

Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

Section 7: External Examining

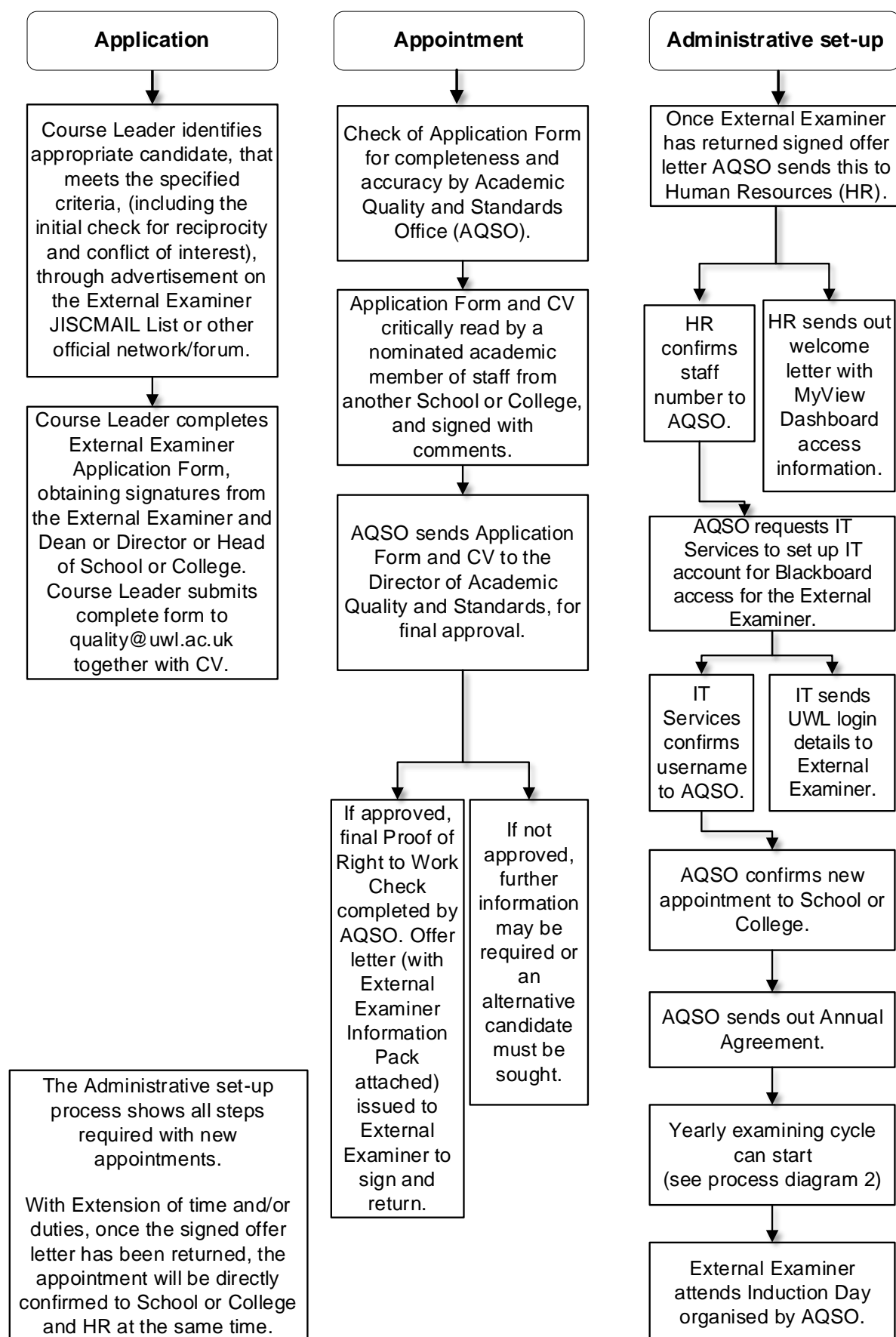
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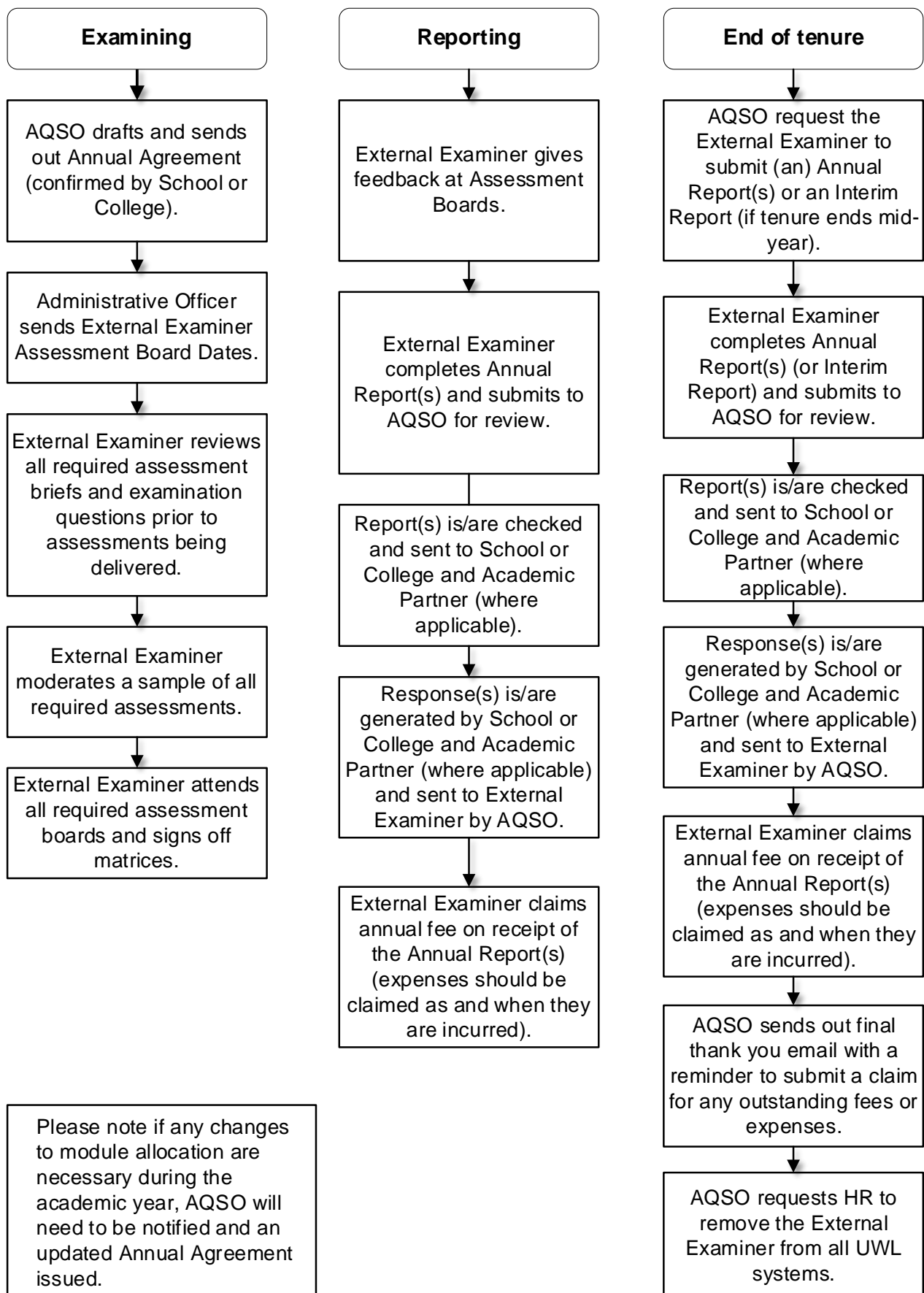
External Examining timeline

