

**EXTERNAL EXAMINERS FOR TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

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# Introduction

## In all cases, the number of External Examiners for a particular programme of study will be sufficient to cover the range of studies and/or the number of students involved.

## An External Examiner shall normally be appointed for a programme of study as a whole but may be appointed with particular reference to one or more components within the programme of study.

## The criteria for the appointment of External Examiners are drawn from the national person specification for External Examiners, presented in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Part B Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality: Chapter B7: External Examining, and have been approved by the Academic Board.

# Nomination of External Examiners

## The nomination of an External Examiner is the responsibility of the Head of School concerned, in consultation with the Programme Director. Before making a nomination, they should contact the prospective nominee informally to ensure that he or she is willing to serve, while making it clear that the appointment will require Education and Student Experience Committee approval and final confirmation will follow after some delay.

## The Head of School should ensure an application is fully completed on the University’s nomination form, which can be found at <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/external-examiners/nomination-and-approval.aspx>

## The completed nomination form should be submitted, together with the curriculum vitae of the nominee, via the Quality and Standards Office to the External Examiner Appointments Panel.

## In making recommendations for the appointment of the External Examiner, Heads of School shall ensure that the proposed External Examiner demonstrates:

### (i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;

### (ii) competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;

### (iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;

### (iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;

### (v) sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers;

### (vi) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;

### (vii) fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that External Examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements);

### (viii) that they meet applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;

### (ix) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;

### (x) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

## In making nominations, Heads of School should also take into account the guidance on potential conflicts of interest, below.

##### Potential conflicts of interest

## The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* indicates that due to the potential for a conflict of interest to develop, the following categories should not be appointed as an External Examiner:

### (i) a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;

### (ii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;

### (iii) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;

### (iv) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;

### (v) 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;

### (vi) former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their programme(s);

### (vii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;

### (viii) the succession of an External Examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same School in the same institution;

### (ix) the appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same Department of the same institution.

## Heads of School should ensure that the categories identified above are not nominated as External Examiners.

## During the nomination process a potential External Examiner shall declare:

### (i) any relationship with any member of the University staff or student that may affect the proper exercise of the duties of an External Examiner;

### (ii) any contractual undertaking with the University, both business and professional;

### (iii) any current enrolment at the University on a programme of study, whether or not in the School providing the programme to be examined.

## During the course of an appointment, an External Examiner should inform the External Examiner Appointments Panel, through the Quality and Standards Office, of any change that has the potential to affect the proper exercise of their functions.

##### Exceptional cases

## In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to nominate an External Examiner where one or more of these criteria need to be set aside. This is only in a subject where there is a clear case that there are a very limited number of potential Examiners. Such a case has to be made to the External Examiner Appointments Panel, setting out the arguments, and including an account the measures taken to recruit another suitable External Examiner.

## It is the Head of School’s responsibility to make a case for the approval of a nomination that does not meet in full the criteria for the nomination of External Examiners or which contravene the potential conflicts of interest identified above in 2.6.

##### Consideration of External Examiner Nominations

## Nominations for External Examiners are considered by the External Examiner Appointments Panel, comprised of the Assistant Director Quality and Standards and one of the four Faculty Directors of Quality (outside of the originating Faculty).

##### Responsibilities of the External Examiner Appointments Panel

## The Panel shall review all nominations for External Examiners, in the light of criteria for appointment, and make recommendations to the Education and Student Experience Committee for the appointment of External Examiners. In certain circumstances, public and statutory bodies may need to approve nominations, and recommendations to the Education and Student Experience Committee will take place only when such approval is secured. The Education and Student Experience Committee on behalf of the Academic Board shall be solely responsible for the appointment of External Examiners.

## As part of the appointment process, the External Examiner Appointments Panel will identify and resolve any potential conflict of interest. It is the duty of the Panel to be satisfied, before making a recommendation to the Education and Student Experience Committee, on the suitability of a candidate for appointment.

## As part of the appointment process, the External Examiner Appointments Panel will identify any nomination approved notwithstanding that national criteria, and the rationale for doing so.

