
External Examiners' Handbook

(Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes)

Centre for Academic Quality Assurance

2024 – 2025



Foreword

Welcome to the University of Hertfordshire (UH) as an External Examiner!

This handbook has been compiled to assist you in your role. It is intended for:

- All External Examiners for the University's taught provision, in order to provide information about their role and responsibilities and the University's rules and regulations; and
- University staff, as a reference point.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) states that '*External examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining UK threshold academic standards within autonomous higher education institutions. External examining is therefore an integral and essential part of institutional quality assurance*'. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education sets out the following Common and Core Practices on external examining, which higher education institutions are required to meet:

The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent

The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise

At the University of Hertfordshire (UH), external examining constitutes a key component of its quality assurance systems. Through External Examining, the University is able to ensure that the standards of its degrees and other awards are comparable to other UK institutions, and provides an external system for monitoring fair practice in the assessment of students' academic performance.

To ensure that you have access to the most current information and documentation, please use this Handbook in conjunction with:

- University of Hertfordshire Academic Regulations Handbook for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (issued annually to all staff and external examiners), also available electronically at: https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/421646/Academic-Handbook-2024-2025.pdf.

In particular:

- UPR AS12 Assessments and Examinations (University-delivered provision) (examination regulations, marking and moderation of assessments, publication of results, conferment of awards)
- UPR AS13 Assessments and Examinations (Collaborative Partner-delivered provision) (examination regulations, marking and moderation of assessments, publication of results, conferment of awards)
- UPR AS14 Structure and Assessment Regulations (Boards of Examiners, assessment and award regulations, external examiners role)
- UPR AS17 Academic Quality (validation and periodic review, appointment of external examiners, annual monitoring and evaluation, collaborative provision)
- External Examiner information on the 'Centre for Academic Quality Assurance' website: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/itaq/learning,-teaching-and-academic-quality/academic-quality-at-herts/external-examiners>
- UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: External Expertise: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-external-expertise.pdf?sfvrsn=6f2ac181_6
- UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) 'External Examining Principles': https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/external-examining-principles.pdf?sfvrsn=fe91a281_12
- Advance HE: Fundamentals of External Examining: https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/hea/Fundamentals%20of%20External%20Examining%20AHE%20-%20%20Feb%202019%20v2_1581086172.pdf

Should you require any additional information regarding your role as External Examiner at the University of Hertfordshire, please email: aqo@herts.ac.uk.

This Handbook is available on the External Examiners website, maintained by the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance.

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1 Introduction to the University of Hertfordshire

1.1 The University of Hertfordshire (UH)

Originally established in 1952 as a technical college, the institution became one of the first three polytechnics in the country in 1969, and in 1992 became the University of Hertfordshire. We are a medium-sized University which employs over 2400 staff and has around 27000 registered students (21000 undergraduate and 6000 postgraduate students, including both home and collaborative provision).

The majority of the University's students are based at its home campuses in Hatfield (College Lane and De Havilland campuses). However, around 6700 students are registered on programmes which are delivered, assessed and/or supported through collaborative partnerships, 3000 in the UK and 3700 overseas.

For further information about the University, visit: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us>.

1.2 Vision and Strategy

The University's Vision, which is an integral part of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan (see: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/strategic-plan-2020-2025>), is "to transform lives. This means whatever your background, wherever you are from, we will drive your potential, powering you to succeed".

Within the Strategic Plan, the Education and Student Experience strand identifies a focus on the following strategic objectives:

- *Develop employability, global perspectives, digital capability and learning skills for life in our students*
- *Create inclusive curricula, informed by industry and professional engagement*
- *Cultivate active learning and critical thinking through teaching excellence*
- *Adopt a whole university and personalised approach to students' learning and wellbeing*
- *Work in partnership with students to design and evaluate educational opportunities*
- *Introduce more flexible options for study in mode and subject and offer well-defined exit qualifications at levels 4 and 5*
- *Increase the range and quality of extracurricular and sporting activity and reward participation*
- *Encourage lifelong learning by engaging alumni in study opportunities*
- *Create a vibrant campus community*

1.3 The People and Committees (see Figure 1)

The PVC (Education & Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes, has senior responsibility on behalf of the VC for education and the student experience.

The Director of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA), Prof Frank Haddleton, reports to the PVC (Education & Student Experience) and has delegated responsibility for the quality assurance and enhancement strategies, policies and practices for the University's taught provision, ensuring consistency of academic standards and assuring the quality of the student experience for University awards. He chairs ASAC. The DAQA is also Head of the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance (CAQA), which consists of the DAQA, the Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance (DDAQA), Ms Catherine Rendell and five Associate Directors of Academic Quality Assurance (ADAQAs). Each ADAQA takes responsibility for a School, with responsibilities including to:

- advise and support Schools in discharging their responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance & enhancement of the student educational experience;
- monitor the School's compliance with UPRs & procedures;
- promote a culture of enhancement and the dissemination of good practice across Schools;
- supporting the School in the (re-)validation and periodic review of its home & collaborative provision;
- take an active role in the annual monitoring process;
- review annual external examiner reports and make recommendations;
- develop and facilitate QA-related staff development activities.

The Director of Learning and Teaching (DLT), Prof Helen Barefoot, reports to the DVC, and is Director of the Learning, Teaching and Innovation Centre (LTIC). The LTIC team includes the Deputy Director of LTIC, a team of learning and teaching specialists and a team of e-learning technologists. LTIC helps the University to maintain and develop excellence in learning and teaching, and develops online and blended programmes.

The Director of Academic Services, Lisa Uttley, has responsibility for the Academic Services unit which supports the University on a range of academic quality-related matters (overseeing academic quality systems and procedures, guidance to Schools, administering validation & periodic review events, managing external examiner appointments and reporting, supporting preparation for external audit and administration of the University module feedback questionnaire, the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)). Within Academic Services there is an Assistant Administrator who takes responsibility for managing external examiner appointments and reporting.

Within Schools, Deans are ultimately responsible for quality and standards. They are assisted by Associate Deans of School (Academic Quality Assurance) (ADoS(AQA)s) and Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching) (AD(LT)s), who both have a range of responsibilities. They work closely with CAQA and LTIC staff to ensure a shared understanding of quality assurance and enhancement across the University. Deans of School are responsible for the standards and quality of programmes and modules within their Schools.