Sep	External Examiner tenure starts – 1 st September.	Annual Agreement sent to all External Examiners – deadline end of October.	External Examiner UG reports due – early September.
Oct	External Examiner PG annual reports due – early October.	External Examiner interim annual report to Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).	External Examiner Induction Days – October and November.
Nov	External Examiner tenure ends 4 academic years later – end of November.	External Examiner final annual report to AQSC and Academic Board.	
Dec			
Jan			
Feb	Additional External Examiner Induction Day.		
Mar			
Apr			
May	Application deadline – end of May for September starters.		
Jun			
Jul			
Aug			

External Examining process diagram 1



External Examining process diagram 2



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Aims

1.1.1 This section describes:

- (a) How a new External Examiner is appointed by the University.
- (b) The duties and responsibilities of the External Examiner.

1.1.2 The aim of the External Examining process is to ensure that the University meets the obligations and expectations of its staff, students and regulators by:

- (a) Ensuring external experts contribute to the setting and maintaining of academic standards and alignment with the relevant national qualifications framework, Characteristics Statements, Subject Benchmark Statements, and any other requirements, such as those from Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- (b) Engaging external expertise – individually and collectively – to encourage robust dialogue between expert peers, students and wider stakeholders on improving the educational experience within the University and its academic partners.

1.2 Definition

1.2.1 External Examiner is an impartial and independent expert responsible for ensuring the standards of the University's awards and the reliability of student achievement in relation to those standards. External Examiners have 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. External Examiners must not contribute to delivery through teaching or any other direct capacity.

1.2.2 External Examiners for Apprenticeship courses:

1.2.2.1 For apprenticeship courses the External Examiner role provides independence and impartiality for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and requires use of assessment experience with robust industry knowledge to form judgements on the conduct of the End Point Assessment (EPA).

1.2.2.2 Where stipulated in the EPA assessment plan, there may be a requirement to appoint an External Examiner to oversee the full apprenticeship course (normally for integrated apprenticeships) covering both the academic learning and end point assessment activity or there may be the need to appoint an External Examiner to only oversee the end point assessment delivery and activity.

1.2.2.3 The following roles for External Examiners will apply for apprenticeship courses:

- **External Examiner Apprenticeship (EPA):** For an integrated apprenticeship course where an External Examiner has been appointed to cover both the on-course delivery and EPA.

- **External Examiner Apprenticeship:** For an integrated apprenticeship course where an External Examiner has been appointed to cover the on-course delivery only.
- **End Point Assessment (EPA) External Assessor:** For either integrated or non-integrated apprenticeship courses where the on-course External Examiner is not responsible for the oversight of EPA.

1.2.2.4 End Point Assessment (EPA) External Examiners for apprenticeship courses will be appointed on a needs-assessed basis or where the assessment plan requires the appointment of a specific role. Responsibilities and duties will be determined by the apprenticeship standard assessment plan.

1.3 Regulation relevant to this section

1.3.1 Condition B1:

The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience.

A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course:

- 1) is up-to-date;
- 2) provides educational challenge;
- 3) is coherent;
- 4) is effectively delivered; and
- 5) requires students to develop relevant skills.

1.3.2 Condition B2:

The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:

- 1) students registered on a higher education course receive resources and support to ensure:
 - a) a high-quality academic experience for those students; and
 - b) those students succeeding in and beyond higher education; and
- 2) effective engagement with students to ensure:
 - a) a high-quality academic experience for those students; and
 - b) those students succeed in and beyond higher education.

1.3.3 Condition B3:

The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.

1.3.4 Condition B4:

The provider must ensure that:

- 1) students are assessed effectively;
- 2) each assessment is valid and reliable;
- 3) academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible;
- 4) academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and
- 5) relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

1.3.5 Condition B5:

The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):

- 1) any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and
- 2) awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

1.3.6 The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education relevant for External Examining are:

- (a) The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.
- (b) Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
- (c) From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
- (d) The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualifications and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 1.3.7 External Quality Assurance (EQA) monitors the EPA that apprentices undertake at the end of their apprenticeship, to ensure that it is fair, consistent and robust across different apprenticeship standards and between different assessment organisations.
- 1.3.8 All EQA for a standard will be delivered by either:
 - (a) The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).
 - (b) The Office for Students (OfS) for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships.
- 1.3.9 There are some exceptions to this, these apprenticeships are referred to as Out-of-Scope. Currently no provision within the University falls under this.
- 1.3.10 The EQA Framework developed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) sets out how apprenticeship EPAs must be externally quality assured. It sets out what good practice in EPA looks like, and what EQA providers should look out for to be confident this has happened. The framework clarifies requirements in ensuring consistency with how assessments are delivered.

