



## Quality Assurance Code of Practice

### External Examining (Taught Provision)

#### Queries:

**First point of contact** - Assistant Registrars or equivalent

**Technical/specialist contact** - Academic Registry

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## 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This QA statement sets out the principles and processes underpinning external examining of taught provision at the University of Bath.
- 1.2 This QA statement should be read in conjunction with:
  - [Ordinance 15](#) on Examiners and Examinations
  - [Regulation 15](#) on Assessment of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses
  - [QA35 Assessment procedures for taught courses of study](#)
- 1.3 This QA statement relates to all taught units and courses of study leading to an award of the University. The details of procedures described in this statement may be varied under the terms of an Institutional Agreement where a course of study is delivered as a collaborative arrangement with another institution. However, where the University is the awarding body, the appointment and functions of the External Examiner remain the University's responsibility.
- 1.3 The references made throughout this statement to External Examiners should also be applied to External Advisers for Foundation Year courses.
- 1.4 For principles and processes relating to external examining of the research elements of research degrees including professional doctorates, refer to [QA7 Research Degrees](#).
- 1.5 For principles and processes relating to external examining of apprenticeship courses, refer to [QA12\(A\)](#).

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 The University attaches great importance to peer review from External Examiners as a key means of ensuring that:
  - the academic standards of University awards and their component parts are set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that the standards of student performance are properly judged against this
  - the final assessment process accurately measures student achievement against intended learning outcomes, and is rigorous, fair and fairly operated, and in line with University Regulations and policies
  - the University can compare the standard of its awards with those of other higher education institutions
  - the University's provision is continuously enhanced to reflect developments in the sector, institution, and discipline.

## 3. Appointment of External Examiners

- 3.1 [Ordinance 15.1](#) establishes the requirement for External Examiners:

*“Examinations for a Degree, Diploma or Certificate of the University, whether taken at one time or in sections, shall be the responsibility of a Board of Examiners.*

*The Board of Examiners shall comprise the internal and External Examiners appointed for each of the subjects or groups of subjects included in the scope of the examination.*

*In every subject or group of subjects in all final assessments (as defined by Regulation 15), there shall be at least two examiners, one at least of whom shall not be a member of the Academic Staff of the University.”*

- 3.2 Accordingly, at least one External Examiner will be appointed for each course of study, or group of closely related courses of study.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of the Head of Department/Learning Partnerships Office (LPO)/the appropriate Director of Teaching in the School of Management to ensure that a sufficient number of External Examiners are appointed with adequate expertise. External Examiner appointments should be phased to ensure an element of continuity.
- 3.4 Normally External Examiners are appointed to a course but, in a small number of instances, they may be appointed to specific units. The responsibilities of the External Examiner must be made clear in the nomination form and in the letter of appointment.

### **Course External Examiners**

- 3.5 If more than one External Examiner is appointed to a course, responsibility for the units on that course will be divided up between the External Examiners according to subject expertise. However, collectively the External Examiners for a course must be able to provide an effective overview of the course, meeting the expectations of the role set out in sections 7 and 8, including commenting on course coherence and making recommendations for its enhancement. All External Examiners appointed to a course are therefore expected to attend the main Board of Examiners for Courses considering final awards.
- 3.6 On a multidisciplinary course, where units are drawn from a number of departments, it is the responsibility of the External Examiner(s) for the course to represent and maintain an overview of the course as a whole.
- 3.7 Further information on the attendance of External Examiners at Board of Examiners is provided in [QA35](#).

### **Unit External Examiners**

- 3.8 External Examiners may be appointed to individual units but not be involved in a course (e.g., foreign language options, CPD units). These External Examiners are expected to report on the individual units to which they have been appointed. They are eligible but not required to attend Boards of Examiners for Units. Their input on units should be provided to the External Examiners for a course(s) as appropriate.

## 4. Appointment Criteria

### 4.1 An External Examiner shall:

- have knowledge and understanding of the UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
- have competence and experience in the field covered by the course
- have academic qualifications/professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined
- have experience of setting assessment and running assessment procedures (either externally or internally)
- have sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of peers
- have familiarity with the standard to be expected of students in the course to be examined
- have fluency in English
- have met the criteria set out by relevant professional and accrediting bodies
- have awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of the flexible curriculum
- have expertise in the enhancement of the student learning experience.