##### Responsibilities of the Quality and Standards Office

## The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for:

### (i) forwarding External Examiner nominations to the External Examiner Appointments Panel;

### (ii) forwarding External Examiner nominations recommended for approval by the External Examiner Appointments Panel to the Chair of the Education and Student Experience Committee;

### (iii) reporting successful nominations to the Education and Student Experience Committee, specifying those nominations that have been approved notwithstanding the national person specification;

### (iv) communicating outcomes to relevant academic Schools.

# External Examiners’ terms of office

## The criteria relating to External Examiners’ terms of office, approved by the Academic Board are as follows:

### (i) The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.

### (ii) An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

### (iii) External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

##### Extension of the duration of the term of office of External Examiners

## In the event that a programme team wishes to apply for an extension to an External Examiner’s term of office, the Head of School, in liaison with the Programme Director, should submit to the Quality and Standards Office an application on the approved form, providing a clear rationale for the extension. The extension form can be found at: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/external-examiners/nomination-and-approval.aspx

## The application will be considered by the External Examiner Appointments Panel and the Education and Student Experience Committee on behalf of Academic Board using the same process as outlined above for nominations.

## Extensions are only granted in exceptional cases in order to preserve continuity, and Schools should not assume that an application for an extension will be approved.

##### Extension of the responsibilities of External Examiners

## In the event that a programme wishes to apply for an extension to the duties of an External Examiner, the Head of School, in liaison with the Programme Director should submit to the Quality and Standards Office an application on the approved form, providing a clear rationale for the extension. The extension form can be found at: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/external-examiners/nomination-and-approval.aspx

## The application will be considered by the External Examiner Appointments Panel and the Education and Student Experience Committee on behalf of the Academic Board using the same process as outlined above for nominations.

## An extension of responsibilities will not normally involve an extension of the External Examiner’s term of office.

# Briefing and Induction of External Examiners

## On appointment, each External Examiner should be provided with the necessary information to undertake the responsibilities outlined in the contract. The School will make, in conjunction with the Quality and Standards Office, appropriate arrangements for induction and support.

## New External Examiners should normally take up an appointment on or before the retirement of their predecessors. External Examiners should remain available after the last assessments with which they will be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.

##### Responsibilities of the Quality and Standards Office

## Every new External Examiner will receive a formal letter of appointment from the Quality and Standards Office setting out the period of office, the programmes or courses to be examined and the fee structure.

## The Quality and Standards Office will send to each External Examiner on appointment a copy of the Handbook for External Examiners which includes:

### (i) contractual arrangements, including rates of payment, expenses, and tenure;

### (ii) information relating to induction and support;

### (iii) general information about the roles, powers, and responsibilities assigned to External Examiners and the Regulations and procedures of the University;

### (iv) guidelines on writing the Report;

### (v) details of the criteria and procedures for the premature termination of a contract.

## The Quality and Standards Office will hold a briefing and induction meeting to which all External Examiners are invited. It is expected that all External Examiners’ will attend one of these events. The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for all aspects of the organisation of this event.

##### Responsibilities of the Programme Director

## The Programme Director shall send to each External Examiner on appointment:

### (i) a written statement about the place of the relevant examinations within the context of the programme;

### (ii) a written statement about the organisation and phasing of relevant curriculum;

### (iii) information about the arrangements for examination of work and the meeting of Board of Examiners;

### (iv) any programme specific information, including a copy of the Programme Specification and Validation Document for the programme;

### (v) a copy of the programme/course handbook for which the External Examiner is responsible;

### (vi) the reports of External Examiners for the previous three years, together with the action plan regarding such reports.

## The Programme Director should brief the new External Examiner at an early stage in their appointment, about the nature of the programme and its examination procedures. The briefing should cover:

### (i) the intended learning outcomes of the programme and its courses or modules and how these meet the requirements of the benchmark statements, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Section A and other external reference points, as appropriate;

### (ii) the syllabuses and teaching methods;

### (iii) methods of assessment and marking criteria;

### (iv) the regulations for the programme including those concerned with compensation for failure and opportunities for reassessment;

### (v) dates of Board of Examiners' meetings;

### (vi) the External Examiner's role in relation to the examining team as a whole;

### (vii) the extent of the External Examiners' discretion.

## The new External Examiner’s induction visit should include meeting with students and staff connected with the programmes.