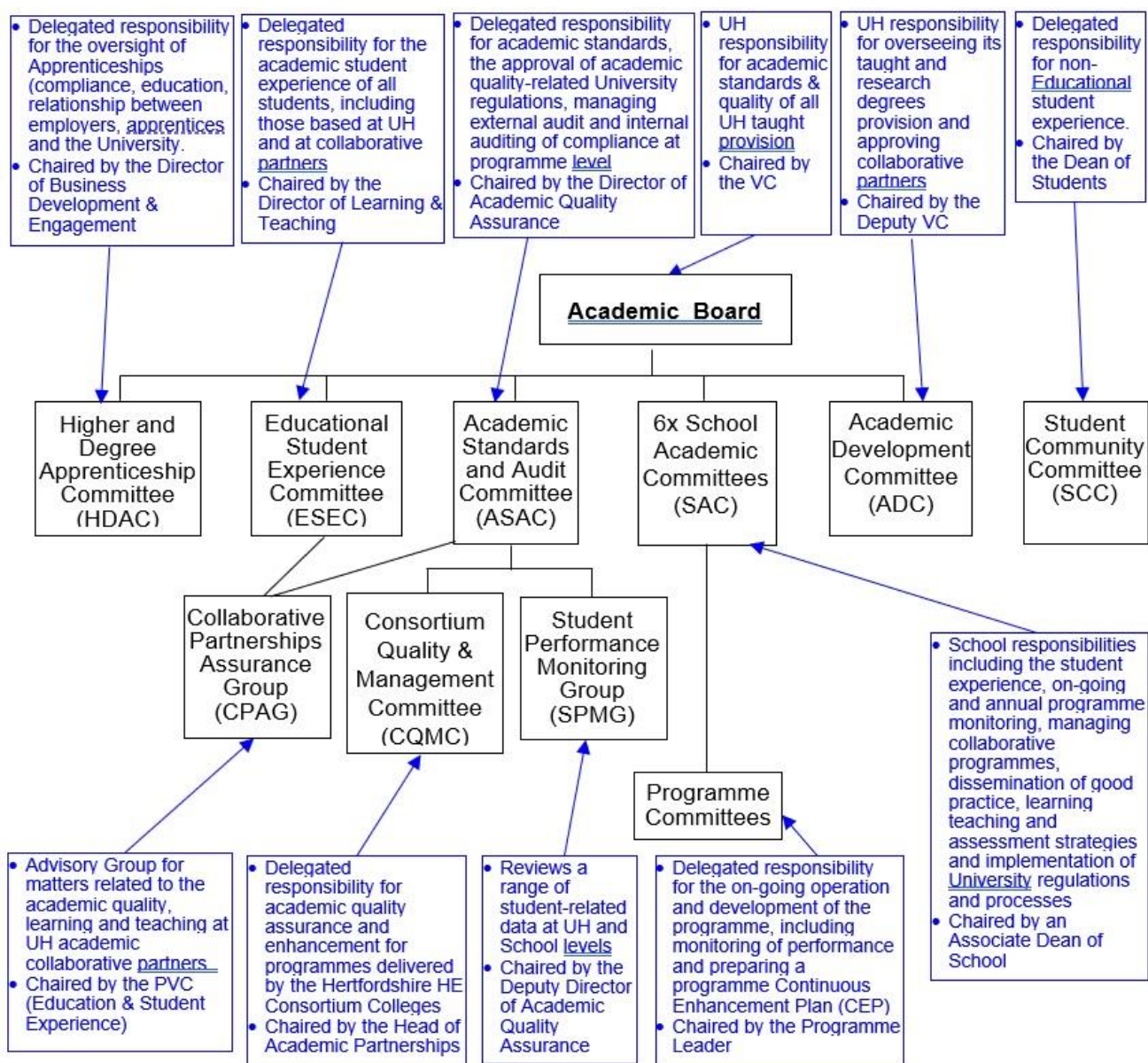


Figure 1: University Committee structure

2. Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners

2.1 The purpose of the external examining system

The UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: External Expertise (see: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>) identifies the following 'guiding principles' regarding the role of the external examiner:

Guiding Principle 2

Degree-awarding bodies engage independent external examiners to comment impartially and informatively on academic standards, student achievement and assessment processes for all provision that leads to the award of credit or a qualification.

Guiding Principle 3

Degree-awarding bodies have processes for the nomination, approval and engagement of external examiners.

Guiding Principle 5

Providers ensure that external experts are given sufficient and timely evidence and training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

At the University of Hertfordshire, the main purposes of the External Examiner process are to:

- assist the University in the comparison of academic standards of its awards across the HE sector;
- verify that standards are appropriate for the award or modules for which the External Examiners take responsibility;
- ensure that the assessment process is equitable and is fairly operated in the marking, grading and classification of student performance, and that decisions are made in accordance with University Regulations;
- report on the standards of student achievement;
- identify, where appropriate, examples of good practice and areas for enhancement.

The University regulations ([UPR AS14](#), section E) provide a fuller list of the responsibilities of external examiners (see also Appendices B and C of this Handbook).

2.2 Boards of Examiners

The University operates a two-tier system of *Module Boards of Examiners* (or *Short Course Boards of Examiners* for standalone credit-rated short courses) and *Programme Boards of Examiners*.

Module Boards of Examiners (and Short Course Boards of Examiners) are specifically responsible for reporting the awards of grades for candidates, and making decisions about referral/deferral options. They consider formal recommendations for exceptional circumstances that may have affected individual performance, and decide on any changes to be made to grades in the light of evidence provided. The Module Board also decides on penalties to be imposed for proven cases of cheating, plagiarism, collusion or other academic misconduct. Module Boards monitor the performance of cohorts of students from different programmes attending a particular module, and report substantial differences in performance to Programme Boards.

Programme Boards of Examiners receive confirmed grades as awarded by Module Boards. They consider the achievement of students completing programmes, recommending the conferment of awards. At earlier stages of a programme they make decisions on the continuation or withdrawal of students on programmes.