### 4.2 An External Examiner will normally be expected to have had some prior experience of external examining. Where this is not the case, the Head of Department / Head of LPO is responsible for ensuring that a suitable course of induction and briefing is put in place to support the appointee in their new role.

### 4.3 Whenever possible, a first-time External Examiner should be appointed as part of a team and mentored by an experienced External Examiner who meets the criteria set out in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.5.

### 4.4 External Examiners from outside the UK Higher Education system, for example from industry, are appropriate in certain circumstances. Key selection criteria will be the relevance of their expertise and recent experience of standards in UK higher education.

### 4.5 To avoid conflicts of interest and for the assurance of independence, an External Examiner will **not** be appointed if they are covered by the following categories:

- a. an employee of the University of Bath
- b. a member of University Court or Council or the equivalent bodies of partner organisations

- c. any former students or staff of the University unless a period of at least five years has elapsed since leaving the University and all students taught by or with the external have completed their courses
- d. a near relative of a member of staff or student involved with the course of study
- e. anyone closely associated with the sponsorship of students on the course
- f. anyone closely associated with placements or training arrangements for the course
- g. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course of study
- h. anyone in a position to significantly influence the future of students on the course of study
- i. anyone involved in recent or current substantial collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved with the course of study including its assessment processes
- j. anyone whose appointment would lead to a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate courses of another institution
- k. anyone replacing an External Examiner who is a colleague from the same department in the same institution
- l. anyone from departments in partner institutions which contribute to the course being examined
- m. anyone from the same department in an external institution where there is already an External Examiner appointed to the same Bath course or group of courses.

4.6 Careful consideration should be given to balancing the advantages of appointing an individual able to provide a fully independent perspective against those of someone who has prior knowledge of the course and its ethos, notably as an external reviewer or as a member of a periodic review activity (Degree Scheme Review or equivalent). Where there has been prior involvement of this nature this needs to be transparent when presenting the case for appointment. Possible nomination as an External Examiner should not be discussed with external reviewers or externals involved in periodic review activity (Degree Scheme Review or equivalent) prior to the completion of all approval/review activities.

4.7 Anyone who already has a significant commitment during key assessment periods and is therefore unlikely to be able to attend in person for Examiners' meetings and events and give due attention in completing the appraisal of scripts, should not be appointed as an External Examiner.

4.8 External Examiners should not normally hold more than two External Examiner appointments for taught courses and units at any one time. Nominees should accordingly give an undertaking prior to their approval that they will not hold more than one other External Examiner appointment at any point during the term of their appointment.

- 4.9 Appointment of retired academics is permissible within a maximum of three years after the date of retirement. Sufficient evidence should be provided of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.

Exceptionally, applications for exemption from the appointment criteria set out above may be made to the Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC) providing a sound rationale. In all such cases advice should be sought from the Assistant Registrar (Faculty/School) and Academic Registry.

- 4.10 For the purposes of avoiding reciprocal arrangements, Academic Registry will hold a register of staff commitments to external examining, updated on an annual basis.

### **Remuneration**

- 4.11 The Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of Council, determines the remuneration of External Examiners. Where the remuneration is paid to the External Examiner as a form of employment through the payroll, the External Examiner will need to provide the University with documentation of their right to work in the UK in line with UK Visa & Immigration Service (UKVI) requirements prior to any payment being made through the payroll.

## **5. Appointment process**

- 5.1 The Head of Department/Head of LPO is responsible for nominating appropriately qualified individuals to act as External Examiners for approval by the Board of Studies. Nominations for External Examiners with a period of office commencing at the beginning of a new academic session should be submitted to the Board of Studies no later than the final meeting of the previous session. Nominations should be submitted using [QA12 Form 1](#).
- 5.2 On behalf of Senate, Boards of Studies are responsible for scrutinising and approving nominations for the appointment of External Examiners. In scrutinising nominations, the Board of Studies will ensure that:
- any individual recommended as an External Examiner has an appropriate level of academic, and where appropriate, professional knowledge, seniority, and experience (see 4.1 and 4.4 above);
  - where the nominee is new to external examining, or is from outside the UK Higher Education sector, sufficient induction and briefing has been put in place to enable the nominee to fulfil their role (see 4.2 and 4.4 above);
  - the nominee has no existing, or prior, connection with the University that would call into question their ability to exercise objective, impartial and independent judgements (see 4.5 and 4.6 above).
- 5.3 The Board of Studies will approve the appointment of an External Examiner on the basis of documentary evidence which demonstrates that the nominee has met all the criteria outlined above in Section 4. The minutes of the Board of Studies will record the

