

## External Examiner Procedures

This documents relates to external examining of taught programmes. Each section is also available online [here](#).

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is intended to help external examiners understand and fulfil their role as an external examiner at the University of Southampton. It sets out the University’s expectations, provides further information on policies and procedures, signposts relevant University ordinances, regulations, and indicates the kind of support external examiners may expect. It is also designed to ensure that external examiners appointed by the University are appropriately qualified and in a position to provide informative comment and recommendations in line with Indicators 2, 3 and 4 of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)’s UK Quality Code, [Part B, Chapter B7: External Examining](#).

## 2. Contacting the University

- 2.1 Administration of external examining (taught programmes) is overseen by the Quality Standards and Accreditation Team (QSAT) in Student and Academic Administration. Queries relating to the University’s quality management framework, external examiner appointments and terms of contract should be addressed in the first instance to:

Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team  
University of Southampton  
Highfield Campus, Building 37  
Southampton, SO17 1BJ  
Email : [qsa@soton.ac.uk](mailto:qsa@soton.ac.uk)  
Telephone : 02380 593094

- 2.2 Queries about academic issues, examination papers, dates of Board of Examiners meetings, accessing online systems and payment of fees and expenses, should be addressed to the nominated contact in the Faculty - usually the Director of Programmes.

### 3. The role of an external examiner

- 3.1 External examiners are responsible, through the appropriate Faculty Programmes Committee (FPC) and Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), to Senate. All external examiners must be formally appointed to the role and sign an appointment letter prior the commencement of their role.

- 3.2 The primary role of an external examiner is:

- to assist the University in ensuring that the standard of its awards is maintained at the appropriate level in accordance with the framework for higher education qualifications and the relevant national subject benchmarks;
- to assist the University in ensuring that its assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in accordance with the University's policies and regulations;
- to assist the University in ensuring that the academic standards and achievement of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiner has experience;
- to assist the University in enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by advising on good practice identified within the University and beyond.

- 3.3 External examiners' reports are an essential aspect of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University. The University views the external examiner system in general and external examiners' reports in particular as key mechanisms for the management of academic standards and reflection on the quality of the student learning experience.

### 4. Programmes requiring external examiners

- 4.1 The University requires that an external examiner is appointed for every programme which leads to an award of the University (including collaborative provision). An external examiner is not required for any provision which does not contribute to an award.
- 4.2 No credit bearing degree, diploma or certificate of the University may be awarded without participation in the examining process by at least one external examiner, who is a full member of the relevant [Board of Examiners](#).
- 4.3 The number of external examiners for any particular programme of study should be sufficient to cover the full range of studies. More than one external examiner may be needed where there are many students or where the degree programme covers a wide range of subject material.

## 5. Collaborative provision requirements

- 5.1 All [collaborative provision](#) must be the subject of scrutiny by an external examiner(s). The University is responsible for the appointment of external examiners for all credit bearing programmes leading to its awards, even where these programmes are delivered by a collaborative partner; the University will determine in discussion with such partners the extent to which they will be involved in aspects of the external examining process (for example, nominations and induction). For joint awards the arrangements for such appointments will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement.

## 6. Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements

- 6.1 The Associate Dean (Education and Student Experience) (ESE) is responsible for ensuring that specific requirements in relation to external examining which may be stipulated by relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are satisfied.

## 7. Period of appointment

- 7.1 External examiners are normally appointed for a period of four years but may be appointed for shorter periods as recommended by the Faculty. Appointments for one year or less are discouraged as it is important to have continuity over a number of years.
- 7.2 Exceptionally where a programme has closed and an external examiner is required for one further year only, a case may be made for the appointment to be extended to an absolute maximum of five years.