In parallel, UH appoints *Module External Examiners* (or *Short Course External Examiners*) to take an oversight of the academic standards and assessment of a cognate group of modules (or

short courses), and *Programme External Examiners* to take an oversight of the award of qualifications. In both cases, external examiners are required to use both the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ, at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>) and the relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements (at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>) as reference points in this oversight (see Appendix A), in addition to any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements.

The regulations for UH Boards of Examiners, including their composition, responsibilities and the role of external examiners can be found in UPR AS14, sections C and E (see the *University of Hertfordshire Academic Regulations Handbook for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes*, page 157: https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/421646/Academic-Handbook-2024-2025.pdf). See also Appendix B for extracts from the UPRs relevant to external examining.

2.3 Module and Short Course External Examiners (see [UPR AS14](#), sections C2, E1.2, E1.3, E3)

Regulations and procedures on the setting, review, submission, marking and moderation of examinations and assessments are described in [UPR AS12](#), section 5 for UH-delivered programmes, or in [UPR AS13](#), section 5 for collaborative programmes. The relevant extract is presented in Appendix C.

It is University policy that all intended learning outcomes on a module are assessed; coursework and examinations have equal importance in this regard.

At academic level 5 and above, Module and Short Course External Examiners will see and comment upon all examination question papers and selected coursework assessment tasks (see Appendix C, section 5.1) in advance, together with grading criteria and marking schemes or specimen answers.

At academic level 3 and 4 the responsibilities vary according to the context. If the final award is below level 5 (including Foundation Years, Cert HEs, etc.) the duties described in Appendix C, section 5.1.2 apply. If the Level 4 is part of a more advanced programme (e.g. an Honours degree programme) then the External Examiner(s) are not required to review standards. The University has decided that by confirming the academic standards of the Bachelors programme at levels 5 and 6, External Examiners are implicitly endorsing the standards at level 4 of the programme. Therefore, unless there are specific Programme or Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements for externals to approve modules at level 4, we would not normally ask them to do so.

A key role of the Module/Short Course External Examiner in the assessment process is to offer comment upon the appropriateness of marking standards and the standards of the assessment of modules. The School will inform its Module/Short Course External Examiners of any additional policies in respect of double marking, marking schemes etc.

Module/Short Course External Examiners are required to consider marking standards through the scrutiny of a sample of student work. Student work includes all types of assessment such as examination answers, coursework, projects and dissertations. Increasingly, external examiners are being asked to review electronic samples of student work, through StudyNet, and guidance on doing so is available at: https://herts.instructure.com/courses/15480/pages/guidance-for-external-examiners?module_item_id=958032.

It is recognised that in some disciplines this will take forms other than written work (e.g. performance, exhibition, practice placements). The arrangements and dates to facilitate this process should be agreed between the Module/Short Course External Examiner and the Module team well in advance (e.g. at the start of the academic year).

Where a single element of coursework counts for 30% or more of a module grade, the Module/Short Course External Examiner must approve assignments before they are given to students. When the contribution is less, the External would be asked to comment on the assignments retrospectively.

The marking and moderation of student work is described in Appendix C, section 5.4 of this Handbook. Please note that (i) internal moderators are not expected to act as 'second markers', and (ii) module/short course external examiners are not expected to act as 'third markers'. The sample received will range across the grades awarded and therefore provide examples at the top, middle and bottom of the range of performance. The sample will also include a number of fails, if any (where a programme is conjointly validated by a professional or Statutory-Regulatory body there may be a requirement that all fails are sent to the external examiner). The sample is provided as an indication of the marking standards in use and External Examiners' views are sought on the overall standards, not on individual scripts. If the External Examiner has reservations about the marking standards, these should be raised with the module team, and prior to the Module Board wherever possible.

Where, exceptionally, the External Examiner has serious reservations over the sample and marking standards, with the agreement of the Module Board s/he may require that all the scripts are re-marked.

Module/short course teams will ensure that External Examiners have access to samples of all of the assessments contributing to a final award mark. It is expected that module/short course teams will have regard to ensuring that the workload of each External Examiner is reasonable and not unduly heavy. Where large cohorts of students exist, additional External Examiners would be appointed rather than over-burdening one External Examiner.

An agreed procedure for consulting Module/Short Course External Examiners with regard to the re-assessment of referred/deferred students should be established at the Board of Examiners. Where there are any significant difficulties in determining referred/deferred results, it may be necessary to ensure that Module/Short Course External Examiners are in attendance at the reconvened Module Board.

2.4 Programme External Examiners (see [UPR AS14](#), sections C3, E1.1 and E2)

The role of the Programme External Examiner is essentially one of judging the overall standards set on the programme and the quality assurance arrangements in place at programme level. Programme External Examiners will not, therefore, be concerned with the moderation of scripts on a module by module basis. However, Programme Externals will wish to assure themselves that Module Externals have been appropriately involved at module level. The Programme Board of Examiners will need to seek a mechanism for providing their External Examiners with feedback from the Module Board(s) and any issues raised. In this way, they can maintain an overview of the standards, comparability and the health of the programme as a whole. A Programme External Examiner may wish to draw on this cumulative information in writing his/her annual report.

For Honours degree programmes, the University has decided that by confirming the academic standards of the Bachelor's award at the final board, the Programme External Examiner is implicitly endorsing the level and standards of any Certificate and Diploma awards at levels 4 and 5 of the programme. Therefore, unless there are specific Programme or Professional/Statutory-Regulatory Body requirements for External Examiners to approve interim awards at levels 4 and 5, it would not be necessary to do so.

2.5 Attendance at Boards of Examiners meetings (see [UPR AS14](#), sections C3.5.2 and C4.4)

External examiners are expected to attend Boards of Examiners meetings. If, exceptionally, you are unavoidably absent then the University requires that you should be consulted and your agreement on the decisions of the Board obtained (using form AQ9a to approve the outcomes

of Module Boards or form E10a to approve the outcomes of programme boards). Without this, Module/Short Course Boards are not authorised to issue grades and Programme Boards are not authorised to publish Pass Lists. The University therefore requests that external examiners attend examination boards wherever possible, and in the case of unavoidable absence then the approval of board outcomes are confirmed as soon as possible to enable students to receive their results.

2.6 Bilingual External Examiners (see [UPR AS17](#), section D5.8)

Bilingual External Examiners are required to be in place to assess the standards of programmes delivered in languages other than English. This places a far greater responsibility on these external examiners, which is reflected in the fees paid.

