

Code of Good Practice: External Examiners (Taught Programmes of Study)

[TQA Manual - Introduction and Contents](#)

[Implementation: for all with immediate effect]

[Partner Institutions: All partner institutions delivering programmes validated by the University of Exeter are required to observe this code of good practice.]

- 1 Criteria for Appointment
 - 1.1 Each external examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate in level and subject for examining the programme(s) to be examined.
 - 1.2 Each external's standing, expertise and experience should be such as to enable fulfilment of the external's responsibility in the maintenance of the academic standards of the programme(s) in the context of higher education nationally.
 - 1.3 Each external should have had significant recent examining experience as an internal examiner.
 - 1.4 There should not be current reciprocal external examining between departments.
 - 1.5 For any one programme, external examiners should not be appointed consecutively from the same institution.
 - 1.6 As a norm, an examiner should not hold more than two external examining appointments for taught programmes at the same time.
 - 1.7 Former members of staff of the University should not be invited to become external examiners before a lapse of at least five years.
 - 1.8 Those registered for an award of the University are ineligible for appointment as external examiners in any part of the University.
 - 1.9 Particularly in courses with direct professional links, it is the responsibility of external examiners to declare an interest if placed in a position of making a judgement about any student with whom there has been direct contact, eg

as a sponsor, relative or friend,
as a close professional colleague,
having been involved with the supervision of the student
on placement or professional training

- 1.10 The Dean of the Faculty of Taught Programmes will be responsible for resolving conflicts of interest in the appointment of an external examiner.

2 Responsibilities

- 2.1 An external examiner is responsible to the Senate of the University.
- 2.2 The external examiner has the responsibility of ensuring that each candidate is treated fairly and with an even application of academic standards.
- 2.3 The external examiner is responsible for ensuring that the standard of the University's awards is maintained and is equivalent to standards elsewhere.
- 2.4 The external must judge each student on the basis of work submitted for assessment without being influenced by any previous association with the programme, the staff, or the student.
- 2.5 The external should compare the performance of students with that of students on comparable programmes elsewhere.
- 2.6 The external must be satisfied that the examination requirements are such as to enable students to be fairly assessed in relation to the programme syllabus.
- 2.7 The external must approve the form and content of prepared examination question papers.
- 2.8 The external must be satisfied as to the form and required content of any coursework which contributes to the final assessment.
- 2.9 The external should be consulted about any proposed change in the form of assessment.
- 2.10 The external has the right to see all examination scripts including course work which contributes to the final assessment. Where it is agreed between the School(s) and the external that a selection of scripts only is made available, the principles for such selection must be agreed in advance. The guiding principle for selection is that the external must have sufficient evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and that they are consistent.
- 2.11 Where external examiners see only a selection of scripts, this should include sample scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range. Externals should normally also have available to them all the scripts of borderline and failing candidates.

- 2.12 The external has the right to moderate the internal marking and will not normally be required to mark work unless marking the whole cohort or with the express agreement of the external themselves in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.13 The external has the right to conduct a viva voce examination where a viva is permitted under the relevant examination conventions. Details concerning vivas are included in the code of good practice for Boards of Examiners.
- 2.14 The external shall normally be present at any meeting of the Board of Examiners at which recommendations are made for the award of degrees, diplomas or certificates. When, exceptionally and for good reason, this is not possible, the external's absence must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Taught Programmes. (This will be held to exclude the examination of referred candidates and re-examinees, where communication by fax or letter may be held to be sufficient.)
- 2.15 The external must be satisfied that decisions relating to individual students are reached in accordance with agreed regulations and conventions.
- 2.16 The external is entitled to expect that all available relevant information has been presented to the Board before it reaches a final decision, particularly in borderline and other difficult cases. The external must be given access to students' marks for all the modules contributing to an award, whether or not the external has been involved in an earlier Board of Examiners meeting that approved individual module results.
- 2.17 In any case of disagreement which cannot otherwise be resolved, the external's decision is final, but the external must provide the Board with a clear statement of the reasoning behind it.
- 2.18 As a condition of appointment and payment, the external shall be required to submit an annual report in the prescribed manner within four weeks of the main meeting of the Board of Examiners.¹ An external involved in the examination of a taught postgraduate programme is also invited to submit an interim report ahead of the dissertation element, drawing attention to any issues that should be addressed by a School before the next academic year.