## 8. Criteria for appointment of external examiners

- 8.1 The University applies the following criteria for the appointment of external examiners, which are derived from the national set of criteria. In accordance with the criteria for appointment:

### *Person specification*

- a. External examiners should normally be able to show evidence of the following:
- (i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
  - (ii) competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study or parts thereof;
  - (iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
  - (iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
  - (v) sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers, and, where appropriate, professional peers;
  - (vi) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award which is to be assessed;
  - (vii) fluency in English, and, where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that External examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements);
  - (viii) meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
  - (ix) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
  - (x) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

### *Conflicts of interest*

- b. The University does not appoint as an external examiner anyone in the following categories or circumstances:
  - (i) a member of a governing body or committee of the University, or a current employee of the University;
  - (ii) a member of a governing body of a collaborative partner, or a current employee of a collaborative partner who has responsibility in the same (or a closely cognate) disciplinary area as the collaborative arrangement;
  - (iii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
  - (iv) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
  - (v) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
  - (vi) anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question;
  - (vii) former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
  - (viii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;
  - (ix) the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the external examiner's home department and institution;
  - (x) the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.

### *Terms of office*

- c. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.
  - d. An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
  - e. External examiners should normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes at any one point in time.
- 8.2 In exceptional cases, arrangements can be made to allow external examiners to suspend their office for up to one year, for example for health or maternity reasons, but the maximum term of office includes any periods of suspension.
- 8.3 It is a requirement that the team of external examiners for a programme collectively has the full range of qualifications, experience and expertise specified in the national criteria. External examiners from outside the higher education system, for example, from industry or the professions, may be appointed where their knowledge and/or experience is appropriate to their programme of study and ensuring that they are provided with a detailed induction and support.
- 8.4 An external examiner who has no previous experience as an external examiner for any institution will normally be appointed to serve as a member of a team of external examiners. Where such an arrangement is not feasible, the first-time external examiner will normally be mentored by an experienced external examiner from the same Faculty.
- 8.5 In cases where an external examiner does not fulfil all the relevant criteria, he/she will be provided with an enhanced induction by the relevant Faculty.
- 8.6 The University does not consider that the prior involvement of an external examiner in the development or validation/approval of a programme necessarily involves a conflict of interest; however, in such instances, consideration should be given to whether there are grounds for believing that their independence has been compromised.

## 9. Nomination and appointment of external examiners

- 9.1 Ordinance 7.3 paragraph 4 states that 'External Examiners shall be appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the Faculty concerned'. Senate has delegated this responsibility to FPCs, with annual reporting to AQSC. The process for approval of external examiner nominations is summarised in the *Process for the approval of new external examiner nominations* [flow chart](#).
- 9.2 The approval of external examiner(s) for new programmes should take place in the academic year prior to the start of the programme. For existing programmes, it should take place in the year prior to the current external examiner completing his/her term of office. External examiners should normally be in post for the annual start of the programmes they are responsible for. Wherever possible a short crossover period at the end of the current examiner's appointment and start of the new examiner's appointment is encouraged to support the new external examiner in the role.
- 9.3 The Director of Programmes is responsible for identifying a preferred nominee to act as external examiner and arranges for a [Nomination Form](#) to be completed as follows:
- Part I** (boxes 1-7) to be completed by the Director of Programmes and box 8 to be completed by the Faculty Curriculum and Quality Assurance (CQA) Team.
- Part II** (boxes 10-19) to be completed by the proposed external examiner.
- 9.4 The Director of Programmes should forward the [Nomination Form](#) to the Associate Dean (ESE) for approval. Nominations are considered in relation to the selection criteria listed above. If approved the form should be signed at **Part III** on behalf of the FPC.
- 9.5 Occasionally, the Director of Programmes may wish to nominate an individual who may not fully meet the selection criteria. In these instances, the Director of Programmes should set out clearly the rationale for doing so in box 7 on the [Nomination Form](#). Information must be provided on the [Nomination Form](#) about the additional induction and support which will be put in place as required. The nomination will not be processed unless this information has been provided.
- 9.6 Where a Faculty can provide evidence that the pool of potential external examiners is restricted, exceptions may, very occasionally, become unavoidable. Any case requiring exceptional approval must be made in box 7 of the [Nomination Form](#). The exception will require approval by the Vice President (Education).
- 9.7 The Associate Dean (ESE), on behalf of FPC, will inform the Director of Programmes if the nomination has been approved or rejected by the Faculty and will forward the [Nomination Form](#) to the CQA Team who will notify QSAT. QSAT will review the nomination on behalf of the Chair of AQSC, request any outstanding information from the Faculty CQA Team, verify eligibility to work in the UK (where applicable – see next section) and issue a letter of appointment on behalf of Senate. No work can be undertaken by an external examiner prior to the receipt by the University of the signed letter of appointment. The signed letter of appointment constitutes the formal contract between the University and the external examiner. All approved external examiner appointments are reported to FPC by the Associate Dean (ESE).