2.7 Information given to students about External Examiners and their reports

In the interests of transparency, the following information is made available to students via a link to a website in (i) the programme handbook and (ii) the programme specification, listing all the University's External Examiners:

- the External Examiner's name;
- their institution;
- the professional body on behalf of whom the External Examiner is acting (where relevant);
- the modules codes for which they are responsible.

The e-mail addresses of External Examiners or other contact details will not be made available to students.

As members of a programme committee, student representatives will have access in full to all Module and Programme External Examiners' reports relating to their programme of study. The reports will be considered as part of the annual monitoring and evaluation process. All other students also have access to external examiners' reports for their modules and programme, upon request (see: [External Examiners | Ask Herts | University of Hertfordshire](#) for information to students on external examining at the University).

2.8 Contacts between the External Examiner and Students

The External Examiner, by arrangement with the appropriate School, may meet with students in order to assist him/her to judge the overall quality and standards of the module/short course/programme concerned, and to gain a general view of the experiences of students during the year. The University will not, however, allow External Examiners to intervene in the assessment of individual students. Where oral examination, interview or observation by the External Examiner is part of the agreed assessment process, then all relevant students will be assessed rather than a sample.

If an External Examiner does wish to meet with students, please note that it is not normally possible at the time of the June/July Board of Examiner meetings (as undergraduate students are not likely to be on campus). It is worth noting that one alternative method of gaining student views is through the University Module Feedback Questionnaire (MFQ). Please note that these apply to the previous academic session.

As the name and institution of External Examiners is available to students via links in AskHerts (see: [External Examiners | Ask Herts | University of Hertfordshire](#)), it is possible that students may try to contact External Examiners. Students are advised that it is not appropriate for them to contact External Examiners in the following statement found at the top of the official list of the University's External Examiners:

'Under no circumstances should a student attempt to contact an external examiner about any individual matter arising out of their programme of study including assessment matters. Any student who believes that they have been unfairly treated should (i) in an assessment matter,

make use of the University's Appeals procedure or (ii) in any other matter, make use of the University's Complaints Procedure.'

If a student contacts an external about an individual assessment matter, he/she is advised not to respond to the e-mail, but to forward the e-mail to the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) or the programme tutor. Any telephone calls from students about individual assessment matters should similarly be referred to the programme tutor.

2.9 Transfer of files with External Examiners

In order for external examiners to externally review draft assessments in advance of their use, externally moderate samples of marked student work and receive exam board paperwork (absent external examiners only), the School will need to send you this confidential information in a safe and secure manner.

Schools are being encouraged to use the 'Exchange File' service to do so. 'Exchange File' is a secure file sharing service for staff to send and receive files of confidential and sensitive information or very large datafiles using their @herts.ac.uk email account. It uses the same secure protocol that is used for ecommerce and other secure transfers on the web, plus all uploaded files are scanned for viruses. It is a safer alternative to systems such as Dropbox, Gdrive, Onedrive, YouSendIt and MailBigFile, which are unregulated and do not meet UH information governance regulations for personal and confidential information. External examiners can also use the service, as long as the recipient has a @herts.ac.uk email account.

Further details are available at <https://www.exchangefile.herts.ac.uk/about.php>.

3. External Examiner Annual Reports (see [UPR AS17](#), section C1.4)

3.1 Submission of Annual Reports

In May each year, Academic Services send an annual reminder of the need for your annual report, along with the appropriate template attached.

All External Examiners are required to submit their annual report **within 3 weeks of the** Examination Boards to Academic Services, in Word format and as an email attachment to: aqo@herts.ac.uk. Academic Services will record receipt, then forward the report to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for consideration. **The University has adopted a policy that External Examiner fees will not be paid until the report has been received.**

Fees and expense claim forms should be sent to Academic Services via e-mail to aqo@herts.ac.uk.

Please note: External examiners for UH programmes delivered at more than one institution (for example delivered at UH and at a collaborative partner) are required to submit a separate report for each institution. However, external examiners responsible for a programme delivered at the Hertfordshire HE Consortium Colleges (West Herts, North Hertfordshire, Oaklands and Hertford Regional) should submit only one combined report for all Colleges.

In due course, the Schools will respond in writing to the External Examiners report and will send an Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report indicating discussions of the report and recommendations and actions.

3.2 Receipt and Consideration of External Examiner Reports (see Appendix D)

All annual reports are sent to the Director of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA) or Deputy Director of AQA for consideration, who will identify any reports which are considered to be inadequate, critical or especially commendatory, and will identify the appropriate action to be taken. This may include:

- i asking the External Examiner for a more detailed report;
- ii referring specific issues to the Dean of School;
- iii referring specific issues to University Committees;
- iv entering into further discussion with the External Examiner;
- v initiating a major review of a subject, module(s) or programme(s).

After consideration, reports are made available to the School for detailed consideration through the annual monitoring and evaluation process. A senior member of staff in the School (for example, Dean of School or Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance)) will ensure that external examiners receive a considered reply to their report indicating actions taken and planned in response to comments. All external examiners' reports are given full and detailed consideration as part of the programme Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) process.

3.3 Module/Short Course External Examiner Reports

The timing of annual Module/Short Course reports will be agreed between the External Examiner and the Chairperson of the Board of Examiners, but it will normally be expected after the annual final Board at the end of the academic session.

A Module/Short Course External Examiner's annual report will ask for comment on the conduct of assessments and on issues related to assessment, including:

- The setting and achievement of academic standards and how they compare with similar programmes at the same level in other institutions;
- Students' achievement; including areas of strength and weakness if appropriate;

- The relevance and currency of the curriculum and where appropriate the relationship to any professional qualification;
- Aspects of assessment, for example: consistency, methods, and fairness;
- Whether the teaching and learning practices adopted are effective in enabling students to achieve their learning outcomes (as indicated by student performance, discussions with staff, examination board discussions, etc.)
- The appropriateness of the learning resources (as evidenced by student achievement, tours of resources, discussions with students, discussions with staff, examination board discussions, etc.)
- Whether previous reports have been responded to satisfactorily;
- Experience of the administration arrangements and the Board of Examiners, for example: arrangement for provision of students' work, operation of the Board, fairness;
- Key features and strengths of the module(s)/short course(s);

They will also be asked to make recommendations on key points that need to be addressed by the School as part of the programme Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) process, or by the University more generally.

