

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER 

External Examiner Induction

University Processes and Academic Regulations

Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to act as an External Examiner at the University of Westminster. The University values the role External Examiners play in ensuring we protect and maintain the quality and standards of our degrees.
- You should already have some knowledge of the point of contact within the School, and some general information about your duties from the nomination process and Letter of Appointment.
- The Course Team will provide you with Course and Module Handbooks for your subject area; a member of academic staff will complete the induction procedure by providing further information about the curriculum you are assigned to.
- This presentation is intended to provide an overview of your role as an External Examiner with the University of Westminster within a quality assurance and enhancement context.

About the University

- Established over 180 years ago as the UK's first polytechnic institution to educate the working people of London.
- There are three Colleges within the University: Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS), Westminster Business School (WBS) and Design, Creative and Digital Industries (DCDI)
- We also offer collaborative courses, including partnerships with institutions in Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, and across Europe.
- The University comprises multiple sites in Central London, as well as a campus in Harrow, North-West London.
- There are currently around 19,000 students at the University, from 169 different countries.
- The University has about 250 External Examiners. Most are from other HE institutions, but a number are practitioners in industry relevant to the course's subject area.

Academic Regulations

University of Westminster Academic Regulations are available on our website:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/guides-and-policies/academic-matters/academic-regulations>

- Section 12 and 13 provide the University's regulations regarding what is expected of External Examiners. More details are provided in this presentation.
- You may also wish to refer to Part 3 Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses, which details our assessment regulations.
- University Grade Criteria
- For further information on the role of the External Examiner, please refer to the [HE Academy website](#) (sector-level guidance) and Section 9 of the [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook](#) (University-specific guidance).

Protecting the value of degrees

The University's Academic Regulations reflect the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and use the expectations in the QAA Quality Code as a reference point for setting, delivering and maintaining the academic standards of its validated awards.

The University undertook a review of Protecting the Value of Degrees as expected of all Higher Education providers. Our degree outcomes statement is available on our [website](#).

As a result of the review, assessment reports will be available to External Examiners via the External Examiner Portal. This includes the PAB Report, PAB Module Report and PAB Student Report.

External Examiners are also required to consider and comment on outliers and assessment at module level and use of University Grade descriptors.

External Examiner role

There are three main duties of an External Examiner:

- To use your expertise in the field to verify that the University of Westminster's standards are appropriate for the award or award elements which you have been appointed to examine.
- To use your knowledge of the standards set by other Higher Education institutions to assist in the comparison of academic standards across higher education awards and award elements.
- To use your knowledge of assessment processes to ensure that the University of Westminster's procedures are fair and are operated fairly and are in line with the Regulations.

Practitioners

If you are an industry practitioner rather than an academic, you may not be able to comment on some of these issues with the same level of detail as our academic External Examiners. You will be working alongside academics, and your expertise is valuable in making sure that the subject area's provisions are adequate for a career or professional qualification in your field.

External Examiner Portal

Instructions on how to access the Portal can be found in your Letter of Appointment.

- Login URL: <http://srs21live.wmin.ac.uk>

The Portal allows you to:

- Submit your Annual Report
- Access expenses claim form and upload your completed form for approval
- Access Payslips and P60s
- Access support documents:
 - [Handbook of Academic Regulations](#)
 - [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, Section 9 External Examiners Involvement](#)
 - [UK Quality Code for Higher Education: External Expertise](#)
 - [Guidance Notes](#)

Blackboard

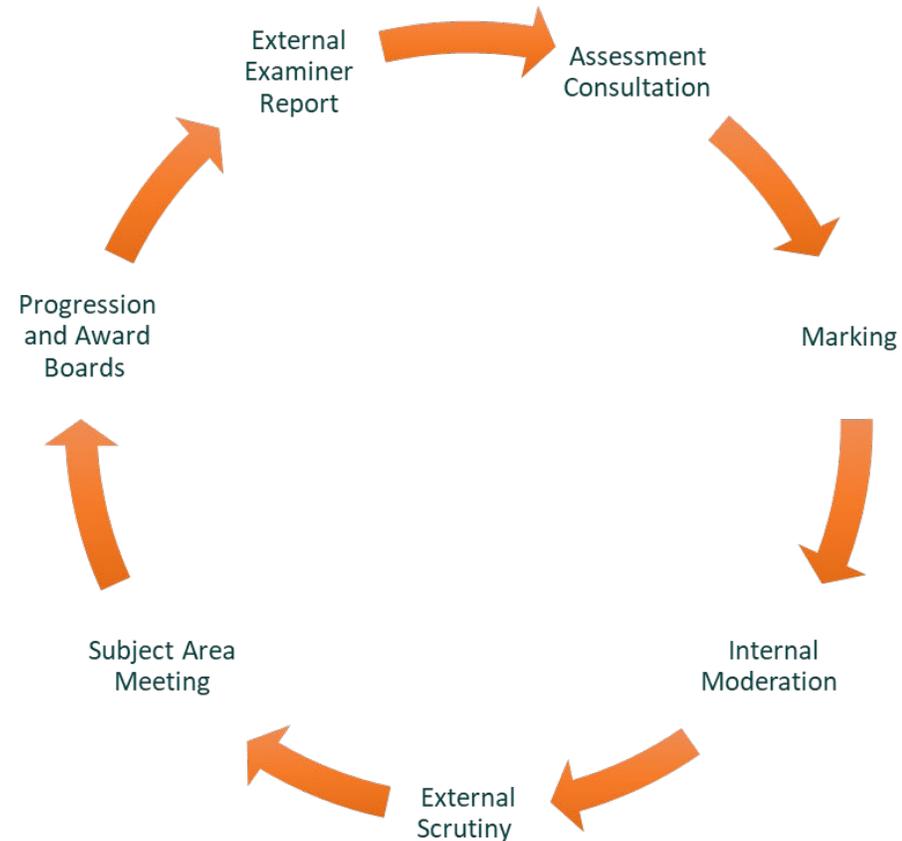
- The University uses Blackboard as its Virtual Learning Environment. Where practically possible students submit assessment through Blackboard, therefore, this is where you will normally be asked to view students assessments.
- External Examiners are issued with a University of Westminster account, which is used to access Blackboard and the EE portal.
- Instructions and login credentials for Blackboard will be provided by the Course Team; External Examiners log in via the URL: <http://learning.westminster.ac.uk>
- The Course Team will advise you when it is time to access the assessments via Blackboard.
- For most courses there will also be assessment that is not submitted through Blackboard, e.g. exams, presentations, blogs and practical assessment. In such cases, the access to assessment may vary. E.g. it may take place on site prior to the Subject Area meeting.