## 10. Right to Work in the UK

- 10.1 There are now commitments on employers to ensure that staff are eligible to work in the UK ([Preventing illegal working: guidance for employers](#)). The taxation requirements of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for external examiners differ depending on the programme level. All external examiners who are appointed to undergraduate programmes must provide proof of their eligibility to work in the UK and this will be verified prior to appointment. The HMRC currently places no requirements on external examiners of postgraduate programmes (taught or research). The University accepts

the *original version* of an in-date passport or travel document (for example Biometric Residence Permits (BRP) or Residence Cards (biometric format)) for these purposes. All new external examiners for undergraduate programmes are required to present or send their current *original* passport (photocopies are not acceptable) to QSAT or a member of the Faculty prior to their letter of appointment being sent and any work being undertaken on behalf of the University.

## 11. University induction

- 11.1 University induction of external examiners currently takes place electronically and all external examiners are directed to an online [induction portal](#) upon appointment. This provides information at an institutional level and external examiners are asked to complete a questionnaire once they have completed their tour around the site.

## 12. Preparing external examiners to undertake the role

- 12.1 Faculties are required to ensure that all external examiners are briefed on:
- the relevant reference points for the programmes for which they are responsible;
  - the assessment procedures and the requirements of the programmes to which they have been appointed;
  - the evidence which he/she requires to exercise oversight;
  - the arrangements for communication with internal examiners and others involved in teaching and learning (including placement providers/assessors);
  - the arrangements for external moderation;
  - the arrangements for external examiners' approval of the overall results.
- 12.2 Following appointment, the Director of Programmes will arrange a Faculty/programme level induction to ensure that the newly appointed external examiner is suitably prepared to fulfil the requirements of the role. A record is kept by the Faculty to demonstrate that induction has taken place.
- 12.3 As part of the induction the Faculty will ensure that the external examiner is given access to all the documentation he/she requires for the conduct of external examining duties. The induction will also include any additional support which may be required, for example arrangements for mentoring or shadowing, for external examiners without previous external examining experience.
- 12.4 The Faculty induction should therefore include:
- a meeting or conversation between the external examiner and representatives of the Faculty (for example the Faculty Academic Registrar) and the Programme Team, to set the context, philosophy and assessment criteria/procedures of the programme(s) within the full range of complementary programmes offered within the discipline and applicable national standards and benchmarks;
  - an introduction to the Faculty's/University's policies, procedures and regulations concerning the structure and administration of examining and awarding boards (a link to the [External Examiner Induction](#) site is provided in the letter of appointment);
  - the University's regulations on progression and classification of final awards, including Faculty/programme-specific regulations where exemptions/variations from the University standard regulations have been approved;
  - content and structure of the programme and modules;
  - the University's marking and [moderation](#) policies, highlighting that the University's policy is that marking standards are to be scrutinised by means of moderation of a sample rather than by [double marking](#);
  - introduction to staff and, if feasible, students;
  - the University's policies on [equal opportunities](#);
  - the individual examiner's role in relation to the examining team as a whole and the extent of their discretion, making clear that it is not the role of external examiners to determine marks or degree classifications for individual candidates (see

paragraph 13.4 below which describes the basis on which the selection of the students' work will be made and provided);

- confirmation of contractual arrangements such as rates of payment, expenses, tenure and dates of Board of Examiners' meetings.

