



LONDON
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY



External Examiner Handbook 2024/25

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Handbook

1.1.1 This handbook has been produced to assist you in your role as external examiner. You will find within it information about our policies and procedures, the duties of external examiners, and how we consider your annual reports. Please contact the Academic Quality and Development (AQD) Team at externalexaminer@londonmet.ac.uk if you have any queries about your appointment or the submission of your annual report. Please contact the relevant School directly should you have a course or module specific query.

1.2 Personal Data

1.2.1 All personal data supplied by you for the purpose of your appointment and subsequently concerning your appointment will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be held securely and for no longer than is necessary. The University will use your personal data for purposes connected with your appointment, for example communication about and payment of fees and expenses, and for any other legitimate reasons. The University will not disclose your contact details or any other personal details to third parties (i.e. outside the University) without your consent unless required to do so under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

2 PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

2.1 The Role of External Examiners

2.1.1 The views of external examiners are an essential part of the University's quality assurance mechanisms. External examiners:

- ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in other higher education institutions and national benchmarks;
- provide assurance for the University that its assessment system is fair, consistent and operated equitably;
- provide assurance that the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes for the course/module;
- provide advice on the content, balance and structure of assessment processes;
- provide recommendations for enhancement and comment on good practice.

2.1.2 External examiners are responsible to the Academic Board of the University through the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.

2.1.3 The University accordingly values the time, effort and experience contributed by its

external examiners to the assurance of the standards and quality of its taught course provision.

2.2 Requirements for External Examiners

2.2.1 At least one external examiner must be appointed for each award/course made by the University. In some disciplines, it may be appropriate to combine a number of cognate programmes within the remit of one external examiner. In other areas, it may be necessary, because of the specialist nature of the modules offered, the breadth of the subject or the high number of students concerned, to appoint additional external examiners for specific modules.

2.2.2 External examiners should not normally expect to be asked to take responsibility for more than 15 modules and more than one external examiner may be appointed for modules with significant numbers of enrolled students.

2.3 Criteria for the Selection of External Examiners

2.3.1 Nominees must show appropriate evidence of the following:

- knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- competence and experience in the subject areas covered by the course(s), or parts thereof;
- relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curriculum;
- competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student experience;
- meeting applicable criteria set by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies.

2.3.2 Nominees will not be appointed as external examiners in the following categories or circumstances:

- A member of a governing body or committee of the appointing body or one of its

partners, delivery organisations or support providers, or a current employee of the appointing body or one of its partners, delivery organisations or support providers.

- Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course.
- Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course.
- Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course.
- Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question.
- Former staff or students of the University unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their course(s).
- A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another higher education provider.
- The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and provider.
- The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same higher education provider.

2.3.3 Where a nominee has no previous experience of the role, a mentor will be offered. A mentor will normally be another appointed external examiner for the School. The mentor will be supplied with contact details for the mentee.

2.4 Appointment of External Examiners

2.4.1 Nominations for the appointment of external examiners should be submitted to AQD on the appropriate form (EEA1) and be accompanied by a detailed curriculum vitae for the person nominated. The nominee should also be asked to give consent to their details being held and used by the University in relation to their duties as an external examiner.

2.4.2 Nominations must be approved by Deans of School (or their nominees) who are responsible for ensuring that there are no 'reciprocal' appointments and no successive appointments of external examiners from the same institution for the course(s).

2.5 Period of Service of External Examiners

- 2.5.1 External examiners are normally appointed for four academic years.
- 2.5.2 External examiners are appointed from November to November to ensure a complete academic cycle (including all reassessment periods and the Subject Standards Boards for taught postgraduate programmes held in October).

2.6 Discontinuation of the Role

- 2.6.1 External examiners may resign from the role on three months' notice. An external examiner should contact AQD if they wish to resign from their role.
- 2.6.2 The University reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an external examiner prematurely in the following circumstances:
- non-attendance at Subject Standards or Progression and Awards Boards without prior agreement;
 - non-submission of annual reports within the specified timescales;
 - non-fulfilment of other duties outlined in the procedures as listed below;
 - where in the University's judgement a situation arises compromising either the University's reputation or the good standing of the external examiner;
 - where the University no longer requires the services of the external examiner for academic reasons.