External Examiner reports are discussed in Programme Committees (and possibly School Academic Committees where significant issues are raised) as part of the University's annual monitoring and evaluation procedures for programmes and modules and to inform academic development. These committees will include student representatives, and **it is therefore essential that reports do not identify any individuals by name.**

3.4 Programme External Examiner Reports

The purpose of the Programme External Examiner report is to enable the Academic Board to judge whether the programme is meeting its stated aims and objectives at the appropriate standard and to make any necessary improvements as appropriate.

A Programme External Examiner's annual report will ask for comment on the programme and on related issues, including:

- The overall standards of the programme, and how they compare with similar programmes in other institutions;
- Students' performance in relation to their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere;
- The standards and range of awards recommended
- Where possible, the assessment arrangements and the quality of the student learning experience;
- Experience of the administration arrangements and the Board of Examiners, for example: information provided, operation of the Board, fairness;
- Whether previous reports have been responded to satisfactorily;
- Key features and strengths of the programme;

They will also be asked to make recommendations on key points that need to be addressed by the School as part of the programme Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) process, or by the University more generally.

External Examiner reports are discussed in Programme Committees (and possibly School Academic Committees where significant issues are raised) as part of the University's annual monitoring and evaluation procedures for programmes. These committees will include student representatives, and so **it is therefore essential that reports do not identify any individuals by name.**

3.5 Matters of concern to External Examiners (see [UPR AS14](#), sections E4 and E5)

External Examiners have the right to correspond at any time directly with (i) the Chair of the Board of Examiners, followed by (ii) the Dean of School or ultimately (iii) the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of the Academic Board if they are concerned about standards of assessment and performance, particularly where they consider that assessments are being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standard of the University's awards and/or the module/short course provision.

Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to **systemic failings with the academic standards** of a programme and the matter has not been resolved through the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, or via QAA (for further guidance, see: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint>) or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

4 Administrative Matters

4.1 Membership of the University

Your appointment as an external examiner of the University requires you to become a 'Category B Member' of the University:

- **Category A Membership** is conferred on individuals who participate in learning, study, research or other educational activities where the university is responsible for the quality of the provision;
- **Category B Membership** is conferred on a range of authorised individuals, including external examiners.

Please be advised that it is a requirement that you provide your passport and any visa information to the University to be verified by the University's HR department prior to the commencement of your external examining appointment. Your attendance at the University's introductory workshop for external examiners will provide you with an opportunity to satisfy this requirement. This enables the University to comply with current Home Office Visa & Immigration requirements, that all external examiners have submitted these documents before they can be allowed to start any work or be paid.

UH accounts will normally be available within 2 working days of processing the application. If you have any queries regarding the status of your contract ago@herts.ac.uk.

4.2 StudyNet and Canvas

The UH Managed Learning Environment (StudyNet, and Canvas for module/programme sites) is available to all External Examiners, to enable them to (i) view the teaching materials used by staff at the University, (ii) review in-course assessments and moderate marked student work online, (iii) view discussion groups, etc. Access to Canvas sites is therefore extremely beneficial in carrying out your duties as an external examiner for the University of Hertfordshire. Guidance on using StudyNet is available at:

[Guidance for External Examiners: 0IND0002 - The Guided Learner Journey \(instructure.com\)](#)

Completion and return of the HR Registration form (sent to external examiners by HR after completion of the Right to Work checks) enables the University's Library and Computing Services (LCS) department to send out log in and password details for access to the site. The log in and password information will remain valid for the term of your appointment with the University.

An introduction to StudyNet is held at the bi-annual External Examiner's Workshop and Schools will liaise with Externals directly, to arrange both module and programme access. External examiners will typically be set with access rights of 'Admin Staff' by Schools – this allows you to see teaching materials and module information. Please contact the School if you do not have access to the modules you are contracted to take responsibility for.

4.3 Travel Insurance

All External Examiners travelling on University business are considered employees of the University and therefore covered by University of Hertfordshire travel insurance. For further information, see: [Travel insurance scheme \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

4.4 Travelling Abroad

Please ensure that you have a valid passport with **over 6 months left to run** before renewal prior to the end of the travel period.

4.5 Data Protection guidance for External Examiners

To support more efficient ways of working and our compliance with data protection requirements, external examiners are now provided with access to the University SharePoint site for administering the assessment and moderation process. When using this system, external examiners are requested to follow the guidance below to support our compliance obligations with the UK GDPR and data protection legislation such as data minimisation, purpose limitation and security of personal information. See UPR IM08 Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement (https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/233090/IM08-Data-Protection.pdf). We ask that you:

- Only access information via the SharePoint site. No data will, or should, be forwarded to personal email accounts;
- Only access documentation that is been allocated to you;
- Do not download any data to personal devices. Any editing should be done within the SharePoint system. Do check that data hasn't been downloaded automatically and if it has, please delete all copies, including from your recycle bin;
- Avoid printing out information wherever possible. Where this has happened please store securely and delete once this is no longer required.

4.6 Academic Services and School responsibilities for Contact with External Examiners

This section identifies the separate responsibilities of Academic Services (AS) and Schools for contact with External Examiners (EEs) and each other.

4.5.1 **Academic Services** (aqo@herts.ac.uk) will send an initial letter to the EE, containing their contract, details of programmes & modules/short courses they are responsible for, a briefing pack, (details of important Academic Services contacts, payment details, an invitation to the EE workshop, the appropriate report templates and deadlines for reporting) and the Academic Regulations. Academic Services also send out the HR Registration form for the EE to become a member of the University and gain full access to StudyNet - once returned and completed, EEs will be provided with a StudyNet username and password.

4.5.2 The **School** should also then write to the EE, containing a welcome from the School, relevant Programme Specifications and DMDs, details of important School contacts, the last relevant EE's reports, the last Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) action plan (for existing programmes) and any other School/programme/module/short course information deemed necessary. A School representative will also meet up with the EE after the EE workshop, to show them any relevant physical resources, discuss the module/short course/programme structure and module/short course/programme-specific regulations, meet appropriate staff, etc. The School will also provide information on how to access module and programme information.