- 12.5 The Faculty must ensure that the following documents are supplied or made available electronically to all external examiners on an annual basis:
- the relevant programme specification(s) and module profiles;
  - level and classification descriptors for the programme(s) to be examined;
  - the University's examination, progression and classification regulations;
  - assessment and marking criteria and associated policies and procedures for the programme(s) to be examined;
  - a link to or copies of the University's [Assessment Framework](#);
  - any other quality assurance materials that the external examiner may request;
  - a timetable/schedule of the examining process within the Faculty;
  - details of procedures for claiming expenses and fees;
  - information about completing the external examiner's report, and a [link to the electronic template](#);
  - the previous external examiner's last report (in the first year only).

- 12.6 External examiners may also find it useful to refer to the [Higher Education Academy Handbook for External Examining](#) as part of the induction process.

### 13. Overview of external examiner responsibilities

- 13.1 External examiners should approve the form and content of draft examination papers, coursework and other assignments that count towards the award in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the objectives, syllabus and regulations for the programme and will reach the required standard. The external examiner may also ask to be involved in the approval of any other assessment tasks.
- 13.2 In some subjects, it may be essential for model answers to be provided and scrutinised by the external examiner. The external examiner should be given feedback as to how their comments on draft assessment material have been taken into consideration, and whether changes have been made as a result.
- 13.3 An external examiner has the right to see and/or moderate all assignments, examination scripts, projects, dissertations and other student work that contributes to an award, including seminar/ presentation work.
- 13.4 The Programme Team must agree at an early stage with the external examiner the basis on which the selection of the students' work will be made and provided to him/her. The guiding principle should be that external examiners must have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. The sample should include a range of work awarded the highest marks, fail marks, and work in each class of the award and may include some of the work of borderline candidates. It must be agreed with the external examiner how he/she will engage with assessment such as practice-based learning, performance, presentations etc. For clarity these arrangements should be confirmed in writing by the Faculty and should be re-visited with the external examiner annually.
- 13.5 External examiners should compare the performance of students with that of students on comparable programmes elsewhere of which they have experience.
- 13.6 External examiners must not be directly involved in marking. All Faculties are required to have in place documented mechanisms to resolve cases of disagreement between internal markers, and these should be followed. If, exceptionally, the external examiner is asked to comment on an individual case where these mechanisms have not led to a resolution, the final decision in such cases must remain with the Board of Examiners collectively.

- 13.7 External examiners are asked to note that University policy is that internal marking standards are scrutinised and monitored by means of moderation of a sample (independent academic scrutiny of marks awarded, on a sample basis, to verify that the marks awarded are appropriate and consistent in relation to the relevant assessment criteria) rather than by [double marking](#). If the moderator has concerns about the marking standards of the sample, arrangements should be made for the marks for all the work for the specific assessment item to be reviewed. Where this occurs the outcome should be documented and communicated to the [Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes](#).
- 13.8 External examiners may not change marks or degree classifications for individual candidates. Rather their role is to confirm that marking criteria and marking standards are appropriate and are being applied appropriately and consistently. If an external examiner disagrees with the standards of marking for assessed work within a sample he/she may request further action such as the:
- additional marking of all the student work within the group; or
  - additional marking of the work of all students taking the affected examination or piece of work; or
  - moderation of the marks of all the students taking the affected examination or piece of work; or
  - adjustment of marks for all students taking the affected examination or piece of work.
- 13.9 External examiners do not have any special role in individual student cases involving Special Considerations or breaches of academic integrity; their role in such cases is to ensure that the [Academic Integrity Regulations](#) and the [Special Considerations Regulations](#) are applied fairly and consistently. As such decisions affect the remit of an examination board external examiners can expect to be informed of any applicable regulations or procedures. They can also expect to be informed of any decisions affecting a module result or a progression/award decision.
- 13.10 External examiners are required to be present at all relevant Boards of Examiners' meetings at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made on the programme(s) in which they are involved. See Section 14 Participation in Boards of Examiners' meetings for further information.