# External Examiner access to the Virtual Learning Environment

## External Examiner access to the VLE is given to enable an External Examiner to effectively carry out their duties and/or to facilitate access to the documentation required to enable them to effectively carry out their duties.

## All External Examiners will be set up with a University computing account upon appointment. The Quality and Standards Office will advise the Programme Director of the External Examiner’s username and the Programme Director will be responsible for ensuring that an External Examiner has access to the relevant VLE sites to enable them to undertake their external examining duties.

## Where an External Examiner is granted access to view samples of assessed student work and has full access (as opposed to samples being provided on a separate site), the Programme Director must provide the External Examiner with guidance on samples to review.

## The External Examiners Handbook will include guidance to External Examiners on accessing the VLE and the briefing and induction event will also include a VLE demonstration.

# Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners

## The rights of the External Examiners are as follows:

### (i) External Examiners should have adequate access to samples of students’ work with the right to see any item;

### (ii) External Examiners are entitled to meet students for the purposes of induction, or where there is a need to oversee practical assessments, and should be given reasonable opportunity to do so;

### (iii) the independence of External Examiners in making judgements about the examination process and award of qualifications is guaranteed, and no Examiner shall be dismissed for exercising such judgement;

### (iv) no arrangement for marking made by Programme Directors shall limit in any way the role of the External Examiner.

## The duties of the External Examiner are as follows:

### (i) reviewing and approving draft examination papers;

### (ii) reviewing a sample of scripts;

### (iii) reviewing the marking and classification to determine if they are of an appropriate standard;

### (iv) attending the relevant Board of Examiners at which the final assessment is made of candidates in the subject(s) for which they are appointed;

### (v) being satisfied that written University procedures for marking and classification are observed;

### (vi) being influential in cases of disagreement over marking and classification, when the External Examiner’s views carry particular weight;

### (vii) providing an annual written report in compliance with the standard requirements outlined in the report form.

# Role of Scheme Examiners

##  An External Examiner appointed as a Scheme Examiner should in addition to other responsibilities be satisfied that for the Scheme:

### (i) the processes for the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted in accordance with the Regulations of the University; and

### (ii) the Examiner has had access to all relevant papers and meetings.

# School liaison with External Examiners

## It is the Programme Director’s responsibility to:

### (i) provide the External Examiner with any draft examination papers for review and approval;

### (ii) provide the External Examiner with dates of meetings of Board of Examiners. Dates should be announced 6 months before the meeting is to be held;

### (iii) provide the External Examiner with an agreed sample of assessed material, prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners [see *Procedures for the Operation of Boards of Examiners*];

### (iv) make arrangements for the External Examiner to meet with students on the programme, where necessary.

# Termination of External Examiner contracts

* 1. Potential cases for the premature termination of an External Examiner’s contract should be referred in the first instance to the Quality and Standards Office.
	2. The early termination of a contract shall be effected by the Chair of the Education and the Student Experience Committee on behalf of the Academic Board, who shall present a report on any such termination to the Education and Student Experience Committee.

# External Examiners’ Reports

## The purpose of the External Examiner’s report is to enable the programme director and internal examiners, the Faculty and the Academic Board and its committees to judge whether academic quality and standards are being maintained, and to make any necessary improvements or to further develop the programme, either immediately or at the next review as appropriate. It follows that this report is vital in the whole process of programme review.

##### Responsibilities of the External Examiner

## External Examiners are asked to submit their reports as soon as possible following the Board of Examiners’ meeting and in any case by the 1st September for Board held in July; otherwise within one month of the date after the Board of Examiners meeting to which they apply. In cases where a Board of Examiners meets more than once during the year, External Examiners are asked to provide the annual report after the final Board of Examiners for that academic year.