1.4 Responsibilities

- 1.4.1 The Academic Board has the responsibility and authority to set, maintain and assure academic standards.
- 1.4.2 The Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) is responsible for organising and managing the approval process for External Examiners and ensuring that robust action is taken in response to their reports.
- 1.4.3 The Academic Quality Lead in each School or College is responsible for ensuring that colleagues within their Schools or Colleges observe the procedures and requirements, and have effective communication mechanisms with their External Examiners.
- 1.4.4 The Course Leader – identified for each course by the relevant School or College – is responsible for ensuring robust, transparent and scrupulous use of the External Examiner for the assurance of standards and the development of the quality of the learning experience on the course.
- 1.4.5 The Apprenticeships Quality Manager is responsible for working with the Course Leader where an External Examiner for an apprenticeship course needs to be appointed.

1.5 Further Guidance

- 1.5.1 For further guidance colleagues should make early contact with the AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2077.

- 1.5.2 Where an academic partnership is involved, the lead School or College should ensure they contact both the AQSO, and the Global Partnerships Office (GPO) at uwl.gpo@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2749 at the earliest opportunity.

2 OVERVIEW OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING

2.1 Role of the External Examiner

2.1.1 An External Examiner at the University is an independent reviewer of assessments and student work with the aim of contributing to the moderation of standards and providing the University with a report on the standards achieved, the comparability of standards with other known Higher Education Institutions and the extent to which the course meets the national expectations in the subject discipline.

2.1.2 The final outcomes of external examining are:

- (a) Approval of results as in line with sector-recognised standards.
- (b) Agreement that results have been reliably arrived at through the student's own work.
- (c) Recommendations for enhancing the academic provision and the student experience.

2.1.3 The role can be divided into three main categories:

(a) Examiner

External Examiners act as an examiner of “output” and the standards achieved by those outputs. For example: review of assessments designed by the School or College and review of the student achievement in the work submitted. External Examiners will be expected to provide a view upon how effective and appropriate the assessments are in measuring the intended outcomes of the course together with approving the results as in line with sector recognised standards. External Examiners can withhold their approval of results where they do not believe they are in line with sector-recognised standards or students have not been provided with opportunities – which are reasonably comparable with those in other Higher Education Institutions – to achieve standards beyond the threshold level.

This approval of results will usually entail the endorsement of the decisions made by Progression and/or Award Boards that External Examiners attend, normally through signature of the relevant papers that contain the student profiles and through confirmation in the External Examiner's annual report.

(b) Processes

External Examiners act as an auditor on the reliability, appropriateness and effectiveness of a School or College's implementation of University processes for assuring the standards of the University's awards. In this capacity External Examiners might for example provide commentary upon the deliberations of

the Award and Progression Board, upon School or College implementation of University policies, upon the University's regulatory framework or perhaps the School or College's management of the moderation process. These commentaries may include, for example, the impact of extenuation on the decision-making processes of a Board of Examiners (but not individual cases), the application and consistency of the University's regulations governing the conferment of awards, or the consistency with which "borderline" grades are treated and subsequent awards conferred. This is not exhaustive but indicative of the regulatory areas the University would ask External Examiners to bear in mind as part of the External Examiners' role.

(c) Curricula

External Examiners may be consulted by Schools or Colleges on changes that affect the student experience and the development of the curriculum. Where there is a major amendment to the course structure or more particularly to the overall assessment regimes for the courses which the External Examiner examines, the External Examiner must approve the amendment.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 2.1.4 In line with the requirements of an Apprenticeship Standard, EPA External Assessors may be appointed solely for the purpose of confirming that the requirements for effective EPA delivery have been met and that the apprentice has successfully completed the EPA. Those appointed to these roles will be known as EPA External Assessors. Their duties will be distinct from that of other External Examiners and full details on their appointment criteria, remit, workload, fees and reporting requirements will be provided by the School or College and the Apprenticeships Quality Manager.

2.2 Levels requiring External Examiners

- 2.2.1 An External Examiner must be appointed to examine all taught components of higher education awards from **Level 5** to **Level 7**.

Level 3 taught components must be examined where:

- (a) It is the first year the new or reapproved course is running, regardless of whether modules are new or existing. A reapproved course is defined as a course which has been through a reapproval event or where provision has been amended via the major amendment process;
- (b) It is the first year that the module is running.

Level 4 taught components must be examined where:

- (a) The award is an enrollable award (not an exit award) e.g., Cert HE, Dip HE or Foundation Degree;
- (b) It is the first year that the new or reapproved course is running, regardless of whether modules are new or existing. A reapproved course is defined as a

course which has been through a reapproval event or where provision has been amended via the major amendment process;

- (c) It is the first year that the module is running;
- (d) It is a requirement set by a PSRB;
- (e) Any other subject specific requirement.

2.3 External Examiner role

2.3.1 External Examiners will:

- (a) Be consulted on, and approve the form and content of, proposed coursework and examinations and other assessments and reassessments that count towards the modules for which they are responsible;
- (b) Have access to all, or if agreed, a sample of summatively assessed work on the modules they are responsible for;
- (c) Moderate the marks awarded by internal markers;
- (d) Consider all available information relating to modules they are responsible for, and to raise any issues at the Module Assessment Board;
- (e) Be consulted on and approve the recommendations for award and progression for all students on awards for which they are responsible;
- (f) Participate as required in any review of decisions about individual students' outcomes taken during their term of appointment at Award Boards or Joint Assessment Boards;
- (g) Occasionally, advise on proposed amendments to modules and courses;
- (h) Where appropriate, have the opportunity to meet with students.

Apprenticeship courses:

2.3.2 All apprenticeships require an EPA to test both academic learning and workplace competence. The requirements for EPA, as described in EPA plans will depend on the delivery method and in turn will determine the role of the External Examiner as set out below.

2.3.3 An integrated apprenticeship means that the University is responsible for both the academic content, assessment, and EPA. Therefore, EPA plans may reference External Examiners, as the EPA is conducted as an integrated part of the qualification. The External Examiner will be involved in the oversight of the EPA where the EPA also forms part of the degree. In these cases, the specific requirements for external examining are set out in the apprenticeship Assessment Plan and must be adhered to in the assessment process.

- 2.3.4 A non-integrated apprenticeship means that the University is responsible for the academic content and assessment, while an external organisation provides the EPA. Appointed External Examiners will not play a direct role in the EPA process but will have oversight in the academic award of the apprenticeship. The External Examiner will not play a direct role in the EPA process. They will however, be involved in the awarding of the degree.
- 2.3.5 EPA External Assessors may be appointed solely for the purpose of confirming that the EPA delivery requirements have been met and that the apprentice has successfully completed the EPA. Please refer to section 2.1.4 above for further details.