## 14. Participation in Boards of Examiners' meetings

- 14.1 The University's [Policy and Procedures for Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes](#) sets out the University's policy on the membership, attendance, responsibilities and operation of Boards of Examiners for taught programmes. It includes information about the key roles involved in the operation of the Board, the standard agenda to be followed and issues to be considered by all Boards of Examiners.
- 14.2 As a key part of the process for monitoring standards of performance the external examiner will have a role in commenting on module assessment data. This is facilitated through the use of a standard agenda for Boards of Examiners and programme statistical information that will be considered by Boards of Examiners.
- 14.3 If a programme is delivered in collaboration with a partner or at different campuses, external examiners should specifically highlight if they have any issues or concerns related to comparability of student performance or experience arising specifically from this delivery.

## 15. Fees and expenses

- 15.1 The fee paid to all external examiners appointed to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes on or after 1 December 2017 is a flat fee of £700. The fee will be paid on receipt of the annual report(s).



- 15.2 External examiners are normally appointed to programmes or groups of programmes, and there are no additional payments to the flat fee. Faculties should undertake an annual review of work allocation which aims to ensure a reasonable and fair distribution of work and as a result, the responsibilities of an external examiner may change from year to year.
- 15.3 The fee to be paid to an external examiner is set out in the letter of appointment. The Faculty will provide external examiners with the appropriate claim form for fees and expenses which should be completed and returned as soon as possible after the Board of Examiners' meeting, and no later than three months after the date of the meeting. Different payment methods are in place for undergraduate and postgraduate taught external examiners due to HMRC requirements and this is explained in the letter of appointment.
- 15.4 Travelling costs within the UK by rail are normally reimbursed at standard class period return rates, unless day returns or 'savers' are available. First class rail travel may only be claimed by prior agreement with the Dean of Faculty (or nominee). Payment for air travel may be approved, provided the total cost does not exceed that of rail travel plus subsistence costs. The dates of travel, departure point and route of journey must be shown.
- 15.5 Details of these costs and subsistence and other expenses should be shown on the claim form provided; subsistence expenses will be reimbursed provided details are shown and receipts submitted. The reimbursement of travelling and subsistence expenses actually incurred will not be subject to tax or national insurance.

## 16. External examiners' reports

- 16.1 External examiners are required to submit an annual written report, using the approved [University template](#).
- 16.2 External examiners are asked to write one report for the cluster of programmes at the same level for which they examine and to highlight where comments relate to a specific programme within that cluster. Separate reports for undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes are required.
- 16.3 Reports are normally submitted between June and August for undergraduate programmes following the Board of Examiners' meetings held in the Summer or between November and January for postgraduate taught programmes following the Board of Examiners' meetings held in the Winter.
- 16.4 The report must be submitted electronically to the Vice-President (Education) via QSAT (qsa@soton.ac.uk), no later than **four weeks** after the Board of Examiners meeting for the academic year of the report. Payment of fees will be conditional upon the receipt of this report. External examiners who fail to submit a report will not normally be eligible to continue with their appointment.
- 16.5 Where a report is seriously deficient in respect of the information provided, the external examiner may be asked for additional comment or the matter may be referred to the Vice-President (Education). An external examiner who submits a seriously deficient report may have their appointment terminated by the University.
- 16.6 The University requires all its external examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on:
- whether the academic standards set for its awards, or part thereof, are appropriate;
  - the extent to which its assessment methods and processes are appropriate for the subject, rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within University regulations and guidance (including the application of procedures covering [Special Considerations](#) and [Academic Integrity](#));
  - whether the marking scheme and assessment criteria are set at the right level and have been applied appropriately;
  - the standards of student performance in those programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine;
  - where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements

