



External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

Purpose of Policy

The policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of Schools, Colleges and at the Institutional level for external examining processes.

Overview

The policy replaces: (i) Code of Practice for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes and (ii) Guidance to Schools/Colleges regarding the Freedom of Information and Data Protection implications of the University's Code of Practice on External Examining.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

This policy applies to External Examiners, staff who are engaged in assessment, processes involving External Examiners appointed for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes or courses and those involved in development of Course or Programme Handbooks. The policy must be applied, unless an exemption has been approved by Quality Assurance Committee or as otherwise stated in the policy, on the basis of a case proposed by a College. The "Application of the policy" provides guidance and must be applied, unless the College has approved an exemption on the basis of a case proposed by a School. The approving body records concessions and exemptions.

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Document control

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Approving authority

Quality Assurance Committee

Consultation undertaken

Working Group of Quality Assurance Committee

Section responsible for policy maintenance & review

Academic Services

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

Taught Assessment Regulations
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment-regulations/taught>
Guidance on policy, principle and operation of Boards of Examiners:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners

UK Quality Code

UK Quality Code, External Expertise

Policies superseded by this policy

Code of Practice for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes, all previous versions of this policy

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.

Keywords

External Examiner, Board of Examiners



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Introduction

1. The University's Taught Assessment Regulations govern the conduct of assessment and examinations. This policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.



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All sections of the policy apply to External Examiners appointed to a course(s) or taught programme(s), referred to as Course External Examiners and Programme External Examiners respectively, unless otherwise stated.

External Examiners' Roles

2. The External Examiner system forms a key part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. External Examiners provide independent and impartial assurance of:
 - consistent assessment standards, processes and student achievements which are comparable with other institutions;
 - the integrity and rigour of assessment;
 - fair, reliable and transparent assessment and degree classification.

External Examiners also

- identify good practice and enhancements and
- contribute to programme and course design.

3. External Examiners need to be able to:
 - a) participate in assessment procedures (see sections 36-47); and
 - b) comment and give advice on assessment procedures and standards and jointly agree, as members of the Board of Examiners, the detailed assessment, award and final degree results.
4. External Examiners have the right to see any assessment material pertinent to the role and may comment about any aspect of a course or programme for which they are appointed as External Examiner.
5. Schools will not ask an External Examiner to assess directly the work of individual students unless this is explicitly stated in the External Examiner's terms of appointment. Where External Examiners are expected to advise on individual cases, the final decision will be made by the Board of Examiners, with consideration of the External Examiner's views.
6. Schools will determine which Programme or Course External Examiners may be required to have oversight of the decision process of the Undergraduate Progression Board.
7. Colleges or Schools may also choose to invite External Examiners to see and comment on reports and feedback related to curriculum review and quality of educational provision.
8. Schools may ask External Examiners to comment on the wider quality and enhancement aspects of a programme or course, such as its design, curriculum, mode of delivery and assessment methods.



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9. External Examiners are required to provide an annual report based on what they have observed of the University's assessment processes and students' assessed work.

Application

- 9.1 External Examiners should also comment on course content, balance and structure and on degree programme curricula. See sections 48 – 53, which set out the expectations for External Examiners on completing External Examiner Reports.

Course External Examiners

10. The College appoints a Course External Examiner to each course. The Course External Examiner is expected to:
 - a) assess and comment on whether the course enables students to achieve the defined learning outcomes and whether the assessment is appropriate in this regard;
 - b) consider the level of achievement of students on the course, in relation to standards elsewhere in the sector for the same kind of course within similar degree programmes;
 - c) review and approve, if appropriate, all examination papers and assessment criteria for the courses examined;
 - d) scrutinise a representative sample of all assessed work across each of the courses examined in order to judge whether marks are fairly and consistently applied to students across the courses, and whether markers are applying the marking scheme consistently and using the full range of marks where justified;
 - e) participate as a member of the relevant Board of Examiner meetings and to agree jointly the decisions of the Board of Examiners; and
 - f) be satisfied that the business of the Board of Examiners is correctly and robustly carried out, in line with the University's policies and regulations.

Application

- 10.1 The College can appoint a Course External Examiner for multiple courses, where appropriate. Colleges may appoint a Programme External Examiner to act as Course External Examiner for one or more courses.