2.4 Activities of the External Examiner

- 2.4.1 During an academic year, External Examiners must:
- (a) Review and comment upon all first sitting and resit of assessment briefs and examination questions for the modules or courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.
 - (b) For specific courses or modules, visit students in practice once per academic year, as specified and agreed between the School or College and External Examiner.
 - (c) Where appropriate, visit academic partner institutions.
 - (d) Where appropriate, engage in Apprenticeship EPA activities as stated in the Assessment Plan.
 - (e) Review and comment upon academic standards and student performance in line with sector-recognised standards on courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.
 - (f) Engage in a minimum of normally two Assessment Boards per academic year, which may include Module Assessment Boards, Award Boards, Joint Assessment Boards and Student Progress Boards.
 - (g) Submit an impartial and independent report on the standards of the modules and courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.
- 2.4.2 External Examiners have no special role in marking or adjudicating individual scripts and student work, and External Examiners are not expected to act as a third marker for any assessment where there is disagreement over a mark between internal markers. The role of the internal markers is to award an appropriate mark based on the submitted work of a student.
- 2.4.3 External Examiners' role in this respect is to review the standard of the marking across the cohort and advise upon its general appropriateness to the work submitted. External Examiners can recommend adjustments to cohort marks where there is evidence of under- or over-marking across grades. External Examiners must not act as an individual third marker for any given student work.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 2.4.4 The University needs to ensure that External Examiners are appropriately briefed as to the specific nature of their role for apprenticeships that involve higher education. For apprenticeship courses this will need to include:
- (a) Specifying whether the apprenticeship involves integrated or separate EPA;
 - (b) The relationship between apprenticeship duties and Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) and course/modules learning outcomes, hence the way the EPA is conducted may have implications for their role.
 - (c) The assessment format or specific requirements for delivery of the EPA as specified in the apprenticeship standard's assessment plan.
 - (d) Depending on the nature of the EPA and whether the higher or degree apprenticeship is integrated or non-integrated in nature the External Examiner may be required to observe and comment upon EPA practice, materials and marking and standardisation activities. The University will adhere to requirements of each EPA assessment plan.

2.5 Period of appointment

- 2.5.1 An External Examiner will be appointed for a period of 4 academic years and 3 months beginning on the 1 September following appointment and ending on the 30 November. There may be some variation to this for courses with non-standard start and end dates.
- 2.5.2 An External Examiner's appointment may be extended, by a maximum of one academic year, in exceptional circumstances, including:
- (a) Where an appointment has not been able to be made;
 - (b) An External Examiner has resigned requiring an earlier start date;
 - (c) Due to the closure of a course there is need to keep continuity of external examining arrangements.

An External Examiner may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since the completion of their last appointment.

3 EXTERNAL EXAMINING PROCESSES

3.1 External Examining stages

3.1.1 External examining comprises the following four stages:

#	Stages	Authorising Body	Responsibility
1	Application	Dean or Director or Head of School or College	Course Leader
2	Appointment	Director of Academic Quality and Standards	AQSO
3	Examining	Chair of the relevant Assessment Board	Course Leader
4	Reporting	Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)	AQSO

3.2 Criteria for reliable and fair external examining

3.2.1 In approving an External Examiner, the authorising body and responsible officers should certify that the approved External Examiner:

- (a) Is sufficiently and suitably qualified – usually to at least the level above the award to be examined¹ – to undertake the duties proposed;
- (b) Is independent of the University and its staff to the degree to offer robust and rigorous assurance of its academic standards;
- (c) Is able to offer sufficient time and expertise to assure and enhance the learning experience of students on the course;
- (d) Has current appropriate expertise – academically, and where relevant professionally – in the core disciplines of the course or module to be examined in order to provide judgement on academic standards;
- (e) Has 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;
- (f) Has experience of teaching and assessing in UK higher education at the levels to be externally examined;

¹ For subject areas where it is not standard practice for the majority of academic staff to have doctoral qualifications and therefore the pool of External Examiners is limited, this requirement may be waived provided there is evidence of substantive academic engagement in the subject at the level of the award and significant experience within the industry.

- (g) Is fluent in English, and any other language in which the course to be examined is taught or assessed; and
- (h) Meets the criteria set by the relevant PSRBs, where necessary.
- (i) In addition, in confirming the appointment, the Director of Human Resources (or nominee) must certify that the External Examiner has the right to work in the UK.

3.2.2 To ensure that criteria 3.2.1 (b) is met the appointed External Examiner should have no direct interest or ties to the University or its staff, courses or students, including:

- (a) Being a member or advisor to the University Board of Governors.
- (b) Being in a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student on the course. For example, both being members of the same committee or board of a PSRB, or undertaking a recent or current collaborative research project.
- (c) Being an internal marker, staff member at an academic partner or occasional staff member on a course at the University.
- (d) Being closely associated with the sponsorship, placements or other training being provided to students on the course.
- (e) Being in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course either as an employer or in some other capacity.
- (f) Required to assess current or recent previous colleagues who are recruited as students to the course.
- (g) Being from the same Higher Education Institution, or other place of employment as any other External Examiner, or staff member on the Assessment Board.
- (h) Replacing another External Examiner from the same institution unless the External Examiner has not completed the term of office.
- (i) Being a current or recent staff member or student from the University or an academic partner institution. This may be considered but only after a period of five years has elapsed since their departure.

3.2.3 There should be no reciprocal examining arrangements between the University and the External Examiner's employing organisation (within the same subject or course), save in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards.

3.2.4 The appointed External Examiner should hold no more than two External Examiner appointments at any one time. However, there are circumstances where this requirement can be waived at the discretion of the Director of Academic Quality and

Standards. These circumstances may include for example emergency cover or a proven shortage of specialists in the curriculum area.

- 3.2.5 Retirees can be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area and this will be kept under review.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 3.2.6 In addition to the above requirements, the below requirements must be met for appointment to the External Examiner role for apprenticeship courses:

- (a) Knowledge and understanding of the apprenticeship standard and assessment plan.
- (b) Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
- (c) Familiarity with the EPA performance expected of apprentices to achieve the award being assessed.
- (d) Knowledge to undertake EPA activities with integrity and impartiality to offer a fair, reliable and consistent assessment experience for all apprentices.
- (e) Be independent of the apprentice, the end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) or employing organisation who are involved in delivering the apprenticeship.