The EE should also be informed of any additional duties required of them, beyond those required by Academic Services. For instance, some Schools ask EEs to prepare individual module reports to their own format – it should be noted that, in these circumstances, these additional requirements **should not replace the Academic Services report requirements** and any additional payment would need to be negotiated between the School and the EE.

4.5.3 On an ongoing basis, **Academic Services** will send the EE:

- Annual updates to the academic regulations (URL link to the Handbook);
- Annual reminder of the need for their report, with attached templates and deadlines;
- Details of any approved amendments to their contract, including programmes and modules they are responsible for, payment, etc.

4.5.4 On an ongoing basis, the **School** will send the EE:

- Programme Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) action plan for the previous academic session;

- Updated Definitive Module Documents (DMDs), Short Course Descriptors (SCDs) and Programme Specifications (it is also good practice to consult the EE on any amendments before they are approved);
- Dates of upcoming Boards of Examiners meetings;
- A response to their last EE annual report.

4.5.5 On an ongoing basis, **Academic Services** will send to the School:

- Any changes of address or personal details of the EE;
- EE's Annual Reports (following initial consideration by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor or one of the Directors of Academic Quality Assurance);
- Intention of an EE to terminate their contract;
- Prior notice of the need to replace the EE upon completion of their contract.

4.5.6 On an ongoing basis, the **School** will send to Academic Services:

- Any changes of address or personal details of the EE (Academic Services ask the EE to inform them of these, but sometimes the School is informed instead);
- Expenses or EE Annual Reports sent directly to the School (EEs are always requested to send their annual report *via Academic Services* for onward transmission to the Vice Chancellor);
- Intention of an EE to terminate their contract.

5 Fees and Expenses

- 5.1** Payment of fees will be made once the annual report has been received. No fee will be paid on receipt of interim reports of any nature, or for involvement in, for example, Semester A assessments. Claims for payment for these activities should be made with the annual fee claim. Please note you are entitled to claim an additional report fee where more than one report is required for your External Examiner appointment.

Expenses related to external examining duties may be claimed at any time.

5.2 Accommodation

Accommodation will normally be arranged by the University and the hotel asked to submit its invoice directly to the University. Meals taken at the hotel must be paid by External Examiner before checking out and then claimed as part of expenses in the normal way (with receipts). Please note that alcoholic drinks cannot be reimbursed by the University. Please do **not** ask for meals to be included in the invoice sent to the University.

Accommodation will be reimbursed for the External Examiner **only**. Accommodation arranged personally will be reimbursed at up to £100 per night (to include breakfast) against a valid receipt.

5.3 External Examiners' Fee Schedule and Expense Rates

A fee is payable to our External Examiners (EEs) upon receipt of an acceptable annual report on the programme and/or modules that they are responsible for. The external examiner's fee structure for this year is:

STANDARD FEES

| | | | <i>Per additional contract</i> |
|---|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Programme External Examiner only | | £300.00 | £150.00 |
| Module External Examiner Only | Up to 20 Modules | £450.00 | £300.00 |
| Both Programme & Module External Examiner | Up to 20 Modules | £600.00 | £450.00 |
| Short Course External Examiner | £50 per delivery of a Short Course up to a maximum of £450 per year | *See below | |
| Attendance at External Examiner Induction Workshop | | £50.00 | |
| Additional Fee for EPA Examination role in addition to standard fee External Examiner | | £100 | |

**Note that External Examiners who cover both modules and short courses will receive a single fee with a maximum of £450 per year, and the number of combined modules and short courses must not exceed 20.*

FEE PAYMENTS

All fee payments are processed through the University's payroll system. Fee payments are processed on the submission of your annual report.

EXPENSES

We are only able to reimburse standard class travel fares, for which receipts or travel tickets must be produced.

The claim form must be submitted to aqo@herts.ac.uk for it to be processed.

PLEASE NOTE

All claims will be paid on a monthly basis and should be received by the 1st of the month for payment by the end of the month. Payment claims that are not submitted by the 1st cannot be guaranteed to be paid and will be processed and paid at the end of the following month. The University apologises for any inconvenience that this may cause.

Claims must be submitted within the academic session that they are incurred and not later than 3 months after the work has been carried out. Claims received beyond the 3 months may take longer for processing for payment.

QAA reference points**1. Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) (2014)**
(<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>)

The introduction to the FHEQ states that:

'It is a technical manual aimed at academic and professional staff working in higher education. It is intended to be used in support of their professional responsibilities for:

- *establishing degree-awarding bodies' own academic frameworks and regulations by which they govern how they award qualifications;*
- *setting and maintaining academic standards both within their own organisations and when acting as external examiners;*
- *formal referencing of the UK frameworks for higher education qualifications to European or other international qualifications frameworks.'*

Examples of the typical higher education qualifications at each level of the FHEQ and the corresponding cycle of the FQ-EHEA:

| Typical HE qualifications within each level | FHEQ level | Corresponding QF-EHEA cycle |
|--|------------|---|
| Doctoral degrees (eg, PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD, DBA, DClinPsy) | 8 | Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications |
| Master's degrees (eg, MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc) | 7 | Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications |
| Integrated master's degrees* (eg, MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm, MOptom) | | |
| Postgraduate diplomas | | |
| Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) | | |
| Postgraduate certificates | | |
| Bachelor's degrees with honours (eg, BA/BSc Hons) | 6 | First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications |
| Bachelor's degrees | | |
| Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) | | |
| Graduate diplomas | | |
| Graduate certificates | | |
| Foundation Degrees (eg, FdA, FdSc) | 5 | Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications |
| Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) | | |
| Higher National Diplomas (HND) | | |
| Higher National Certificates (HNC) | | |
| Certificates of Higher Education (Cert HE) | 4 | |

* *Integrated master's degree programmes typically include study equivalent to at least four full-time academic years, of which study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year is at level 7. Thus study at bachelor's level is integrated with study at master's level and the programmes are designed to meet the level 6 and level 7 qualification descriptors in full.*

2. QAA Subject Benchmarks

(<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>)

The QAA Subject benchmark statements identify the general expectations about standards of awards (mostly Bachelor's degrees with Honours, but also some Master's degrees) in a specific subject area. They describe the academic characteristics and standards of a subject area and the expectations of a graduate in terms of the knowledge, understanding and skills. They also discuss the teaching, learning and assessment processes appropriate to the discipline. There are currently 75 Honours degree benchmark statements and 14 Master's degree benchmark statements, accessible from the website identified above.