2.7 Amendments to External Examiner Appointments

- 2.7.1 Once an external examiner is appointed, Schools will need to make a formal request to AQD to amend the remit of an external examiner; amendments include a request to extend an external examiner's tenure and / or reallocate modules to an external examiner's portfolio.
- 2.7.2 Once an external examiner is appointed, Schools will need to make a formal request using form EER1 to AQD to extend the appointment period of an external examiner. Appointment periods beyond four years are not normally permitted but in exceptional cases approval may be given to the extension of an appointment for a fifth year. The re-appointment of an external examiner beyond the five-year period will not normally be considered until a further five years have elapsed.
- 2.7.3 Schools may also request that additional modules be allocated to an external examiner but such a request must take into account the number of modules already allocated to an external examiner and ensure that the number does not exceed 15 modules.

2.8 Guidance for External Examiners

2.8.1 AQD will update and publish the External Examiner Handbook and other institutional resources for external examiners on the [Quality Manual](#) webpages of the University website.

2.8.2 Schools will provide external examiners with the following materials.

- Relevant course and module specifications (including guidance on accreditation if necessary)
- Relevant assessment briefs and marking criteria
- Timeline of the academic year (including dates of meetings)

3 THE DUTIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

3.1 The Duties of External Examiners

3.1.1 External examiners are appointed to complete the following duties:

- review module assessments;
- approve relevant assessments;
- review a representative sample of work, marking and feedback;
- adjudicate between markers to determine an individual mark if required in exceptional circumstances;
- attend the relevant Subject Standards Boards and/or Progression and Awards Boards;
- provide assurance of assessment procedures and Board procedures;
- confirm appropriateness of change of marks if required;
- complete an annual report.

3.1.2 If they request it, external examiners may be offered the opportunity to meet students on the programme, individually or collectively, to allow the students to comment in confidence on the quality of their learning experience.

3.1.3 External examiners should note that comments relating to a named or identifiable student will become available to that student should they submit a data subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018. External examiner comments on, for example, annual reports, scripts, assessed work, separate assessment report/comment sheets or in the minutes of meetings should be able to be produced for a data subject in a meaningful form and should be both intelligible and appropriate.

3.1.4 External examiners are not permitted to respond to contacts made by third parties including students or their representatives, external bodies and organisations. If any such contacts are attempted, external examiners should immediately contact AQD.

3.2 Participation of the External Examiner in Modifications to Courses / Modules

3.2.1 From time to time, courses and / or modules may be modified to ensure they remain current. Major (Material) modifications are required to have external examiner input. External examiners may therefore be consulted on course/module structure and design, assessment strategies and methods, and relevant procedures with appropriate staff on a regular basis during their appointment period. Where these discussions form part of the modification process they should be recorded on the relevant modification forms.

3.3 Participation of the External Examiner in Assessment Procedures

3.3.1 Draft assessment papers, model answers, rubrics and other assessment criteria should be available to external examiners for scrutiny in good time before the assessment period. The provision provided to external examiners should be aligned to the University's process for the preparation of assessment. This should include provision for reassessments. External examiners may request additional materials if required.

3.3.2 External examiners should be informed of any immediate adjustments to assessment that may be necessary and, where feasible, consulted in advance.

3.3.3 External examiners have the right to view all forms of assessed work, including evidence of performance on placements which form an assessed part of the course. In those cases where it is agreed that a sample of assessed work will be provided, the principles for such a selection should be confirmed with external examiners in advance. In general, the selection should be made to ensure that external examiners have sufficient evidence to determine that internal marking, moderation and classification are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. External examiners should be provided a representative sample of work across the full range of marks in accordance with the University's [Academic Regulations](#).

3.3.4 If, during their review of the work of students, external examiners encounter any instance in which they suspect plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct (such as cheating or the fabrication of results) they should immediately report their concerns and views to the relevant School.

3.3.5 The role of the external examiner is not to contribute to the assessment of students, but to ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and national benchmarks. If an external examiner does not agree with any of the marks given to assessed work within a sample they may require further action such as the:

- i. additional marking of all the student work within the group; or
- ii. additional marking of an element of assessed work of all the students within the group; or
- iii. adjustment of the marks for all students within the group.

Concerns should be raised with the Chair of the Subject Standards Board in the first instance and actions to remedy the concern agreed as per the [Academic Regulations](#).