3.3 Timings

- 3.3.1 In most instances, a few months is required in order to complete the appointment, contracting and induction process required by the University. Therefore, application documentation should be submitted normally no later than the 31 May for appointments commencing in September of the following academic year. In exceptional circumstances, appointments may be made mid academic year, in these cases, applications should be submitted no later than 3 months prior to the start of the appointment.
- 3.3.2 This timescale ensures that the External Examiner's Proof of Right to Work can be checked, their contract issued and signed, access to the necessary IT systems can be authorised and they commence their appointment before any work has been sent to them for judgement.
- 3.3.3 It should be noted that in order to obtain all of the information required, work on some aspects of the Appointment stage should begin well in advance of these deadlines.
- 3.3.4 Where Schools or Colleges are proposing a mid-year appointment they should seek specific guidance from the AQSO at the earliest opportunity.

3.4 Termination, Resignation and Absence

- 3.4.1 The appointment of an External Examiner can be terminated by the University, approved by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards if, for example, they fail to fulfil their obligations, normally subject to three months' notice. Any termination of an External Examiner's appointment must be reported to the next Academic Board with reasons for termination.
- 3.4.2 There are a number of possible reasons for termination of contract. These include:
- Changes to curriculum or closure of courses.
 - Failure by an External Examiner to carry out their duties in accordance with their contract.
 - An External Examiner no longer meeting the criteria due to changed circumstances, e.g., insufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area following leaving the HE sector; a change in right to work in the UK status, changed circumstance creating a conflict of interest.
 - Evidence that an External Examiner's application/CV was inaccurate.
 - Evidence that an External Examiner does not have the right to work in the UK.
 - Evidence that the External Examiner's judgement/reporting is insufficiently thorough, critical, or objective.
- 3.4.3 Where an External Examiner wishes to resign their post, this will normally be subject to three months' notice to ensure that all standards are secured. Prior to their departure a resigning External Examiner will be required to submit an interim report.
- 3.4.4 An External Examiner can be temporarily replaced where a current External Examiner is unable to carry out their duties for a maximum period of one year.

4 APPLICATION

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 External Examiner Application ensures compliance with regulatory or legislative requirements (e.g., immigration and OfS conditions of registration).

4.1.2 The School or College is responsible for the following at the Application stage:

- (a) Identification of candidates for post.
- (b) Completion of External Examiner Application Form.
- (c) Approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College.

4.2 Identification of candidates for post

4.2.1 A Course Leader who wishes to propose the appointment of a new External Examiner should identify appropriate candidates for the role.

4.2.2 External Examiner posts can be advertised on the External Examiner JISCMail List or other official network or forum to ensure that all appropriate candidates have the opportunity to express their interest in roles at the University.

4.3 Completion of Application

4.3.1 A Course Leader who wishes to propose the appointment of a new External Examiner or an extension of time and/or duties of an existing External Examiner, must complete the External Examiner Application Form. The form is accessible from the [AQSO SharePoint site](#). Although the Course Leader is responsible for completing the Application Form, the Academic Quality Lead will have oversight of the Appointment process.

4.3.2 In completing the form, the Course Leader will need to:

- (a) consult Paragraph 3.2 above to ensure that the proposed External Examiner can demonstrably meet all necessary requirements.
- (b) provide the intended details of the course(s) and modules for which the External Examiner is to be appointed. The application form must include reference to specific courses and modules where these are currently being delivered, however any new modules should be referenced with indicative titles prior to the completion of course approval.
- (c) ensure that all required documentation is submitted with the application form e.g., CV, to the AQSO.

4.3.3 Schools or Colleges should consult the End Point Assessment Department when completing applications for apprenticeship courses.

4.3.4 Schools or Colleges should also consult the GPO regarding the proposal for any impact on UK or overseas Academic Partnerships.

- 4.3.5 An application for an extension of time and/or duties should be completed in the same way as for a new application, with the following exception:
- (a) There is not a requirement for an External Examiner to submit an updated CV when being nominated for an extension of time or an extension of duties unless they have changed role/job since their original application was considered or where there may be additional information included within the CV which would be helpful when considering an extension of duties which expands the subject area which they would be examining.

4.4 Approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College

- 4.4.1 The fully completed and signed External Examiner Application Form must be submitted for approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College or Academic Quality Lead. In signing the form, the Dean or Director or Head of School or College or Academic Quality Lead confirms that the proposal has been discussed and approved at executive level within the School or College.
- 4.4.2 The Dean or Director or Head of School or College approval confirms that the following points have been discussed and confirmed at both Executive and Operational level:
- (a) The allocation of modules or awards is appropriate.
 - (b) There are adequate resources allocated to the support of the External Examiner in undertaking their duties (e.g., an appropriate mentor has been identified).
- 4.4.3 The signed External Examiner Application Form must be sent to the AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk to enable the remaining stages to be completed. Where the AQSO considers that the application is either incomplete or does not meet the requirements for appointment this will be returned to the Dean or Director or Head of School or College with a clear explanation of the matters for consideration.

5 APPOINTMENT

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The External Examiner Appointment process ensures compliance with regulatory or legislative requirements (e.g., immigration and OfS conditions of registration). The Director of Academic Quality and Standards is authorised by the Academic Board to undertake this delegated duty.

5.1.2 The External Examiner Appointment process consists of two stages:

- (a) University Approval
- (b) Confirmation of Appointment

Apprenticeship courses:

5.1.3 External Examiners who are appointed to apprenticeship courses are subject to the appointment criteria and approval process outlined in this section of the handbook. For external examining arrangements for apprenticeships, the following need to be taken into consideration during the appointment process:

- (a) The University needs to be assured that the External Examiner is suitably qualified to undertake the role, providing a balance between academic and workplace practice experience and having currency of experience in both areas. In terms of workplace practice experience, consideration should be given to academic nominees who are working with a relevant industry to support delivery of a course (e.g., guest lecturers from industry, live briefs, experience of running an apprenticeship), members of an industrial liaison committee or undertaking consultancy in a relevant area. If an External Examiner cannot be found who matches the criteria, consideration should be given to appointing both an examiner with academic subject expertise and one with appropriate practice-based expertise.
- (b) External Examiners from industry may be appointed where appropriate; but each board shall have at least one External Examiner who has recent examining experience at the relevant level and who is familiar with the standards required for comparable courses.