qualifications and current employment of the proposed External Examiner, the courses or parts of courses to which the External Examiner is appointed and any discussion of appointment criteria in relation to potential conflicts of interest. Senate will then formally note the appointment as recorded in the minutes. Appointments made by Chair's action should be kept to a minimum.

- 5.4 The Education Quality and Standards Committee will receive a report on the appointment of External Examiners where any risks are identified by Academic Registry as part of sampling appointment information provided by Faculties/the School on an annual basis.

#### **Length of appointment**

- 5.5 External Examiners are appointed for three years in the first instance, with a possible extension for a maximum of one further year ([Ordinance 15.2](#)). Upon expiry of this period, External Examiners for taught courses may not be reappointed to the same or any another course of the University until a period of five years has elapsed.

#### **Extensions to appointments**

- 5.6 Following a satisfactory performance during the appointment period of three years, an External Examiner may be offered an extension to the appointment of one year. For the appointment to be extended, the Faculty/School (Assistant Registrar) must receive confirmation in writing (e-mail is acceptable) from the External Examiner that they continue to meet the criteria and that they have no conflicts of interest. Re-appointments should be submitted to Boards of Studies for noting.

#### **Appointment letters**

- 5.7 The Secretary to the Board of Studies will advise Academic Registry of External Examiner appointments and extensions of appointment. Academic Registry is responsible for maintaining an accurate register of External Examiners on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.
- 5.8 Academic Registry will issue a letter of appointment to the External Examiner together with the Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Courses, which includes information on, for example, assessment regulations, equality, diversity and inclusion and data protection.
- 5.9 A copy of the appointment letter will be sent to the Head of Department /Head of LPO, the Director(s) of Studies and the Faculty/School Assistant Registrar.

#### **Termination of appointment**

- 5.10 An appointment may be terminated, for any reason, with six months' notice in writing by either party.
- 5.11 The External Examiner may terminate the contract, without notice, in any of the following circumstances:

- a. if the External Examiner suffers serious illness or is incapacitated such that their performance is, or is likely to be affected
- b. if they are rendered unable to continue to perform their obligations for other good reason
- c. if a conflict of interest arises during the term of the appointment.

5.12 The University also reserves the right to terminate the contract, without notice, in any of the following circumstances:

- a. if the External Examiner is deemed to have failed to fulfil all or part of their obligations (this may include the failure to attend Boards of Examiners where attendance is required without good cause, the failure to submit reports, or the provision of incomplete reports) or if their performance, in the context of the University's stated expectations, is judged to be inadequate
- b. if the External Examiner suffers serious illness or is incapacitated such that their performance is, or is likely to be affected
- c. if the External Examiner is rendered unable to continue to perform their obligations for other good reason
- d. if a conflict of interest arises during the term of the appointment
- e. if changes are made or envisaged to a course which render the appointment no longer applicable/desirable (the University will endeavour to provide reasonable notice to the External Examiner wherever possible)
- f. if the University believes there has been any unprofessional conduct on the part of the External Examiner
- g. if the University perceives there to be an irretrievable breakdown of the relationship.

5.13 If the External Examiner wishes to terminate the appointment, pursuant to either 5.10 or 5.11 the following procedure is to be followed:

- a. The External Examiner will write to the Dean of the Faculty /the School (email will suffice) citing the reason for the termination (5.10, 5.11(a), (b) or (c)) with a proposed end date.
- b. Where the reason given is **not** 5.11(b), the Dean will respond on behalf of the Chair of Senate, agreeing to the termination and confirming an end date.
- c. Where the reason given is 5.11(b) the Dean will acknowledge the request and seek further advice from Human Resources.

5.14 If the University wishes to terminate the appointment pursuant to 5.12(b), (d), or (e), i.e. if such termination arises from illness/incapacity or a conflict of interest arising or changes to a course (and the External Examiner does not terminate the agreement themselves), it is sufficient for the Dean of the Faculty/School to write to the External Examiner, on behalf of the Chair of Senate, terminating the appointment.