The relevant benchmark statements are an essential reference point for programme designers, and are used in association with FHEQ and the SEEC credit level descriptors in defining the programme learning outcomes. Within each, expectations are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are usually expressed for the threshold level that students would be expected to have attained upon graduation. They are often (but not always) described in terms of (i) knowledge and understanding and (ii) skills, which in turn are usually sub-divided into intellectual skills, practical skills and transferable skills. For this reason, the UH programme Specification template uses a similar breakdown when describing programme learning outcomes.

In preparing or reviewing Programme learning outcomes, programme teams relate their programmes to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, but should not be a direct copy of them. For some programmes a relevant benchmark statement may not be available. Whilst benchmark statements mostly focus on Honours degrees, postgraduate programmes may also demonstrate how they relate to the standard and outcomes of that award.

For some interdisciplinary programmes it may be inadequate to refer to only one set of benchmark statements. Where a number of Subject benchmark statements are referred to it is for the programme team to decide on the appropriate balance, acknowledging that the outcomes of both/all statements cannot usually be achieved in the programme concerned.

Those externally examining Foundation Degree awards should refer to the QAA *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. It describes the distinctive features of a Foundation Degree in terms of its purpose, general characteristics, generic learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment strategies: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements>.

Those externally examining Master's Degree awards should refer to the QAA *Master's Degree characteristics* statement, for a point of reference in the delivery of master's degrees in a range of subject areas: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements>.

Those externally examining HE-level Apprenticeships should refer to the QAA *Higher Education in Apprenticeships characteristics* statement, for a point of reference in the delivery of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in a range of subject areas: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements>.

Those externally examining any Dual or Joint awards should refer to the QAA Qualifications involving more than one Degree-Awarding Body characteristics statement as a point of reference: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements>.

Appointment of External Examiners (from [UPR AS17](#))

C1.1 Appointment of External Examiners

(Note for guidance:

- A** The criteria for the appointment of External Examiners are set out in section C1.2.
B Terms of reference for External Examiner appointments at Module and/or Programme Board of Examiners level are set out in UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes'.)

- C1.1.1 Schools, in conjunction with the Student Administration Service, are responsible for identifying and approaching potential External Examiners for modules, short courses and programmes leading to University awards. It is the responsibility of the Student Administration Service Manager (in consultation with their designated ASO(AQA)) to ensure that the search for replacements for External Examiners whose term of office is to expire is begun in good time. The period of office for an External Examiner is normally four (4) years but can be extended by up to one (1) year under exceptional circumstances.
- C1.1.2 Where more than one External Examiner is appointed to a programme, Schools should consider phasing External Examiner appointments to enable and encourage the mentoring of new External Examiners.
- C1.1.3 Proposals for the appointment of External Examiners must be submitted to AS not less than six (6) months prior to the required commencement of their duties. For most programmes and subjects AS will require nominations by 31 March for commencement on 1 October. This minimum period is necessary to allow sufficient time for proposals to be considered and for alternative appointees to be identified if first choices withdraw or are rejected by the University.
- C1.1.4 The ADoS(AQA) or senior member of staff responsible for the programme, module(s) and/or short course(s) is responsible for nominations of Programme External Examiners, Module External Examiners and Short Course External Examiners, in consultation with the relevant Dean(s) of School.
- C1.1.5 It is the responsibility of the ADoS(AQA) to ensure that the relevant nomination forms ([AQ11](#), AQ12 or AQ13) are fully and properly completed, ensuring that the information provided by (or about) the proposed External Examiner is appropriate to the prescribed criteria.
- C1.1.6 All proposals must be carefully scrutinised by or on behalf of the relevant SAC. This scrutiny should address both the merits of the proposed appointee and the strength and balance of the team of externals which he or she will be joining. Factors to be considered will include:
- i the capacity of existing External Examiners to make competent judgements relating to all agreed external reference points (including the requirements of PSRBs);
 - ii the need for an appropriate match between the number of External Examiners and the quantity and complexity of the material being assessed;
 - iii how External Examiners will be deployed where provision includes work-based learning or work placements;
 - iv any additional requirements placed upon the University by PSRBs.
- The Chairman of the SAC will make the Committee's recommendation on the relevant nomination form.
- C1.1.7 Any proposed departure from normal requirements or procedures must be justified within an accompanying statement.
- C1.1.8 AS will screen all proposals before passing them to the DAQA (or nominee) for consideration and approval on behalf of the Academic Board.
- C1.1.9 AS will confirm the appointment, in writing, to the External Examiner. The External Examiner will receive:
- i the External Examiners' Handbook;
 - ii the current edition of the University Handbook 'Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes';
 - iii the letter of appointment, which will include an invitation to the External Examiner to attend an induction workshop (and explain the expectation of attendance).

C1.1.10 The confirmation details of appointment of an External Examiner will be sent to the Student Administration Service Manager for further circulation within the relevant School and Partner Organisations.

C1.1.11 It is the responsibility of the Student Administration Service Manager to ensure that programme documentation (including the Programme Specification(s)) and/or appropriate SCDs and DMDs and other documents are sent to the External Examiner on appointment.