5.1.4 Appointment of External Examiners will always be made following the guidance as stipulated within the EPA Assessment Plan for each individual apprenticeship standard.

5.2 University Approval

5.2.1 Once the application form and accompanying CV have been submitted, the application will be considered by the AQSO and a critical reader (an academic member of staff from another School or College) who is trained for the consideration of applications. The purpose is to check that the proposed External Examiner complies with internal and external regulations, prior to submission to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards.

- 5.2.2 Critical Readers are not required to undertake scrutiny of applications for an extension of time or an extension of duties, unless the AQSO deem that the nature of the extension request requires academic judgement in relation to the ability of the External Examiner to take on the amended role.
- 5.2.3 After considering the proposal, the Director of Academic Quality and Standards will take one of the following actions:
- (a) Approve without revisions.
 - (b) Approve subject to revisions to the satisfaction of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards.
 - (c) Refer for resubmission at a later date.
 - (d) Reject, and require further identification of an appropriate External Examiner.
- 5.2.4 Once the Director of Academic Quality and Standards has granted final approval, the AQSO will send an Offer Letter (contract) and information pack to the External Examiner. External Examiners are required to sign and return a copy of the Offer Letter to the AQSO. Once this has been received, the AQSO will liaise with the Human Resources Department and IT Services Department in order to ensure that the External Examiner is set up on the required systems. The AQSO will then notify the lead School or College; the School or College should inform the Academic Partners (where appropriate). From the School or College's perspective, the full approval process can now be considered complete.

5.3 Confirmation of Appointment

- 5.3.1 All newly appointed External Examiners must complete a Right to Work in the UK check.
- 5.3.2 In order for the University to comply with its legal duties under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006), checks that all External Examiners are eligible to work in the UK must be conducted. To avoid any possibility of discrimination this documentation is required from everyone, even if they are a UK citizen.
- 5.3.3 To enable swift appointment and to manage the expectations of applicants when staff members approach suitable candidates, they must mention to the candidate that they will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

6 EXAMINING

6.1 Introduction and contact

6.1.1 Induction and support for newly appointed External Examiners

6.1.1.1 External Examiners will be briefed before the start of their duties. The AQSO will arrange induction days for External Examiners to be held, as required depending on appointment dates. The dates are normally scheduled to take place in October and November with an additional session scheduled in February.

6.1.1.2 The aim of these sessions is to provide information on the role of the External Examiner at the University as well as to look at the key processes e.g., assessment boards and associated regulations.

6.1.1.3 The induction days should be interactive and informal and give newly appointed External Examiners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with University processes and meet with representatives from their School or College.

6.1.1.4 The [External Examiners Web Area](#) also provides guidance and support in undertaking the role.

6.1.2 Information provided by the AQSO and other departments

6.1.2.1 The Offer Letter, sent by the AQSO will contain: details of the course(s) and module(s) the External Examiner will be covering including reference to academic partners (where applicable); period of tenure; contact details, and induction day information.

6.1.2.2 The Human Resources Department will send a welcome letter to the External Examiner together with guidance for claiming fees and expenses via the MyView system.

6.1.2.3 The IT Services Department will send the External Examiner login information in order to access the University's IT systems including the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Blackboard.

6.1.2.4 The AQSO will send to the External Examiner an Annual Agreement by the end of October each academic year or following appointment during the year which details the course(s) and module(s) they are examining that academic year, including reference to academic partners (where applicable), fee information, Assessment Board dates (where available), and School or College contact details.

6.1.2.5 If Assessment Board dates are not available at the point of completing the Annual Agreement, these will be provided to the External Examiner by Academic Administration Department.

6.1.2.6 The workload of an External Examiner can change, reduce or increase annually for a number of reasons including:

- (a) Changes in curricula coverage due to changes in External Examining arrangements.

- (b) Modules closing or new modules running.
- (c) The addition of academic partnership provision.

6.1.2.7 The End Point Assessment Department will ensure that External Examiners for apprenticeship provision have access to the following information on confirmation of appointment:

- (a) The relevant apprenticeship standard.
- (b) A document mapping the academic course to the apprenticeship standard.
- (c) The EPA Assessment Plan for the apprenticeship course.
- (d) Any relevant assessment materials.

6.1.3 Information provided by the Course Leader

6.1.3.1 The Course Leader will ensure that the following information is sent to the External Examiner to complete initial briefing:

- (a) Access to specific modules and pages in Blackboard.
- (b) Website link to the academic regulations.
- (c) Course documentation including Course Handbook and Module Study Guides for each module for which the External Examiner has responsibility.
- (d) PSRB requirements (if applicable).
- (e) Student handbooks (if applicable).
- (f) Previous External Examiner reports and responses.
- (g) Course monitoring reports.
- (h) Any relevant discipline assessment criteria, marking schemes or model answers.

6.1.3.2 For Apprenticeship courses the following areas will also require clarification by the Course Leader during induction:

- (a) The employers who are involved with the Apprenticeship.
- (b) Whether the EPA is integrated, or non-integrated and how this affects the External Examiner role.
- (c) Cohort numbers and delivery patterns (which might be different for different employers).
- (d) Whether an External Examiner will be working alongside another External Examiner for the course (e.g., whether one External Examiner will have

particular responsibilities for the practice/vocational aspects of the Apprenticeship).

6.1.4 Mentoring arrangements for new External Examiners

6.1.4.1 A course team may wish to nominate an External Examiner who, whilst being well qualified to examine in terms of their specialist subject knowledge, does not have sufficient recent external examining experience. Nominees without sufficient external examining experience should, where possible, join an experienced external examining team and the School or College must allocate a mentor to offer support on the University's processes in their first year as External Examiner. The mentor must be an existing and experienced External Examiner, normally already with experience of working in this role at the University and should preferably be associated to a similar subject area. There is no additional fee associated with acting as a mentor.

6.1.5 Meeting with students

6.1.5.1 There is no formal University requirement for External Examiners to meet with students, although it is a PSRB requirement in some instances. External Examiners should be provided with the opportunity to engage with students where this is deemed appropriate by the course team. This will in part be determined by the nature of the discipline and assessment methods.

