

GUIDANCE ON RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

General points:

1. A single response can be made to a number of reports for the same course, as long as each External Examiner can be re-assured that his or her points are addressed.
2. For the avoidance of doubt, the response should be addressed directly to the External Examiner. It is not a response to the University.
3. Responses can be formulated in a number of ways. Versions using bullet point and other formats may be used. All issues identified in the report requiring action should be responded to using the action plan table, but there may be commentary alongside this.
4. Responses to External Examiner reports are public documents that will be made available to all staff and students at the University, and must, therefore, be written in appropriate academic style, and must not contain typographical errors. The academic title of the External Examiner must be used, and individual staff and students must not be mentioned by name or be identifiable in any way. Roles should be used to identify those responsible for completing actions within the action plan table.

Suggested structure for a response to an External Examiner's report

1. Welcome the positive points in the report and to highlight areas of good practice.
2. Identify those areas which the External Examiner report recognises as best practice and worthy of dissemination across the University, and describe how the matter is being taken forward. [Referral to institutional committees is not the only possible route.]
3. Identify the actions taken in response to points raised by the External Examiner that unless addressed might indicate a failure to meet national expectations or might threaten the standard of the award. An example of this is where assessment methods are not designed well enough to meet the course learning outcomes. This response should be completed in consultation with the Faculty Director of Quality who will advise on whether the issue is of a significance that requires reporting separately to the University, if this has not already occurred.
4. Identify the actions taken or to be taken in response to points raised by the External Examiner that are matters of academic choice where the course team or department wishes to take positive action in response to these points to enhance the course. The specific actions to be taken should be included in the action plan table within the response template.
5. Discuss those issues raised by the External Examiner where the course / school does not wish to take up the External Examiner's suggestions. Please note that this applies only where the External Examiner is reflecting on something that is a matter of academic choice.
6. External Examiners' reports often raise issues where the University has taken a different policy stance. It is likely that the University has taken that decision for good reasons and

will not wish to change that policy without substantial evidence that the current position is not the appropriate one. State that the issue raised conflicts with University policy and note the stance that the course team, school or faculty has decided to take in the light of the comment. This might be that the issue has been passed on for discussion or that the issue is to be taken no farther. The Quality and Standards Office or the Faculty Director of Quality will be happy to advise.