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Programme External Examiner

11. The College appoints at least one Programme External Examiner to each programme that leads to a higher education award.
12. For combined degree programmes, the “owning” School is responsible for recommending Programme External Examiners for appointment by the College.

Application

- 12.1 Colleges can appoint a single Programme External Examiner for multiple programmes, including their exit awards, where appropriate.
 - 12.2 A Programme External Examiner may be appointed to a programme and also act as a Course External Examiner for one or more courses. Where no Course External Examiners are appointed, the Programme External Examiner will also act as the Course External Examiner for the courses within the programme.
13. The College appoints Programme External Examiners to give oversight of a whole programme. They are expected to:
- a) assess and comment on whether the programme design enables students to achieve the defined learning outcomes for the programme;
 - b) affirm that the programme meets recognised national standards for the final award;
 - c) consider the application of the scheme of award for classification of honours to ensure it is correctly and fairly applied to all students on the programme;
 - d) participate as a member of the relevant Board of Examiner meetings and to agree jointly the decisions of the Board of Examiners; and
 - e) be satisfied that the business of the Board of Examiners is correctly and robustly carried out, in line with the University’s policies and regulations.

Application

- 13.1 Programme External Examiners do not necessarily need to have knowledge of all the subject areas covered by the programme in order to perform the role of Programme External Examiner. The Programme External Examiner’s role is to have oversight of the academic standards for the programme(s) and/or award(s) for which they are appointed. The University’s Taught Assessment Regulations provide further information about the operation of the Board of Examiners:
www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf



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Appointment

14. Colleges, on behalf of the University, are responsible for appointing External Examiners. Colleges must have robust and documented mechanisms for approval of appointments in place.
15. Schools make nominations to the College after consultation with the staff members teaching the course or programme and having ascertained that the proposed individual is willing to accept the nomination as External Examiner.

Application

- 15.1 Schools and Colleges may operate different nomination and appointment processes depending on their respective quality assurance structures. Nominations are made in the name of the relevant Head of School and appointments are approved in the name of the Head of College. The information contained in the External Examiner nomination form should affirm to the College that the person nominated has the necessary authority and experience and meets the other requirements set out in relation to qualifications and expertise, conflicts of interest and terms of office below.

Selection

16. Schools and Colleges select External Examiners from suitably qualified people who meet the qualifications and expertise outlined in this policy (See sections 20 and 21). Prior to appointment, Schools and Colleges must also consider any potential conflicts of interest (see section 22).
17. The number of External Examiners for any particular degree programme or course should be sufficient to cover the range of studies therein. More than one External Examiner may be needed where there is a large number of students, the course or programme covers a wide range of studies, and/or a large volume of academic work contributes to the course or programme.

Application

- 17.1 In specialised subjects where the pool of expertise is small, it may be necessary to appoint a single External Examiner to more than one Board of Examiners simultaneously. Schools should exercise judgement in allocating an individual External Examiner a manageable workload.



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18. External Examiners should normally be resident in the United Kingdom.

Application

- 18.1 If the proposed External Examiner is resident abroad, and planning to undertake work in the UK, the School must take account of UK visa and immigration requirements, travel costs and, where appropriate, check that the College is prepared to pay the cost of travel to Edinburgh before proposing the appointment.
- 18.2 Where an External Examiner from outside the UK is appointed, the School should confirm that the individual has the required knowledge of the UK Higher Education system.
- 18.3 Human Resources' website provides information on Right to Work in the UK and information and guidance for recruiters on immigration and visa requirements. See: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-guidance/right-to-work-checks> [EASE log in required].

19. Schools must take account of any professional validation by external organisations or professional bodies if these are required in the discipline.

Qualifications and Expertise

20. In order to ensure that External Examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities expected of them, only individuals who can show appropriate evidence of the following will be appointed:
 - a) appropriate knowledge and understanding of the UK HE Sector's agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards, including the relevant subject benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks and UK Quality Code for Higher Education (See <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>), along with sufficient experience of quality assurance and enhancement processes;
 - b) a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered and the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to be able to identify good practice and recommend enhancements;
 - c) sufficient standing and experience to be able to command authority and the respect of academic peers and, where relevant, professional peers;
 - d) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate. External Examiners from outside the HE system, for example from industry or the professions, may be appropriate in certain circumstances;



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- e) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- f) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- g) familiarity with the standard expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- h) fluency in English and, where programmes are delivered or assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s); and
- i) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Application

20.1 In addition to the above, Schools may wish to develop their own School-specific guidance on the requisite qualifications and experience for External Examiners, as appropriate to their own specific disciplines.