- with those in other higher education institutions;
  - the consistency of standards and achievement in cases where programmes are delivered by different collaborative partners;
  - innovation and good practice that they have identified.
- 16.7 The final report submitted at the end of the external examiner's term of office, should contain retrospective comments on his/her experience as an external examiner at the University and should draw attention to any significant changes in standards or procedures observed during the period.
- 16.8 An external examiner may make a separate report directly and confidentially to the President and Vice-Chancellor on any matter of serious concern arising from the assessments that may put at risk the standard of the University's awards. Should an external examiner choose to make a confidential report, the President and Vice-Chancellor will ask the Vice- President (Education) to follow up the issues raised and coordinate a response on his/her behalf. A report on the issues and response will be made to AQSC. The Associate Dean (ESE) from the relevant Faculty will be responsible for ensuring this is communicated to the relevant Director of Programmes, FPC and more widely in the Faculty as appropriate.
- 16.9 If the external examiner is not satisfied with the response they receive, they may, if they so wish, take up an issue through the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) procedures for raising a concern. This option will be drawn to the attention of the external examiner in the response letter from the President and Vice-Chancellor and details are also set out in Section 18.

## 17. Consideration of external examiners' reports and institutional oversight

- 17.1 External examiners' reports are an essential aspect of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University. The University views the external examiner system in general and external examiners' reports in particular as key mechanisms for the management of academic standards and reflection on the quality of the student learning experience.
- 17.2 Discussions of external examiner reports are incorporated specifically within the processes of annual monitoring and also through Staff : Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) where they are formally discussed with student representatives.
- 17.3 Annual external examiner reports are addressed through a feedback process that aims to keep external examiners fully informed of action taken as a result of their reports. External examiners will receive a considered, written response from the Faculty to issues raised, within eight weeks of the Faculty receiving the report. This will include any action to be taken, or a rationale for not taking action, in response to the comments made. External examiner reports are considered at both Faculty and institutional level. If an external examiner provides feedback or raises concerns relating to the University's approved regulations, these will be reported to AQSC by the Faculty and considered when the University next reviews its regulations.
- 17.4 The process for the Faculty to receive and respond to external examiners' reports is set out in the *External Examiner Reports - Receipt and Response [flow charts](#)*. Faculties will also provide a verbal update on the actions that were taken in response to external examiners' comments the previous year at the next meeting of the Board of Examiners.
- 17.5 The Associate Dean (ESE), working with the CQA Team, is responsible for ensuring all external examiner reports are received and responded to. The Associate Dean (ESE) and CQA Team are also responsible for ensuring that external examiner reports are made available to members of academic staff teaching on the programme, students on the programme and any other appropriate parties for example PSRBs or collaborative partners.

- 17.6 At Faculty level, the FPC maintains oversight of external examiner reports. Each Faculty is required to produce a [Faculty Summary Form - External Examiner Reports and Responses](#) for consideration by the External Examiner Scrutiny Group (EESG) and submitted to FPC for note. This will include matters to be addressed at Faculty level which are added to the Faculty Action Plan and any matters to be escalated to the University for consideration. Where applicable, Faculties ensure that any necessary information arising from external examiners' reports and/or the consideration of these reports is made available to relevant PSRBs, as required.
- 17.7 The process by which the University maintains oversight of its external examiners' reports is set out in the *Institutional oversight of External Examiner Reports and Responses* [flow charts](#). AQSC is responsible for institutional oversight and scrutiny of all external examiner reports. An EESG is established to report bi-annually to AQSC, via a report and action plan, with recommendations arising from the feedback received from external examiners and the subsequent discussion at the meeting of the EESG.
- 17.8 Following approval of the institutional oversight report and action plan by AQSC, a letter outlining the actions the University is taking to address issues raised by its external examiners at an institutional level is sent from the Vice-President (Education) to external examiners.

