duties will be drawn up and agreed with the Scheme or Course Team and progressed in accordance with the current University Regulations.

An adviser is required to submit an annual report to the external examiner and the appropriate Faculty.

C11.18 Edexcel External Examiners

C11.18.1 External Examiners for Edexcel Courses

All arrangements for and duties of external examiners for courses leading to Edexcel awards will be in accordance with the Licence Agreement and appropriate University guidance issued by the Registrar and Secretary's Office.