21. In exceptional circumstances, the College may approve the appointment of an External Examiner who does not meet the criteria with respect to qualifications and experience. Requests for appointments of External Examiners in these circumstances must be supported by a School recommendation. Colleges will not approve this type of exceptional appointment for a sole Programme External Examiner for a specific degree programme. Colleges will report annually to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on exceptional appointments of External Examiners who do not meet the criteria for qualifications and experience stated in this policy.

Application

- 21.1 These exceptional circumstances may arise where the School seeks appointment of an External Examiner from industry or where the nominee has no previous experience as an External Examiner. Where the College appoints an External Examiner who is not an academic for a particular course, the School will need to ensure that it has a mechanism for assuring academic standards are maintained; for example, by having another External Examiner who is an academic on the Board of Examiners.
- 21.2 Where an External Examiner has no previous experience as an External Examiner for any institution, a more experienced External Examiner will be appointed to act as mentor to work with the first-time External Examiner to provide guidance and to ensure that the Examiner fulfils the requirements of their role. Schools must consider whether first-time External Examiners have additional information and development needs when compared with experienced examiners.



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Conflicts of Interest

22. External Examiners must be wholly impartial and independent of the University, its staff, governing body and relevant partners. Individuals in any of the following categories will not be appointed as External Examiners:
- a) Members of the University Court, University Committee members or employees of the University.
 - b) Anyone with a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship with a student being assessed. (See also 25.)
 - c) Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to significantly influence the future of students on the programme of study or any of the courses in question.
 - d) 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 course(s) in question. Significant involvement in this context means directly involved with a close knowledge of one another's work.
 - e) Former staff or students of the institution, unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the individual have completed their programme(s) of study.
 - f) Anyone whose appointment would create a reciprocal external examining arrangement involving equivalent programmes at another higher education institution.
 - g) Anyone whose appointment immediately follows the appointment of an External Examiner from the same department in the same higher education institution.
 - h) Any nominee who has a colleague from the same department of the same institution already acting on the Board of Examiners to which the nominee is to be appointed.
 - i) Any nominee who has an honorary position at the University or has held an honorary position at the University within the last five years.

Application

- 22.1 This is a non-exhaustive list. Schools and Colleges must use their judgement when ascertaining whether a conflict of interest exists.
- 22.2 With regard to section 22 (f), staff who perform External Examiner duties in other Universities should keep their School informed in order to ensure that reciprocal arrangements involving equivalent programmes do not occur.
- 22.3 Schools should avoid a situation where a member of University staff and a member of staff of another Higher Education Institution are both simultaneously sitting on the same Board of Examiners at both institutions. To maintain objectivity, Schools should



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attempt to select examiners from the full pool of experts available rather than continually re-appointing from a small, familiar group.

23. The External Examiner must keep the School informed of any changes in circumstances that may give rise to a conflict of interest. The School should inform the College when a conflict of interest arises.
24. In exceptional circumstances, the College may approve the appointment of an External Examiner where a conflict of interest has been identified. Requests for appointments of External Examiners in these circumstances must be supported by a School recommendation. Such an appointment will not be approved for a sole Programme External Examiner for a specific degree programme. Colleges will report annually to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on exceptional appointments of External Examiners with conflicts of interest categories stated in this policy.

Application

- 24.1 Exceptional circumstances may arise when a limited pool of expertise is available in a specific discipline or subject area.

Disclosure of intimate relationships

25. The University requires any member of staff, including External Examiners, to disclose an intimate relationship with any University of Edinburgh student (see [Policy on Disclosure of Intimate Relationships](#)).