- 5.15 If the University wishes to terminate the appointment pursuant to 5.12(a), (c), (f) or (g) the following procedure should be followed:
- i. The Head of Department should provide a rationale for terminating the appointment and outline in writing the non-fulfilment of duties, or the unprofessional conduct or the breakdown of the relationship (as applicable), which has prompted the action, to the Dean of the Faculty/School.
  - ii. Based on the outline or evidence provided, the Dean of the Faculty/School will make a recommendation to Senate to terminate the appointment. Normally the Vice-Chancellor will take Chair's Action on behalf of Senate to agree to terminate the appointment.
  - iii. The Dean will write to the External Examiner informing them of the decision to terminate the appointment.

## 6. Induction

- 6.1 Following appointment, the Head of Department/Head of LPO will ensure that the following information is provided to the External Examiner in a timely manner:
- a Departmental/School contact
  - the composition and membership of the Board of Examiners including the names and subject areas of other External Examiners
  - the schedule for examining procedures including the proposed dates of the Boards of Examiners for Units and Boards of Examiners for Courses
  - the final report(s) of the outgoing External Examiner(s).
- 6.2 The Head of Department/Head of LPO is also responsible for ensuring that External Examiners receive appropriate induction and briefing material to enable them to appreciate the aims and philosophy of the provision with which they will be associated, and to contribute in an effective manner to the assessment process. This will include provision of relevant information on the scheme of study and assessment for the course(s)/unit(s) for which the External Examiner has responsibility, such as:
- the student handbook for the course
  - the course specification and/or unit descriptions
  - course assessment regulations
  - (where relevant) the Department/School policy on confidentiality relating to matters of commercial sensitivity (which may arise in relation to assessment of placement and work-based learning) and on
  - the method and extent of sampling
  - whether or not the External Examiner will meet students
  - the way in which access will be provided to assessed parts of the course (e.g., where the final assessment involves placements or online learning).
- 6.3 To support the induction provided by the Department, information and guidance for External Examiners is provided via a dedicated web page <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/guidance-for-external-examiners/>.

### **Meeting students and staff**

- 6.4 Departments/the School/LPO are strongly encouraged to provide External Examiners with an opportunity to visit the Department/School and the relevant collaborative partner organisation(s) to familiarise themselves with the course, the institution and its procedures, before the assessment period.
- 6.5 The Head of Department/Head of LPO is responsible for ensuring that External Examiners are informed of any changes affecting their roles and responsibilities.

### **Information to students**

- 6.6 Students will be provided with details of the name, position and institution of their External Examiner(s) through their course handbook (see [QA44 Course Handbooks and Course Specifications](#)). It must also be made clear to students, in their course handbook, that it is inappropriate for them to make direct contact with External Examiners, in particular regarding their individual performance in assessments, and that other appropriate mechanisms are available, such as an appeal or a complaint. External Examiner reports are shared with students on request (see paras 9.3a and 9.5).

## **7. The Role of External Examiners in Assessment**

- 7.1 One of the core roles of the External Examiner is to assure the quality of final assessment processes and ensure that academic standards of awards are set and maintained at the appropriate level. University Regulations define Final assessments as those assessments where the results count in determining the award or the level of the final award (Degree, Diploma or Certificate of the University). The External Examiner should be an independent and impartial adviser who provides informed comment upon the academic standards set and the students' achievement in response. **The role of the External Examiner is to verify the assessment process and assure overall standards rather than to seek to judge individual cases.** In support of these general principles, the External Examiner is involved in:
- assuring the quality and validity of assessments at the design stage, including the quality of assessment criteria and the setting of assessment questions
  - assuring the quality of the marking and grading processes, including the quality of marking, moderation/double marking, scaling, etc.
  - assuring the correct application of relevant assessment regulations
  - assuring the fairness of examining, and examination board processes
  - ensuring the consistent use of marking boundaries for units and helping Departments/the School to calibrate their marking
  - verifying that the standards achieved by students are appropriate to the level of study
  - confirming that the academic standards sought and achieved are comparable with other universities in the United Kingdom.