6.1.5.2 External Examiners find it useful to meet with students to assist in evaluation of the appropriateness of assessment methodologies, as well as to assist them in forming a view on standards and on quality of delivery.

6.1.5.3 Where External Examiners do meet with students the focus of discussion should be on the students' experience of learning and assessment. Questions might include:

- (a) Are students made aware of the overall outcomes for the course? Are timetables and workloads appropriate?
- (b) Do students feel they are being challenged?
- (c) Do students know how they are doing?
- (d) What feedback do students get on their progress and does it help them improve?
- (e) Are the library and IT facilities adequate?
- (f) What are the course strengths and are there any areas for improvement?

6.1.5.4 The University expects the External Examiner to exercise judgement when reporting on student views and interpret them against their wider knowledge of the course. Students should be encouraged to support and illustrate their views with examples of practice. The contribution from the External Examiner is to provide an independent critical perspective on student feedback. The University values student feedback and the course team should already have a good understanding of

student opinion. It does not always add value for External Examiners to simply report student views as stated without placing them in a critical context.

6.2 Approving Assessment Tasks

- 6.2.1 External Examiners must be consulted on draft assessment briefs and examination questions at undergraduate levels 5 and 6, and at postgraduate level 7. Assessment briefs and examination questions must be reviewed by External Examiners where the assessment is part of an enrollable Cert HE, Dip HE or Foundation Degree or where required by a PSRB or other subject specific requirement. To facilitate consideration by External Examiners, model answers, outline solutions and related marking schemes must be provided along with draft assessment briefs and examination questions.
- 6.2.2 All documents should be provided to External Examiners at least four months in advance of the assessment.
- 6.2.3 External Examiners should normally be consulted regarding students' choice of projects and/or design exercises and/or dissertations where these are integral components of module assessment at Level 6 or Level 7.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 6.2.4 All apprenticeships whether integrated or non-integrated, will require an independently assessed synoptic EPA. The arrangements for which are detailed in the respective apprenticeship's standards EPA plan, and the EPA. Where the EPA will be conducted by a separate independent apprenticeship EPAO, the EPAO is selected by the employer.
- 6.2.5 Where an apprenticeship standard is an integrated degree apprenticeship, the EPA is included within the degree award and UWL will need to ensure that they meet the requirements of the respective assessment plan in demonstrating the independence of the process for EPA.
- 6.2.6 As such, for integrated apprenticeships, the External Examiner may be involved in the oversight of the EPA. This might require undertaking consultation on the development and implementation of assessment materials specifically for the EPA. On some occasions the External Examiner may be required to participate and conduct EPA activity.
- 6.2.7 For non-integrated apprenticeships the External Examiner will not play a direct role in the EPA but will be involved in the awarding of the degree aspect of the apprenticeship. Where the University only acts as the EPAO it may be necessary to appoint an EPA External Assessor.

6.3 Sampling Assessed Work

- 6.3.1 The External Examiner has the right to see all assessed work in order to select an appropriate sample for moderation and/or audit against marking schemes/model answers/outline solutions. Detailed arrangements for selection shall be agreed with the External Examiner in advance.

- 6.3.2 The minimum moderation sample of student work, at all levels for all awards is: 10% of student work for each assessment on any modules that contribute to the final award, or ten pieces of work per assessment (whichever is the greater). The sample should reflect the range of marks across the module and include all borderline fails.
- 6.3.3 Where a sample is provided it should include:
- (a) The assessment(s) marked highest overall;
 - (b) A selection of passed assessments from each classification band;
 - (c) Any problematic assessments particularly where there was wide disagreement among internal examiners;
 - (d) A sample of fails;
 - (e) At the External Examiner's discretion, all fails in dissertation/major projects can be reviewed.
- 6.3.4 Assessments include all components contributing to a module including coursework elements and examination papers. The reference to 'problematic assessments' is intended to cover a variety of eventualities where the School or College wants the particular advice of the External Examiner. This would include, for example, exceptional cases where there is internal disagreement on the application of the marking scheme but must not be regarding a mark for a script or coursework assignment.
- 6.3.5 The External Examiner has the right to see any worked scripts and other assessed assignments, including coursework, projects, dissertations which contribute to the module mark. External Examiners shall have discretion to sample material which will allow them to render a judgement as to the:
- (a) Overall suitability of the assessment methods in practice.
 - (b) Coherence of the assessment strategy.
 - (c) Reliability of internal marking.
- 6.3.6 The External Examiner may conduct viva voce examinations in such exceptional cases as shall be determined by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College in consultation with the External Examiner.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 6.3.7 For Apprenticeship courses requirements will be stipulated as per each EPA Assessment Plan.

6.4 Approving Student Achievement

- 6.4.1 External Examiners shall be bound by the academic and assessment regulations of the University.

- 6.4.2 External Examiners shall offer advice and comments regarding the standards of the cohort and the assessment process. The External Examiner shall have equal power with internal members of the Assessment Board and may not override the collective view of the Board.
- 6.4.3 External Examiners must sign the matrices to signify endorsement of the marks for the modules and that decisions have been made in accordance with the University regulations.
- 6.4.4 Where unable to attend, the External Examiner must submit a statement to the Chair of the Assessment Board which states that they agree with the final marks awarded and standards achieved, and this should be attached to the matrices in lieu of their signature.

Where an External Examiner does not wish to or refuses to sign, see paragraphs on disputes below.

- 6.4.5 The signed pass lists will be retained within Academic Administration records as part of the Award and Progression Board minutes.
- 6.4.6 Disputes involving External Examiners
- 6.4.6.1 However, where an External Examiner does not agree with decisions taken by the Board or disagrees regarding issues of standards on taught modules, the views of the External Examiner shall be noted in the minutes of the relevant Assessment Board and in time in the External Examiner's report.
- 6.4.6.2 In these cases, the decisions of the Board must be separately ratified by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards before they are final.
- 6.4.6.3 The External Examiner may appeal, in exceptional circumstances, to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. The decision of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards shall be final.
- 6.4.6.4 If the External Examiner is unwilling to sign then they shall submit, in writing, their rationale, with justification to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards will investigate any issues which might mean that students' marks would not otherwise be considered at the Award Board. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards shall have authority to sign the pass list in lieu of the External Examiner.
- 6.4.6.5 When the decision of an External Examiner considering a dissertation submitted for a Master's degree by Examination gives rise to a case of dispute between the External Examiner(s) and internal examiners it is within the power of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards to decide on the matter, at their discretion, or to appoint another External Examiner to provide an independent opinion. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards may take into account any written reports submitted by members of the Assessment Board.
- 6.4.6.6 In choosing a second External Examiner the Director of Academic Quality and Standards may also take into account, but need not be bound by, the nomination (if any) of an Assessment Board for a second External Examiner. A decision on

whether or not to reconvene the Examining Board shall be at the discretion of this second External Examiner whose decision on this matter shall be final.