Terms of office

26. The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will be for four years. An exceptional extension of one year may be permitted, if necessary.
27. Where an External Examiner retires from their institution during their four year External Examiner term, their appointment with the University as an External Examiner will cease at the end of the relevant academic session. An exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity may be approved.
28. An External Examiner who has completed their term of appointment is not eligible for a new appointment until five years have elapsed.
29. In view of the time commitment required to fulfil the duties of an External Examiner, it is recommended that an individual should hold no more than one other External Examiner appointment for courses or taught programmes during their period of employment as an External Examiner in the University.



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30. The University expects that the External Examiner has agreed with their own institution / employer the time commitment required for the role.
31. It is recommended that the period of office for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate External Examiners begins on 1 August, finishes on 31 October for all undergraduate External Examiners and on 30 November for all postgraduate taught External Examiners.

Appointment and Induction

32. Once the College has approved an External Examiner's nomination, the College, or School where the College has delegated this responsibility, will communicate with the External Examiner notifying them of their appointment.

Application

- 32.1 The appointment notification should include:

- a) a formal letter of appointment and details of the External Examiner contract, including a statement on the External Examiner's duties. This should include the courses or programmes they are appointed for, deadline for return of the External Examiner report and a statement that the External Examiner will operate within this policy and within the University's other regulations and policies;
- b) guidance on the payment of fees and expenses, including relevant forms. The School or College will provide an explanation of how the External Examiner's fee is calculated or the amount if a fee is set. It should be explained that the fee will be subject to the External Examiner's satisfactory fulfilment of their duties and will be paid on receipt of the External Examiner's final report. The School / College will also provide information on the University's Expenses Policy; and
- c) the process for raising serious concerns about academic standards. (See sections 64-65)

33. Schools will brief External Examiners as appropriate so as to enable External Examiners to fulfil their duties, including giving due attention to the needs of first-time External Examiners.

Application

- 33.1 This information should include links to:

- relevant sections of the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study,
- course and programme handbooks,
- objectives of the courses,
- curricula and teaching methods,
- methods of assessment and marking scales or grade schemes,



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- the schedule for aggregation of marks of the various components in the overall assessment and
- any arrangements for credit on aggregate or reassessment of parts of the programme.

The School must also ensure that the External Examiner is briefed on their oversight role, where they have one, for an Undergraduate Progression Board.

34. At the beginning of the academic session, the School should provide the following information to the External Examiner:
- a) information on dates of meetings;
 - b) details of the Board of Examiners' composition;
 - c) detailed arrangements for other examining activities such as attendance at orals or practicals; and
 - d) any other material the School considers necessary for the External Examiner to fulfil their role effectively.

Termination of Appointment

35. The University can terminate an External Examiner's appointment at any time where the External Examiner is deemed not to have fulfilled their obligations or if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved. External Examiners who wish to resign before the end of their normal term of office must give three months' notice in writing to the appointing College.

Application

- 35.1 Schools are expected to review the work of External Examiners and make recommendations for termination to the College for contractual non-compliance should this become necessary. The College is responsible for monitoring the External Examiners' compliance with their contracts. Schools and Colleges must make reasonable efforts to resolve issues of non-compliance through discussions with the External Examiner concerned. In rare cases where these matters cannot be resolved, termination of the appointment may be carried out by the Head of College on the basis of advice from Human Resources. The reasons for the termination of the appointment along with efforts to resolve the issues, should be fully documented.



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Participation in Assessment

36. External Examiners are full members of the Board(s) of Examiners. All External Examiners have the right to attend meetings of all relevant Boards of Examiners.
37. In order to be quorate, at least one External Examiner must participate in and approve the decisions of the Board of Examiners.
38. External Examiners must participate in all Board of Examiners meetings relevant to their appointment. External Examiners are required to attend in person at least one Board of Examiners meeting in the first year of their term.

Application

- 38.1 If an External Examiner is not able to attend at least one Board of Examiners meeting in the first year of their term, their non-attendance must be reported to the College. The Taught Assessment Regulations define “attendance” and “participation”.

Course External Examiners

39. In some disciplines, an External Examiner may need to assess students directly in some parts of the assessment (for example orals) and this should be explicitly stated in the External Examiner’s contract. In all other cases, the External Examiner must never be asked to mark, grade or otherwise assess directly the work of individual students.
40. External Examiner(s) must review and approve draft examination papers. Draft examination papers should be accompanied by model answers, where applicable and appropriate, or solutions and the marking schemes to be applied.
41. Schools will provide Course External Examiners with a sample of students’ assessed work for each component of summative assessment on the course (for example, examination scripts or student coursework) to review.