- 7.2 In discharging their role, External Examiners are expected to take into account the University's policy and regulatory framework as outlined in Section 1 and the [University's Statement of Equality Objectives](#) as well as the Office for Student's regulatory requirements for quality and standards, including [Condition B4: Assessment and Awards](#) and [Condition B5: Sector-recognised standards](#), nationally recognised guidelines, e.g. the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), [Subject Benchmark Statements](#), and the expectations of professional accrediting bodies.
- 7.3 In accordance with [Ordinance 15](#) and [Regulation 15](#), the University will not make an award without participation in the examining process by at least one Examiner external to the University, who is a full member of the relevant Board of Examiners for Courses. An External Examiner will be involved in agreeing the marks for any final assessment and in reaching all decisions relating to the conferment of awards and the determination of final degree classification.
- 7.4 External Examiners are therefore expected to review work and attend meetings of Boards of Examiners as set out in 3.5 and [QA35](#).
- 7.5 A Board of Examiners makes collective decisions with all members being full and equal, and no one member having primacy.
- 7.6 All draft examination papers, the assessment of which contributes to a final award of the University, and other summative assessment tasks that make a significant contribution<sup>1</sup> to a final award, should be sent, with clear marking criteria and model answers/marketing schemes appropriate to the discipline, to an External Examiner for moderation and advice following the internal moderation procedure.
- 7.7 Procedures for moderation are open to audit by External Examiners who may advise on the appropriateness of the mechanisms for moderating the summative assessments set (see [QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback](#)).
- 7.8 An External Examiner has the right to see all degree examination scripts and any assignments contributing to the assessment of the final award (where the University's retention policy allows). In cases where it is agreed that only a selection of scripts shall be inspected, the principles for such selection must be agreed in advance and must normally include those around classification borderlines (on the understanding that borderline candidates should be considered collectively rather than as individual cases). Where a selection has been agreed, External Examiners may wish to see a representative sample from the top, middle and bottom of the range, and all failures. The guiding principle is that External Examiners should have seen sufficient

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of 'significant contribution' is all work contributing 7% or more towards the degree classification.

assessments to assure themselves that internal marking and the resultant classification of awards are of an appropriate and consistent standard.

- 7.9 External Examiners are informed of regulations and procedures relating to individual mitigating circumstances and assessment offences in the Handbook for External Examiners and as members of the Board of Examiners are made aware of decisions which affect unit outcomes, progression and awards.
- 7.10 Unless they specify otherwise, it will be assumed that the External Examiners support the decisions of the Board of Examiners for Courses which will then be recommended to the Board of Studies, making the award on behalf of Senate.
- 7.11 If, after thorough and careful discussion, an External Examiner should feel unable to endorse the conduct of the assessment process and/or to participate in a collective decision of the Board of Examiners, a full report should be made to the Board of Studies in the Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Examiners. See also Serious Concerns (9.9 and 9.10).
- 7.12 Where the Board of Examiners and Board of Studies are involved in the assessment of multi-disciplinary degrees and joint courses, arrangements for the appropriate External Examiner(s) to be involved in the assessment process should be made by the responsible Board of Studies (as agreed with the Education, Quality and Standards Committee).

## **8. The Role of External Examiners in Quality Enhancement**

- 8.1 A key aspect of the role of External Examiners is to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of the University's provision.
- 8.2 External Examiners are encouraged to comment on the scheme of assessment and the procedures surrounding moderation, assessment and marking; and to offer advice on the content, balance and structure of the assessment strategies employed.
- 8.3 Departments/the School are expected to use the opportunity afforded by the visits of External Examiners to discuss with them the structure of the course(s) of study and the curriculum.
- 8.4 Reports from External Examiners are used to inform the Annual Monitoring of units and courses (see [QA51](#)). Reports and comments from External Examiners also form part of the evidence base for the periodic review of courses, Degree Scheme Review (see [QA13](#)) or equivalent. It is also expected that Departments/the School/LPO will invite comment from External Examiners when proposing amendments to courses of study affecting the nature and pattern of assessment (see [QA4](#)).

Good Practice Example:

One Department invites its retiring External Examiners to give lectures on their specialisms to final year students.