## 18. Information provided to students about external examiners

- 18.1 The name, position and institution of each external examiner is made available to students through inclusion of this information in the relevant programme specification(s). If an external examiner does not give consent for his/her details to be published in this way the name will not be included in the programme specification and instead it will state that the name of the external examiner will be made available to students on request. Students are advised that they must not contact external examiners directly. Should any external examiner be contacted by a student they are asked to forward the details to their main contact for the programme for a response. Similarly, if an external examiner is approached by a student or group of students in person with a request to discuss particular issues about a programme or module the external examiner should refer the student(s) to the main programme or module contact.
- 18.2 External examiners' reports and responses are shared, in full with all students, via the University's portal [SUSSED](#) and with student representatives at SSLC. Students will also be engaged through discussion at FPC and AQSC at which they are represented.
- 18.3 Where possible, and particularly if the external examiner requests it, arrangements should be made for external examiners to meet with students. Such meetings are not part of the assessment process but are seen as good practice and provide an opportunity for the external examiner to gain a better understanding of a programme and the way in which it operates from a student perspective.

## 19. Revision, extension, resignation, interruption or termination of appointment

### **Revision to appointment**

- 19.1 If a revision of an existing external examiner appointment is necessary, for example to add or remove programmes, the Director of Programmes should complete a [Revisions to Appointment Form](#). Faculties should ensure that any revisions are made prior to the start of the next academic year. If approved by the Faculty, QSAT will send the external examiner an amended letter of appointment on behalf of Senate.
- 19.2 A Revisions to Appointment Form is not required for change in module allocations, for example if new modules come online or existing modules are not running for a particular academic year. In such cases the Faculty should advise the external examiner by email of

any changes to their module allocation for the year, with a copy to QSAT for information.

### **Extension to appointment**

- 19.3 Where the initial appointment was for a period shorter than the maximum, an external examiner's term of office may be extended up to the maximum of four years. The Director of Programmes should complete an [Extension Form](#). If approved by the Faculty, QSAT will send the external examiner an amended letter of appointment on behalf of Senate.
- 19.4 Requests for extensions should be submitted in good time before the end of original appointment. Failure to do so may result in the external examiners' personnel records being closed which can lead to delays in the payment of expenses and for external examiners for undergraduate programmes, the requirement for their eligibility to work in the UK to be re-verified.
- 19.5 Where a programme has closed and an external examiner is required for one further year only, a case may be made for an appointment to be extended to an **absolute maximum of five years**. Such extensions require the approval of the Chair of AQSC. The Director of Programmes should complete an [Extension Form](#) and this must be accompanied by a memorandum from the Associate Dean (ESE) explaining why the extension is required. If approved by the Chair of AQSC, QSAT will send the external examiner an amended letter of appointment on behalf of Senate.

### **Resignation**

- 19.6 Where an external examiner wishes to resign before the end of his/her term of office, they are requested to provide reasonable notice (at least three months) and complete their duties for the current year of appointment where possible. Immediate steps should be taken by the Director of Programmes to identify a replacement. The Director of Programmes should complete a [Resignation Form](#) and QSAT will write to the external examiner to confirm their resignation on behalf of Senate.