Application

- 41.1 The samples must provide the External Examiners with enough evidence to determine that internal marking is of an appropriate standard and is consistent. External Examiners should see samples of summative assessments from the top, middle and bottom of the range. The principles governing the selection of these samples must be agreed in advance and communicated to the External Examiner.
42. Schools may ask External Examiners to jointly invigilate practical, oral or performance elements of exams with members of academic staff. Schools must inform students if oral assessment arrangements will involve an External Examiner.



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Application

- 42.1 Where External Examiners directly conduct oral examinations, Schools must provide the necessary information about the oral assessment to allow them to judge the student's performance. Where the External Examiner does not directly examine the student, they have the right to view oral examinations and presentations (either in person or by audio-visual means) where practicable and proportionate. See the regulation on "Oral assessment" in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf
43. External Examiners should have the same amount of involvement in both the content and process of practical examinations as they have for written papers and coursework.
44. Some Arts disciplines require assessment by live performance or exhibition. Participation by External Examiners in these forms of assessment must meet current standards and practices of the sector and relevant professional bodies, including, where appropriate the creation of retainable documentation of the performance and/or exhibition.

Programme External Examiners

45. The Programme External Examiner approves jointly, as a member of the Board, the decisions of the Board of Examiners regarding students' programme outcomes, including award and classification. The Programme External Examiner confirms that these decisions are taken in line with University regulations and published criteria.
46. Programme Boards of Examiners determine programme outcomes based on course marks which have already been ratified by a Board of Examiners. Members of the Programme Board, including the Programme External Examiner, are not entitled to challenge ratified course marks.
47. Programme External Examiners may be required to have oversight of the decision process of an Undergraduate Progression Board. This oversight may be remote; the External Examiner does not need to be physically present.

Application

- 47.1 The Undergraduate Progression Boards Policy sets out the responsibilities of External Examiners who have oversight of the decision process of the Board and how Schools can effectively support External Examiners in fulfilling their role.

www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/ug_progression_boards.pdf



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External Examiner Reports

Submission

48. External Examiners are required to submit a report annually to the Principal of the University via the External Examiner Reporting System.
49. External Examiners are also required to provide an additional reflective overview at the end of their periods of office.
50. The deadlines for submission of the External Examiner reports are 31 July for undergraduate and 30 November for postgraduate taught. External Examiners may submit their annual reports at any time prior to the deadline.
51. External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on the extent to which:
 - a) the University is maintaining threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
 - b) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s) or programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
 - c) the academic standards and the achievements of the students are comparable with those of other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience.
52. External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on quality assurance and quality enhancement and are asked to:
 - a) confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled and if evidence was insufficient, give details;
 - b) state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction;
 - c) address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body and highlight areas of good practice and innovation; and
 - d) recommend, where appropriate, opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.
53. External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on teaching, course and programme structures and content including:
 - a) good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment; and
 - b) opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.



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Actions in response to External Examiners' Reports

54. Schools are responsible for ensuring that they have robust mechanisms in place for handling External Examiner reports and for taking appropriate action where required in response to those reports.
55. A senior person responsible for teaching and quality assurance matters (the Academic Response Co-ordinator), designated by the Head of School, will take responsibility for responding to each External Examiner report. Schools will respond to External Examiner reports within six weeks so that information in the reports is acted upon promptly in order to maximise its use to Schools and students. This response will demonstrate that the University has given full and serious consideration to the comments made and indicate what actions will be taken as a result.
56. It is the College's responsibility to oversee the operation of School processes for responding to External Examiners' reports. Each College is also responsible for handling issues or suggestions arising from External Examiners' reports that pertain to the College, so that Colleges can take appropriate action where required.
57. The College is responsible for identifying issues or suggestions that have institutional level implications and raising these matters in appropriate forums at an institutional level.
58. The College is responsible for ensuring that issues raised in a particular report, that are judged to be particularly serious or important, are notified to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance acting on behalf of the Principal. This is only likely to occur in exceptional cases where institutional action is necessary.
59. Schools may choose to send the reports of External Examiners who are subject to validation by external organisations, to the relevant organisation, provided they are accompanied by information setting the Examiner's comments into context and noting any action that will be taken as a result of the report.