7 REPORTING

7.1 Submitting the annual report

- 7.1.1 External Examiners will provide reports on individual modules to the module leaders throughout their tenure. External Examiners are required to submit (a) written report(s) on an annual basis to the University according to the deadlines set in the report template(s) and communicated to the External Examiners. The report(s) must be received before payment of fees is authorised. Such reports should cover the full range of activities with which the External Examiners have been involved. External Examiners will be advised by the University on the annual report(s) they are required to submit based on their annual remit.
- 7.1.2 The final report(s) (completed on the same template(s) as the annual) made at the end of the term of office, should give general observations based on the whole period as well as covering the year in question. Particular attention should be paid to any issues that have been raised, but not addressed during the External Examiner's period of tenure.
- 7.1.3 Where an External Examiner is appointed to oversee work delivered at the University and Academic Partner, the External Examiner must refer specifically to the academic partner(s) cohort(s) in the relevant annual report(s), raising any issues (where appropriate) and confirming the academic quality and standards of the provision.
- 7.1.4 Interim/supplementary reports may be submitted at any times where an External Examiner considers that issues have arisen which require prompt attention. This report is intended to be exceptional, and it will not be necessary for External Examiners to report on the satisfactory operation, or progress of the work, of the assessment board.
- 7.1.5 An External Examiner may send a separate report to the Vice-Chancellor and President on any matter which they deem necessary; such a report may be sent in confidence at any time. If an External Examiner has serious concerns about issues related to standards within the University and has exhausted all internal procedures including a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor and President, they should access the independent mechanism for addressing concerns about standards and quality in higher education managed by the OfS.
- 7.1.6 External Examiner Annual reports will be processed and reviewed by the AQSO who is responsible for ensuring that reports are considered and that any necessary actions are taken within the University.
- 7.1.7 Annual reports should be completed as directed by the AQSO; the templates or means of reporting may change annually. The report(s) is a major source of information in the annual monitoring process. The report(s) should contain clear information on academic standards and should advise on good practice, innovation

and areas for enhancement. The most useful reports not only celebrate the positive aspects of courses but also give specific recommendations for actions.

- 7.1.8 In the unlikely event of a report not being sufficiently clear or informative, the University may seek further details.
- 7.1.9 Where an External Examiner has not submitted an annual report and following numerous attempts to contact the External Examiner by both the AQSO and the School or College, the School or College must submit a Record of External Examiner Activity to the AQSO, in lieu of an annual report. Written reports or minutes from assessment boards can also be used as evidence of External Examiner engagement. By completing this form, the School or College is confirming that the External Examiner concerned undertook the activities indicated in the form and appropriately engaged with the School or College in completing these activities.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 7.1.10 If the External Examiner remit includes an Apprenticeship course, the annual report will also require specific feedback from the External Examiner on the delivery of the Apprenticeship, this may include details on EPA delivery depending on the appointment. External Examiners will be expected to comment on the following aspects:
- (a) Is the Apprenticeship aligned to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Characteristic Statement for Apprenticeships?
 - (b) Does the Apprenticeship provide evidence of development of Maths and English?
 - (c) Is there evidence that learning and teaching includes coverage of Safeguarding, Prevent and British Values?
 - (d) Does the teaching and learning fully cover the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours set out in the Apprenticeship Standard?
 - (e) Is it clear how the minimum 'off-the-job' learning is relevant, of benefit to the Apprentice and Employer, and monitored?
 - (f) Is it clear where elements of assessment within modules are linked to the occupation and the EPA?
 - (g) Have EPAs been carried out following internal and external quality assurance requirements and requirements as set out in the assessment plan?
 - (h) Are apprentices receiving a good level of support from the University?

7.2 Responding to the Annual Report

- 7.2.1 The AQSO should acknowledge receipt of an External Examiner's annual report and provide an indication of the timescale for a formal written response from the Course Leader or nominee.

- 7.2.2 The Course Leader or nominee is responsible for preparing the formal response to the External Examiner by the appropriate deadline using the External Examiner's Response Template. For courses being delivered by academic partners, the academic partner course leader is responsible for preparing the draft formal written response and sending this to the Academic Partnership Link Tutor for review.
- 7.2.3 The response must be reviewed by the Academic Quality Lead who is responsible for ensuring that any 'management issues' raised by the External Examiner (for example, relating to staffing resources) are referred to the School or College Executive for response.
- 7.2.4 The response must be checked by the AQSO, and subsequently sent by the AQSO directly to the External Examiner.
- 7.2.5 The AQSO will hold the definitive copy of all External Examiner reports and responses and will ensure they are accessible internally on the [AQSO SharePoint site](#). The full report subject to redaction where appropriate and response are shared with students through publication on Blackboard (or equivalent VLE for academic partners) and discussion at appropriate student/staff committee structures to strengthen student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. Reports should not include the names of students or members of staff.
- 7.2.6 Summaries of all External Examiner reports and responses are considered by the relevant Course Committees and School or College Quality Committees, as part of the evidence base for the University's monitoring and review processes.
- 7.2.7 Where an External Examiner has raised 'causes for concern' about standards, the Director of Academic Quality and Standards is responsible for ensuring that these concerns are addressed appropriately by the School or College or Academic Partner in a timely fashion and that an appropriate and timely response is sent to the External Examiner.
- 7.2.8 The Director of Academic Quality and Standards has access to copies of all External Examiners' reports and responses. If their attention is drawn to any issue of concern which requires urgent action the issue can be dealt with outside the quality assurance committee structure but must involve the Dean or Director or Head of School or College and other relevant staff. Reports on the action taken, if any, shall be provided to the AQSC, as appropriate. A summary report of all External Examiner reports and external examining activity is submitted to the AQSC annually by the Senior Quality Officer - Monitoring and External Examining.