## 9. External Examiners' Annual Reports

- 9.1 External Examiners are required to provide an annual report on the course(s) or unit(s) for which they are appointed, including observations on academic standards, aspects of good practice, learning and teaching, course structure and content. A brief verbal report should be made at the Board of Examiners for Courses for finalists (see para 3.5 and [QA35](#) para 7.7.9) with the full written report provided within six weeks of the completion of the examination process (see 9.6). External Examiners are also expected to make further comments at the end of their period of office; a report which is then made available to the incoming External Examiner.

Good Practice Example:

One Department offers its External Examiners the opportunity to meet outside the Board of Examiners to give them the opportunity to discuss their impressions prior to reporting.

- 9.2 Where a course is delivered via a number of modes or partners, this should be reflected in the External Examiner's report, either by the submission of separate reports, or by clear differentiation of comments on each mode or partner within the body of a single report.

### Sharing reports with students

- 9.3 The University's approach to quality management is underpinned by the principles of peer review and the informed student voice. It is recognised that the External Examiner system depends on a degree of confidentiality to ensure feedback is frank, whilst providing student representatives with sufficient contextualised information about the quality and standards of their course. With these twin purposes in mind, the External Examiner's report form ([QA12 form 2](#)) is in two parts:
- Part 1 will be shared by staff with student representatives via Staff Student Liaison Committees and with all students upon request from [the QA12 web page](#). It is expected that the majority of the External Examiners' comments will be provided within Part 1 of the form. **External Examiners should NOT include any data relating to individual students in Part 1.**

- b. Part 2 of the report form is provided for instances where an External Examiner thinks it necessary to:
- make comments relating to an individual student or member of staff (which would be covered by the Data Protection Act); and/or
  - make comments on an issue which might be regarded as sensitive or of particular importance, where the External Examiner does not deem broader circulation to be appropriate. These might include categories that the University has defined as restricted under the Freedom of Information Act, such as information that might prejudice the University's commercial interests, information held under obligation of confidentiality or information that is intended for publication at a later date.

9.4 Part 2 of the report form will not be shared with student representatives as a matter of course. However, External Examiners should be aware that the University may be obliged to disclose the contents in response to a specific request under the Data Protection Act or Freedom of Information Act. The University will consider such requests on a case by case basis and will endeavour to consult with the External Examiner prior to disclosure. Further information regarding the University's policies on Data Protection and Freedom of Information is available at:

- <https://www.bath.ac.uk/teams/freedom-of-information/>
- <https://www.bath.ac.uk/legal-information/data-protection-policy/>

9.5 The Head of Department / Head of LPO is responsible for ensuring that Part 1 of an External Examiner's report is shared with student representatives via Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) together with the response from the Department/School/LPO and any other contextual information on actions taken or planned in response. The reports and responses are also shared with students upon request from the [QA12 webpage](#). The personal address of the External Examiner and Part 2 of the report should be removed prior to circulation. Where proceedings of SSLCs are published online, steps must be taken to ensure that web pages are accessible to members of the University only.

### **Submission of reports**

9.6 The Vice-Chancellor is the University officer to whom the External Examiner formally submits their report. Annual reports should be submitted **within six weeks of the completion of the examination process**. Where possible they should be submitted electronically to: [externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk). Alternatively, they can be sent by post to the Vice-Chancellor, care of: Academic Registry (External Examiners), University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath, BA2 7AY.

9.7 Once the report has been received, the designated Department/School/LPO administrator may then proceed with the payment of the External Examiner's fees.

9.8 Academic Registry is responsible for the institutional co-ordination of the receipt and recording of External Examiners' reports. In liaison with Academic Registry, the Secretary to the Board of Studies will check for receipt/non-receipt of reports and



request that the Head of Department / Head of LPO send a formal written request by letter where reports are missing. Where a report is still not forthcoming, Academic Registry will send a further institutional reminder on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.