Analysis of Themes arising from External Examiner Reports

60. Colleges and the University's Senate Quality Assurance Committee use information from External Examiner reports to identify common themes to help shape their strategic approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, and to enhance the student experience.
61. Schools will make themes from External Examiner reports, and the Schools' summarised response to these themes, available to student representatives.

Application

- 61.1 Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) should consider themes arising from External Examiners' reports and summarised responses from Schools/Subject areas. Each School should decide which SSLC is most appropriate for the consideration of the summary reports.



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62. Students have the right to view External Examiners' reports. Schools are responsible for making External Examiner reports available to students on request.

Application

- 62.1 See sections 66 - 73 for further guidance on freedom of information and data protection matters. Schools should record the frequency of requests.

Expenses and Fees

63. Colleges are responsible for determining how to set External Examiner fees, and for arranging for the payment of fees and expenses. In some circumstances, Colleges may devolve responsibility for paying fees and expenses to Schools. Payment of expenses must be in line with the University's Expenses Policy.

Application

- 63.1 Payment of the External Examiner's fee is made annually by the Finance Office after receipt of a completed report from the External Examiner, and on the basis of payment instruction from Colleges or Schools.

Raising Serious Concerns

64. External Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, who acts on behalf of the Principal, if necessary, by means of a separate confidential report. The Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance will respond in writing, outlining any actions to be taken as a result.

65. Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings in the academic standards of a programme or programmes (and has exhausted all procedures internal to the University, including the submission of a confidential report to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance), they may invoke the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

Data Protection

Personal information of External Examiners

66. In order to administer the processes of appointing, managing, and paying fees to External Examiners, Schools and Colleges hold personal data regarding External Examiners in line with the University's Data Protection Policy.



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Use of data by External Examiners

67. External Examiners have access to confidential information and must ensure that personal data are always held securely and are not disclosed to any unauthorised third party either accidentally, negligently, or intentionally.
68. External Examiners must not identify students or staff in their reports. It should be noted that even if a student or member of staff is not named it may be possible to identify them, for example using a student's exam number or matriculation number, or a member of staff's job title.
69. Where an External Examiner identifies an individual, the individual has the right under data protection law to make a subject access request.

Details of External Examiners

70. The names, positions and institutions of External Examiners must be included in the relevant course/programme handbook and made available to students. Where an External Examiner is appointed to fulfil a role on behalf of a professional body, this will be stated.

Application

- 70.1 This information will also be made available to relevant staff in the University, and, where relevant, to external bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency.
- 70.2 Schools must inform students, in the course/programme handbook, that students must not make direct contact with External Examiners, and that other routes exist for queries about the assessment process.
- 70.3 The University holds information on appointed External Examiners for no longer than is necessary. The [Human Resources \(HR\) privacy notice](#) and [retention schedule](#) give details of categories of information and how long the University holds the information.

External Examiner Reports

71. The University does not publish External Examiner reports. However, External Examiner Reports are disclosable upon receipt of a request for copies of the reports in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Application

- 71.1 Schools are responsible for making External Examiners' reports available to students and the public on request. There is no requirement to publish External Examiners' reports. Schools must take care to redact from the report any information about identifiable students.



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- 71.2 If the School is unsure about any aspect of a request made under freedom of information or data protection law, they should contact their local practitioner or the Records Management Section. Requests for the disclosure of any restricted reports made directly and separately to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance will be judged on a case by case basis in line with the University's freedom of information obligations.
 - 71.3 External Examiner reports are accessible to those who have access to the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) system and Business Information Suite. This means that a significant number of staff in the University are able to access External Examiner reports and Schools' responses. The system includes a mechanism for reporting a data breach. System guides contain further information on using this tool.
72. External Examiner reports are held in the system for five years from submission.
73. Data protection advice is available from the local Data Protection Champion and the University Data Protection Officer. Information Security advice is available from the Information Security Division of IS. Advice on disclosure of information is available from the University's Records Management Section.

1 August 2019