Assessment Cycle

The University's statement on assessment states that it should be:

“robust, valid and test the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.”

Throughout the academic year you will liaise with the course team to complete this cycle, starting with the Assessment Consultation.



Assessment Consultation

- An important component of external scrutiny is consultation with the course team on assessment questions.
- External Examiners are required to approve assessment at Level 5 or above, with a proportion of 30% or higher of the overall marks for the module. This usually takes the form of e.g. approving essay or exams questions.

Internal Marking and External Scrutiny

Completion of the marking process

- The full details of the marking, moderation and external scrutiny processes are referred to in [Section 12](#); a [summary](#) of the process is also available.
- We recommend External Examiners read this section ahead of undertaking external scrutiny.
- With the exception of programmes that lead to an award at Level 3 or 4 and collaborative provision external scrutiny is not required for modules at Levels 3 and 4.
- Any questions on how the process was undertaken practically or any concerns or points of good practice can be discussed initially at the Subject Area meeting.

External Scrutiny: Marking

Samples

- A representative sample of student work for each assessment on each module will be provided.
- The sample will be 10-25% of work as previously defined in the regulations; it should include the highest marks, failures, borderline-failure and a range of other marks across the spectrum.

Access to materials

- Access to a sample of the assessment is determined by consultation between the Module Leader and the External Examiner.
- A draft copy of the Module Leader's Report for each module will be provided to facilitate your scrutiny.
- At the subject area meeting, you will have access to the overall module marks.

Objective of the external examiner

- To review the marks and confirm they have been awarded consistently and fairly using the appropriate criteria
- This should include reflection on any outliers (high or low assessment marks); ensuring confidence in the criteria used
- It is not your role to re-mark the work.

Marking Quality

- In sampling assessed work External Examiners are expected to ensure the marking is appropriate. In doing so, External Examiners may wish to consider:
 - *Is there evidence of over/under generous marking?*
 - *How are markers using the marking criteria and grade descriptors?*
 - *How robust is the moderation process in practice?*
- You can request to see any piece of student work within your remit to facilitate your scrutiny.
- If you believe that the sample has been marked incorrectly, you may advise that:
 - All work should be re-marked by a third marker to ensure consistency
 - If work has generally been over or under-marked, that all marks should be adjusted by a given margin.
 - You cannot request that individual marks are changed.

External Scrutiny: Assessment Feedback

**“Clear, consistent, inclusive, fair,
constructive and timely”**

- Assessment and Feedback policy, University of Westminster

- The University is committed to providing clear and timely feedback to students. Our Assessment and Feedback Policy is available on the University website
- You are required to consider evidence of feedback, the quality and nature of the feedback provided to students, including its usefulness.

Attendance at Subject Area Meetings

- External Examiners are expected to attend an annual Subject Area meeting.
- Subject Area meetings are the University's intended forum for a holistic discussion of the curriculum, feedback, moderation and external scrutiny processes.
- The course team in your subject area will communicate meeting dates, which may be conducted in person or virtually. Meetings will include other External Examiners within that subject area (where applicable).
- The Subject Area meetings have an indicative agenda related to the internal marking and external scrutiny process to prompt discussions on good practice, as well as assure standards.
- For those without External Examiner experience, particularly non-academic appointees, this can be a useful opportunity to gain insight into the assessment process and structure in a HEI context.
- During the Subject Area Meeting you will be provided with assessment and overall module data.
- More information is available in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (Section 9).