- 3.3.6 All external examiners are members of the relevant Subject Standards Board and are required to be present at all Subject Standards Boards in the subject(s) in which they have been involved, which may include resit Boards.
- 3.3.7 Where an external examiner is not able to attend the Subject Standards Board, they may confirm that standards have been met by the submission of an *in-absentia* form to the Chair of the Subject Standards Board.
- 3.3.8 The Progression and Awards Board is the Board at which the results of assessments are considered and any awards and classifications determined on the University's behalf prior to publication. Schools will nominate an external examiner to be the awards external examiner (using form EEA2) who will have the right to be present at those meetings where external examiner involvement is essential in the approval of awards, classifications and marks/grades contributing to awards or the ratification of module marks for purposes such as progression. If an external examiner exceptionally cannot attend a meeting where their presence is required, they must be available for consultation by a suitably agreed alternative.
- 3.3.9 All awards and classifications must be approved by the relevant Progression and Awards Board. As external examiners are required for Progression and Awards Boards to be quorate, all awards and classifications require the explicit approval of external examiners. As members of Progression and Awards Boards, external examiners have oversight of all module marks contributing to award and classification, including intermediate concluding qualifications and taught postgraduate awards, and all module marks arising from reassessment.
- 3.3.10 External examiners must provide explicit agreement for the change of marks following Assessment Boards.

3.4 Annual Reports

- 3.4.1 External examiners are required to submit an annual report within three weeks of the relevant Subject Standards Board using the standard template. If an annual report is not submitted within this time period, external examiners will be reminded by the University and/or the relevant School to submit an annual report. Subsequent failure to submit an annual report will lead to the University considering terminating an external examiner appointment.
- 3.4.2 External examiner comments on an individual candidate (i.e. a data subject) included

in an annual report would need to be produced as part of a data subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018. External examiners are accordingly asked not to identify individual students in their annual reports.

- 3.4.3 Annual reports will be provided to the relevant Dean of School, Head of Subject and course teams, which may include, where relevant, collaborative partners. Personal identifiers included in annual reports will be redacted prior to further distribution.
- 3.4.4 Deans of School will ensure that annual reports are discussed by the appropriate School committees and that external examiners are informed in writing of the school's response to their comments. School level Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees will monitor that Schools have dealt appropriately with the issues identified in the annual reports and will consider any generic issues arising.
- 3.4.5 External examiners are encouraged to liaise with appropriate School staff should they have any comments that may require immediate consideration and may raise any issues of concern in advance of the submission of the annual report by contacting AQD.
- 3.4.6 In addition, an external examiner may write privately to the Vice Chancellor should they wish to make a comment which would not be appropriate for inclusion in the annual report.
- 3.4.7 Annual reports are available to students. Annual reports may also be available to external reviewing/accreditation agencies such as the Office for Students (OfS), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and, where appropriate, to the relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

3.5 Fees and Expenses

- 3.5.1 Fees are paid to external examiners by AQD following receipt of the annual report.
- 3.5.2 Fees are set out in the external examiner Contract for Services.
- 3.5.3 Valid expenses will be reimbursed by AQD which will provide the necessary claim forms. The levels of reimbursement are the same as for University staff. Valid expenses include the costs of travel to and from the University, overnight accommodation, postage and general subsistence.

3.6 Irreconcilable Differences between the External Examiner and the School

- 3.6.1 If the external examiner feels unable to provide assurance of assessment procedures and Board procedures, the external examiner and/or Chair of the relevant Progression and Awards Board should immediately report the circumstances to the Academic Registrar.
- 3.6.2 The issues raised will then be considered by the Academic Registrar. If the proposed

actions prove unacceptable to the external examiner and/or Chair of the relevant Progression and Awards Board concerned, the issue will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) who will consult with the Senior Officers of the University in proposing reconciliatory action.

4. TIMELINE OF KEY EXTERNAL EXAMINER ACTIVITIES

Date	Activity
Semester one	Course teams engage with external examiners to request a review and approval of semester one and year-long assessment briefs, including resit assessment briefs
End of assessment period one	Course teams ensure marking and second marking (internal moderation) is complete and share module samples with external examiners
End of semester one Subject Standards Board (SSB)	Usually held in February, external examiners invited to relevant SSBs to confirm academic standards. In the event that an external examiner is not able to attend the SSB, external examiner may submit <i>an in-absentia</i> form to the Chair of the SSB.
Semester two	Course teams engage with external examiners to request a review and approval of semester two assessment briefs, including resit assessment briefs
End of semester two Subject Standards Board (SSB)	Usually held in June, external examiners invited to relevant SSBs to confirm academic standards. In the event that an external examiner is not able to attend the SSB, external examiner may submit <i>an in-absentia</i> form to the Chair of the SSB.
Within three weeks of the SSB	External examiner requested to submit annual report
Summer period	Awards external examiners invited to attend Progression and Award Boards
Autumn sampling and SSBs	External examiners examining taught postgraduate dissertation / project modules will be asked by course teams to sample dissertations and attend an October SSB. External examiner to submit annual report within three weeks of the October SSB.