## External Examiners are asked not to name individuals, as annual reports will be made available to students and staff of the institution.

## Exceptionally, External Examiners are entitled to report any serious matter, particularly where it relates to academic quality and standards, directly to the Vice-Chancellor, in confidence.

## Reports should be sent by email to tqi@canterbury.ac.uk.

## Payment will be made on the submission of the annual report.

##### Responsibilities of the Quality and Standards Office

## It is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Office to

### (i) receive external examiners’ annual reports;

### (ii) acknowledge receipt of the report;

### (iii) check all reports to ensure they do not identify individual students or members of staff;

### (iv) make the report available to staff and students of the University.

## The University views the External Examiner system in general and External Examiner reports in particular as key mechanisms for the management of academic standards and reflection on the quality of the student learning experience.

## All External Examiners reports are considered, on arrival in the Quality and Standards Office, by the Director of the Quality and Standards.

## If any report suggests a serious problem, or one requiring urgent attention, the Director of Quality and Standards takes the matter up with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) directly.

## The Quality and Standards Office will provide the Vice-Chancellor with a copy of each External Examiner report for consideration.

## The Quality and Standards Office will ensure that each External Examiner report will be made available to the head of the appropriate academic School(s).

##### Responsibilities of Heads of School

## The Head of School shall ensure that all issues raised by the External Examiner, either in their report or through other aspects of their role are identified, including those for which action has already been taken, and given due consideration by the programme team.

## The Head of School shall ensure that appropriate action is taken in response to all issues raised by the External Examiner or that the reason why no action is taken is noted and that such actions are communicated to all stakeholders in the programme, including the external examiner and, where appropriate, external bodies. Such actions will be monitored and evaluated through the Annual Programme Monitoring.

## Where an External Examiner raises a significant issue, one, for example, that if not rectified threatens the standards of the programme, it is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that that issue and how it is addressed is reported on the appropriate pro forma to the Faculty Quality Committee and thereafter to the Quality Monitoring and Review Sub-Committee.

## The consideration of External Examiner comments and the response to the External Examiners and others is the responsibility of the whole programme team and not of a single individual or individuals; as such the External Examiner report should be discussed at such bodies as the Programme Management Committee, the Programme Board and the Student-Staff Liaison Committee.

## The Head of School shall ensure that the External Examiner report is made available to:

### (i) all members of academic staff teaching on the programme;

### (ii) all students on the programme;

### (iii) other appropriate parties.

##### Responsibilities of Faculty Directors of Quality

##  The Faculty Director of Quality shall:

### (i) read all External Examiner Reports for programmes managed by the faculty;

### (ii) check that the Annual Programme Monitoring covers all issues of significance;

### (iii) inform the Dean of Faculty of any issue of serious concern to the faculty;

### (iv) inform the Director of Quality and Standards of any serious issue of concern to the University arising in External Examiners’ reports;

### (v) inform the appropriate Faculty Director of Quality of any issue which is related to another faculty where there is joint working;

### (vi) ensure that any issue of significance, is considered by the Faculty Quality Committee, together with the action taken or to be taken in response;

### (vii) submit an annual report on issues raised in External Examiner reports to the Education and Student Experience Committee, normally in Semester 2.

##### Responsibilities of the Director of Quality and Standards

##  The Director of Quality and Standards shall:

### (i) read all external examiner reports;

### (ii) draw to the attention of the relevant Faculty Director of Quality any issues of significance that relate to that faculty;

### (iii) ensure that each external examiner report is made available to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration;

### (iv) inform the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) of any issue of serious concern to the University, to enable the Vice-Chancellor to be made aware. This will enable the Vice-Chancellor to take any immediate action needed in the light of a serious issue raised in a report by an External Examiner;

### (v) ensure that any issue of significance is considered by the Quality Monitoring and Review Sub-Committee, together with the action taken or to be taken in response;

### (vi) submit an annual report on issues raised in External Examiner reports to the Education and Student Experience Committee, for consideration by the Academic Board normally in the Lent Term.