Progression and Award Boards (PAB)

- The University of Westminster has a single tier Assessment Board process. This is in part to ensure course teams and External Examiners can have meaningful discussions through the Subject Area meetings.
- Subject Area External Examiners are not required to attend the PABs. However, each PAB has a Chief External Examiner from the Subject Area who does attend the PAB.
- Progression and Award Boards may not change any moderated marks presented for ratification at the Board; PABs formalise the process of awarding grades using the agreed-upon module marks.
- The Chair is required to confirm to the Board members that:
 - both internal and external scrutiny has taken place as required in the Academic Regulations
 - advise the Board of any significant issues resulting from discussion during moderation and scrutiny process. This includes reviewing any matters arising from the Subject Area Meetings, as well as the statistics that were presented at those meetings. Please note this expectation should not replace comments in your formal report.
- The decisions are formally recorded in the notes of the PAB meeting; the Board then ratifies the agreed moderated marks.

PABs (continued)

Boards for Undergraduate awards are held in June, and Postgraduate Boards are held in June and September/October. Where there is a January start for a subject area a February Board is permitted.

In addition, referral and deferral PABS take place in July. Internal moderation and external scrutiny of assessment is still expected for this period. In practice, the sample however is often much smaller.

The full Terms of Reference for the PAB are laid out in the [Academic Regulations Section 14](#) [14.12].

Chief Externals are expected to report on the distribution of results across classifications. See Chief External Examiner information (Slide 18).

Role of Chief External Examiners

Chief External Examiners are appointed by Schools from the pool of existing Subject Area External Examiners.

The Chief External Examiner is expected to:

- attend the PAB to ensure fair application of the University's processes relating to awards and credit accumulation, as well as decisions on exclusions.
- contribute to discussions at the PAB on the distribution of results across classifications and the comparability of awards with similar programmes within the UK.
- complete an additional section on their Annual Report after the PAB.

The Chief role:

- concerns academic procedures, rather than subject knowledge, therefore, the Chief is not expected to employ any subject-area academic expertise as part of their role at the PAB.
- require some familiarity with standards for progression and awards procedures across Higher Education and University of Westminster procedures.

External Examiners with responsibility for Collaborative Partner(s)

- Broadly, the role and remit of External Examiners with responsibility for Collaborative provision is the same as other External Examiners. The only difference in the Academic Regulations is that External Examiners are appointed to Collaborative provision for all levels, including levels 3 and 4.
- However, the practicalities of the role may differ, for example travel times, course induction will include an induction with the partner.
- External Examiners for franchise provision should in addition ensure standards are comparable with the University of Westminster course.

External Examiner Annual Report: Overview

The Annual Report is:

- a **formal record of the feedback you have provided** throughout the academic year
- opportunity to feedback any praise or criticism
- submitted within 6 weeks of confirmation of PABS for your subject area
- submitted online, via the [External Examiner Portal](#).

Report Format

- The report contains questions where you are expected to respond on a sliding scale from “Agree” to “Disagree”.
- There are a further ten questions where you are asked to provide more detailed responses.

External Examiner Annual Report

In the annual report, you will be asked to indicate how far your expectations, as informed by your experience of Higher Education, have been met by commenting on the:

- Appropriateness of assessment
- Marking processes
- Quality of feedback
- Academic Standards
- Module outcomes
- Evidence of good practice
- Issues for further consideration

External Examiner Annual Report (continued)

Feedback on Communication and Administration

- The communication of information related to your role as External Examiner
- How far previously-raised issues have been addressed
- Arrangements made for you to access student work

Chief External Examiners comment on:

- Comparable standards for the determination of awards
- Degree outcome data, including the distribution of classifications

External Examiners for Collaborative programmes comment on:

- Comparable standards
- Date of visit to the partner
- Good practice

Review and response

- The annual report is reviewed by the Course Team and the Quality and Standards Office.
- The Course Team will submit a response to your report outlining the key issues and what they will do to address any areas of concern you have identified.
- An annual overview report is submitted by Quality and Standards to the University Teaching Committee and Academic Council summarising the External Examiner data and themes.

Other involvement

External Examiners may be required to comment on curriculum changes being proposed through the modification process. These will generally be where changes are being made to the degree course, rather than individual module changes.

Examples may include introducing a new module, changing a core module to optional (or vice versus) or changing credit value.

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Fee Payment & Right to Work

On submission of your annual report, the annual fee payment process is prompted.

For the fee to be processed:

- You may need to provide your bank details if you did not do so on acceptance of the appointment, or if your details have subsequently changed.
- You will need to complete the Right to Work verification with a member of staff; this is a procedural activity to comply to UKVI requirements. Further guidance on why we need this information and the process to complete the activity can be found on the [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk)



Support

- Any queries of an academic or course-specific nature should be addressed to your Point of Contact (as detailed in your Letter of Appointment).
- General administrative queries should be directed to the Quality and Standards team External Examiner & QA Co-ordinator at: externalexaminers@westminster.ac.uk.
- The Guidance Notes document provides information about the role and processes.
- There are several support documents available on the [Information for External Examiners](#) webpage.