3 General External Examiners

- 3.1 Under circumstances described in the annex to this code, the University may appoint general external examiners for certain modular programmes at partner institutions.

4 Period of Appointment

- 4.1 In accordance with Ordinance 3, para 3, an external examiner shall normally be appointed for a maximum of four years.
- 4.2 An external who has served for a period of four years shall not be re-appointed for the same programme(s) without exceptional reason.

5 Termination of Appointment

- 5.1 The University has identified the following circumstances under which the appointment of an external examiner may be terminated early:
- (a) failure to attend Board of Examiners meetings without the prior agreement of the Dean of the Faculty of Taught Programmes (acting on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor);
 - (b) failure to submit an annual report within the specified time;
 - (c) failure to carry out duties identified in the University's code of good practice;
 - (d) cessation of, or non-recruitment to, the programme(s).
- 5.2 The early termination of the appointment of an external examiner shall be made by the Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Dean.

6 Student Contact with External Examiners

- 6.1 The contacting of external examiners by students regarding any aspect of their programmes of study is prohibited and will be treated as an offence under the University's Disciplinary Procedures. Externals are requested to inform the University's Examinations Office should such an occurrence take place.
- 6.2 An informal meeting between students and the external may be held at the request of the external by arrangement and with the agreement of the School.

7 Initial Briefing

- 7.1 Where resources permit, Schools should take the opportunity of inviting new external examiners to Exeter ahead of their first Board of Examiners, to ensure that a Board meeting is not the first time at which they meet the generality of academic staff.
- 7.2 The University will provide new external examiners with details of the general regulations and codes of good practice relating to their appointment.
- 7.3 As a minimum, Schools should provide new external examiners with the following information by the start of the first session of their appointment:
- School handbook(s)
 - Programme specification(s)
 - Module descriptions
 - School assessment conventions
 - Minutes of the last Board of Examiners meeting
 - Previous external examiner's final report

PROFESSOR J M KAY
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

January 2006

¹See also the statement of procedures for external examiners' reports at:
[http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part 9/9GSoPEErpts.pdf](http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%209/9GSoPEErpts.pdf)

ANNEX

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Code of Good Practice for General External Examiners: College of St Mark & St John

[To be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Good Practice - External Examiners (Taught Programmes of Study) hereafter the 'Code']

[Implementation: with immediate effect]

1 Criteria for Appointment

(in addition to paragraph 1 of the Code)

- 1.1 Each General External Examiner shall be appointed from among the College's currently serving External Examiners for the modular BA, BSc and BEd degree programmes such that their period of appointment does not exceed the term permitted by the University (*paragraph 3 of the 'Code'*).
- 1.2 No more than two of the currently serving External Examiners shall be invited to serve as a General External Examiner for the BA, BSc and BEd Progress and Final (Awards) Boards.
- 1.3 All appointments shall be made by the University on the recommendation of the College.

2 Responsibilities

- 2.1 The General External Examiner shall be responsible, in association with the Chair of the Board, for ensuring that the conduct and decisions of the Progress Boards and Final Boards of Examiners at the Advanced Stage are appropriate in terms of the equity of treatment of candidates and the standards of the University.
- 2.2 The General External Examiner shall ensure that degree regulations are adhered to in respect of student progression and that the Examination Board Conventions are applied fairly with regard to the recommendations for the awards of Degree, including classification of Honours Degrees.

- 2.3 The General External Examiner shall not have power to alter a module mark that has been confirmed by a Subject External Examiner appointed by the University to a Subject Board.
- 2.4 The General External Examiner shall attend the Progress Boards and Final Boards and shall submit an annual written report regarding those Boards to the University's Vice-Chancellor who shall send copies of such reports to the College Principal.

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Deputy Vice-Chancellor

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