### **Interruption**

- 19.7 Occasionally, circumstances may arise where an external examiner is unable to complete their duties for the current year of appointment, or wishes to interrupt for a defined period of time, up to a maximum of twelve months. Such events are not regarded as a suspension and the usual term of an external examiner remains four years counted from the date of their first appointment. In such cases, the external examiner should give written notice, with reasonable notice when possible, to the Faculty of their intention to interrupt their term of office, and the expected length of interruption. The Faculty will then look to appoint an interim external examiner for this period. In these circumstances only, an interim external examiner may be appointed from the home institution of the substantive external examiner, and work under their advice and guidance. A [Nomination Form](#) should be completed in the normal way. An interim external examiner's details will be included on the programme specification alongside the substantive external examiner's information. Details of the change in appointment will be communicated to all relevant students by email and at the SSLC.
- 19.8 Although the Faculty will attempt to make temporary arrangements, if a suitable interim external examiner cannot be appointed, the Faculty may terminate the external examiner's appointment using the [Termination Form](#) and appoint a replacement external examiner.
- 19.9 If at the end of the period of interruption, the substantive external examiner is unable to return to their duties, the interim external examiner may be appointed as the substantive external examiner. However, if they are from the same institution as the previous external examiner, their period of office will be adjusted to ensure that the maximum term of external examining support from that institution does not surpass four years.
- 19.10 During a defined period of interruption, the substantive external examiner will not be

entitled to the fee for external examining. If more than one external examiner has undertaken duties over the course of an academic year, the fee will be split between the substantive and interim external examiner in a method determined by the Associate Dean (ESE).

- 19.11 Faculties should inform QSAT of any interruptions to appointments and the planned arrangements to cover the period. Once approved, QSAT will write to each external examiner concerned to confirm the interruption period and the temporary arrangements in place. If a new external examiner has been appointed, QSAT will send a letter of appointment on behalf of Senate.

### **Termination**

- 19.12 An external examiner's contract may be terminated by the University as a result of the following circumstances:
- a. in the event of a conflict of interest arising during the term of office. The external examiner's contract will be terminated from the point at which the conflict of interest arises;
  - b. in the event of a serious breach by the external examiner of the terms of their appointment, for example:
    - i. failure to attend Board of Examiners meetings without the prior agreement of the Dean of the relevant Faculty and without arranging an alternative means to input to the meetings;
    - ii. failure to submit an annual report within the specified time;
    - iii. failure to carry out the duties outlined in this document.
  - c. as a result of a failure of the external examiner's part to engage with the procedures for appointment, including fulfilling the University's statutory employment requirements;
  - d. withdrawal of, or non-recruitment to, the programme(s);
  - e. when only a full, rather than an interim, external examiner appointment can be made as a result of a request from the external examiner of an interruption in their term of office.
- 19.13 Recommendations for termination of appointment for non-performance of duties in line with the above must be made by the Dean of the Faculty concerned and approved by the President and Vice-Chancellor as specified in the Statement of the Senate's Primary Responsibilities and delegated and related matters. A [Termination Form](#) should be completed and forwarded to QSAT who will obtain the approval of the President and Vice-Chancellor and report the outcome to the Faculty. The Faculty may also wish to discuss the potential upcoming termination with the external examiner, particular if termination is not as a result of any fault of the external examiner. If the termination is agreed, QSAT will arrange for a termination of appointment letter to be sent to the external examiner. At the discretion of the relevant Associate Dean (ESE), a full or partial fee for the year of office may be paid to the external examiner. If an external examiner wishes to query the reason for termination, they should be directed to the Associate Dean (ESE) in the first instance.

## **20. Procedures in the case of serious concerns**

### ***QAA Concerns scheme***

- 20.1 Where an external examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, he/she may invoke the QAA's Concerns scheme or inform the relevant PSRB. The University will inform an external examiner at the point when all internal procedures have been exhausted.

- 20.2 Information on the QAA's Concern's scheme can be found at:  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=159#.WBG9Ny0rldU>.
- 20.3 It should be noted that the scheme is concerned only with systemic failings in an institution's management of standards or quality, and therefore should not be used in relation to one-off cases of ineffective practice.

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## Appendix 1 - University of Southampton acronyms

- **Associate Dean (ESE)** - Associate Dean (Education and Student Experience)
- **AQSC** - Academic Quality and Standards Committee
- **CQA** - Curriculum and Quality Assurance
- **FPC** - Faculty Programmes Committee
- **QSAT** - Quality Standards and Accreditation Team
- **SSLC** - Staff : Student Liaison Committee
- **UoS** - University of Southampton