### **Serious concerns**

- 9.9 An External Examiner will be informed of their right (through the External Examiner's handbook) to raise any matter of serious concern with the Vice-Chancellor, if necessary, by means of a separate confidential written report. In such circumstances, the University would provide a considered and timely response, outlining any actions it will be taking as a result.
- 9.10 Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a course or courses and has exhausted all internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, they may send [notification to the Office for Students](#) or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

## **10. Responding to External Examiners' Annual Reports**

- 10.1 External Examiners can expect consideration to be given to any concerns that they raise and can expect to have the nature of any resultant action or rationale for lack of action communicated to them.
- 10.2 On behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Academic Registry will disseminate reports to:
- the Head of Department/ Head of LPO
  - the Director of Teaching
  - the Director of Studies
  - the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School for further circulation as appropriate.
- 10.3 External Examiners' reports are considered at a number of levels within the institution in order to ensure that action is taken at a level appropriate for any concerns raised:
- the Vice-Chancellor or the Chair of the Education, Quality and Standards Committee, advised by Academic Registry, may take up specific points with an External Examiner and require action by the Department/School or LPO, or raise broader themes via the appropriate institutional committee
  - the Dean or an Associate Dean of the Faculty/School, advised by the Assistant Registrar or Academic Registry, may take up specific points with relevant colleagues and may disseminate good practice, or address poor practice, through the Board of Studies
  - the Head of Department / Head of LPO is responsible for ensuring that any matters of concern raised in External Examiners' reports are addressed at course level, by raising specific points with the academic staff responsible for the delivery of the course of study. Where the requirements of external professional bodies are the focus of comments, the Head of Department / Head of LPO is also responsible for

informing those bodies of action taken in response to the External Examiner's reports.

- 10.4 The Head of Department / Head of LPO will respond to the External Examiner in writing, normally within six weeks of receipt of the report and should copy this to the Head of Department, Director of Studies and to Academic Registry using [externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk) and if appropriate, to the Dean and Associate Dean.

## **11. Monitoring and Review**

- 11.1 Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees monitor External Examiners' reports, formal responses and reports of action taken, as part of the Annual Monitoring of units and courses (see [QA51](#)). They are also responsible for ensuring that any good practice is disseminated within the Faculty/School.
- 11.2 SSLCs discuss External Examiners' reports and their responses alongside other annual course monitoring information.
- 11.3 Academic Registry prepares an annual overview of the recurring themes, institutional level issues and good practice identified by External Examiners, and monitoring of appointment of External Examiners (see 5.4) for consideration by the Education, Quality and Standards Committee. Any recommendations requiring institutional authority will be forwarded to Senate for approval.



## Statement Details

<b>Issue Version:</b>	<b>4.16</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>August 2025</b>
<b>Antecedents:</b>	<p><b>Senate</b>  <b>New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR),</b>  <b>Individual Mitigating Circumstances &amp; Assessment (IMCA)</b>  Minutes 8844a, 11358.  9 April 2008, Minute 12740  10 June 2008, Minute 12782  21 October 2009, Minute 13005  14 April 2010, Minute 13110  9 June 2010, Minute 131418  8 June 2011, Minute 13331</p> <p>Undergraduate Modularisation Working Party</p> <p><b>Graduate Studies Committee</b>  Minute 165</p> <p><b>Quality Assurance Committee</b>  Minutes 164 (b), 305, 439, 623(1), 743, 857(2)(7)(8)  3 July 2009, Minute 976(7)  29 September 2009, Minute 1009  13 July 2010, Minute 1095(3)</p> <p><b>University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee</b>  13 July 2011, Minute 119  12 March 2012 Minute 207  9 July 2012 Minute 279  9 July 2013 Minute 428  8 July 2014 Minute 552  7 July 2015 Minute 669  3 Nov 2015 Minute 708  5 July 2016 Minute 807  11 July 2017 Minute 940  6 Nov 2018 Minute 1103  16 July 2019 Minute 1197</p>

	14 Nov 2019
	<b>Education, Quality and Standards Committee</b> 1 Nov 2021 Minute 148 15 March 2022 – Draft Minute 180 Approved by EQSC September 2023 (via correspondence) 14 May 2025 – Minute 455
	<b>QA18</b>
	<b>QA19</b>
<b>Related Documentation:</b>	<a href="#">QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education</a> (including Advice and Guidance on External Expertise) <a href="#">University Regulations for students</a> , especially Regulation 15 - Assessment of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. <a href="#">Assessment regulations for undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses</a> Specific rules of IMCs are outlined in our assessment regulations or in the Individual Mitigating Circumstances and Assessment document. Details of the IMC procedures that apply to specific courses are available <a href="#">here</a> .
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