C1.2 **Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners**

C1.2.1 The following criteria are to be applied during consideration of proposed External Examiner nominations:

- i a Programme, Module or Short Course External Examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate to the programme/modules to be examined;
- ii a Programme External Examiner should have, where appropriate, knowledge and experience of managing complex modular programmes;
- iii an External Examiner should have appropriate standing, expertise and experience of UK Higher Education so that they are able to assess and confirm comparability of standards. Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:
 - a the present and previous post(s) and place of work;
 - b the range and scope of experience across UK Higher Education and/or the professions;
 - c current or recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the field of study concerned;
 - d the level of the External Examiner's qualifications and breadth of experience which should generally match that which is to be assessed;
- iv an External Examiner should have competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience;
- v an External Examiner should have enough recent internal and/or external examining or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students; attendance at the University's External Examiners Training Workshop is mandatory for those with limited experience in this role;
- vi Examiners should not be over-extended by their External Examining duties and should not normally hold more than the equivalent of two (2) substantial undergraduate External Examiner appointments;
- vii there should be an appropriate balance and expertise in the team of External Examiners;
- viii External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the University (or Partner Organisation) which might compromise their objectivity, for example, the nomination will not be accepted if in the last five (5) years the proposed External Examiner has:
 - a been a member of staff, a Governor, a student, a colleague or a relative of a member of staff who has involvement with the programme/module;
 - b completed a previous appointment as an External Examiner on a cognate programme in the University or Partner Organisation. However, an External Examiner for a programme at the University may be appointed subsequently as the External Examiner for a franchise of that programme at a Partner Organisation;
- ix the proposed External Examiner should not:
 - a be personally associated with the sponsorship of students or the award of prizes;
 - b have a personal association with a student in their area of responsibility (for example, colleague, relation, partner etc);
 - c be in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students in their area of responsibility;
 - d be working in an organisation or company providing placements for students in their area of responsibility;
- x there should not be:
 - a more than one (1) External Examiner from the same institution in the team of External Examiners, except in a complex programme involving a large number of discrete subject areas;
 - b reciprocal External Examining between two (2) institutions;
 - c replacement of an External Examiner by one (1) from the same institution;
 - d an External Examiner from an institution which has been the source of External Examiners in the recent past (normally four (4) years), for the same programme or subject area;
- xi an External Examiner shall have fluency in English and, where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language;
- xii where a PSRB requires, External Examiners must be registered on the relevant part of the professional register.

(1) Roles and responsibilities of External Examiners (from [UPR AS14](#))

E1 General information

E1.1 Programme External Examiners

- i Programme External Examiners are appointed by the University to have oversight of the programme-specific assessment and ensure that it has been undertaken in a manner which is just to the individual student and that the standard of the University's awards is maintained. Membership and attendance of Programme External Examiners at the Programme Board of Examiners is expected (but see also section E2.3).
- ii By confirming the academic standards of a programme at its final board, the Programme External Examiner is implicitly endorsing the Level and standards of any interim awards for the programme. Therefore, unless there are specific Programme or Professional/Statutory Regulatory Body requirements for External Examiners to approve interim awards, it is not necessary to do so.

E1.2 Module External Examiners

- i Module External Examiners are appointed by the University to ensure that the assessment and academic standards in cognate subject areas are appropriate. They will be asked to moderate assessment and standards, possibly across a broad range of credit-rated modules at different Levels. Module External Examiners are members of Module Boards of Examiners (see C3.5 'Involvement of External Examiners in Module Boards and Short Course Boards' above). Membership and attendance of Module External Examiners at the Module Board of Examiners is expected (but see also section E3.2). Where they are not also Programme External Examiners they are not members of the Programme Board but may be invited to attend by the Chairman/Chairmen of relevant Programme Board(s).
- ii Module External Examiners are appointed for all modules at Levels **5, 6** and **7**. By confirming the academic standards of a Bachelor's programme at Levels **5** and **6**, External Examiners are implicitly endorsing the standards at Level **4** of a programme. Therefore, unless there are specific Programme or Professional/Statutory Regulatory Body requirements for External Examiners to consider modules at Level **4**, it is not necessary to do so. For final awards at Levels **0** and **4**, Module External Examiners are appointed for modules at the Level of the final award.

E1.3 Short Course External Examiners

- i Short Course External Examiners are appointed by the University to ensure that the assessment and academic standards in cognate subject areas are appropriate. They will be asked to moderate assessment and standards, possibly across a broad range of credit-rated short courses at different Levels. Short Course External Examiners are members of Short Course Boards of Examiners (see C3.5 'Involvement of External Examiners in Module Boards and Short Course Boards' above).
- ii Short Course External Examiners are appointed for all short courses at Levels **5, 6** and **7**.

E2 Role, responsibilities, rights and duties of Programme External Examiners

E2.1 The role of the Programme External Examiner(s) is: to audit the programme assessment process; to ensure that justice is done to the individual student; to ensure that the standard of the University's award is maintained and to ensure compliance with the regulations for the award.

E2.2 Programme External Examiners must be appointed to all programmes which may lead to an award. Where External Examiners have been appointed, no recommendation for the conferment of a University award may be made without their written consent. On any matter which the Programme External Examiner(s) declare(s) a matter of principle, the decision of the Programme External Examiner(s) shall either be accepted as final by the Board of Examiners or shall be referred to the Academic Board.

E2.3 If a Programme External Examiner is absent from a meeting of a Board of Examiners which is concerned with the determination of the class or grade of award and, because of the circumstances, no substitute has been duly appointed, then they should be consulted and their agreement on the decisions of the Board obtained (section 9.3.2, UPR AS12^g/section 9.3.2, UPR AS13^h, refers). It is essential that, in such circumstances, every endeavour is made to ensure that at least one (**1**) of the Programme External Examiners is present at the meeting and that no decision of the Board be made final until the concurrence of the absent External Examiner(s) has been established.

E2.4 Responsibilities of Programme External Examiners

The following outlines the collective and individual responsibilities of Programme External Examiners. They should:

- i be able to judge each student impartially on the basis of the results submitted by the relevant Module Boards and Short Course Boards, without being influenced by previous association with the School(s), the staff or any of the students;
- ii be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere;
- iii attend all meetings of Programme Boards of Examiners at which recommendations for final awards are made and other meetings of Boards of Examiners, as agreed with the Chairman and/or Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance);
- iv be consulted about and agree to any proposed major changes to the assessment or programme regulations which will directly affect current students;
- v require assurance that the form and content of proposed assessments have been approved by Module and/or Short Course External Examiners;
- vi require assurance that all students have been assessed fairly in relation to the curriculum and regulations;
- vii ensure that recommendations for awards are reached by means consistent with the University's regulations, requirements and normal practice in Higher Education;
- viii participate, as required, in reviews of decisions and recommendations about individual students;
- ix report to the University annually on the conduct of assessments and on issues relating to assessment;
- x report to the Chairman of the Academic Board (the Vice-Chancellor) on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments, which put at risk the standard of the University's award(s).

E3 Role, responsibilities, rights and duties of Module External Examiners and Short Course External Examiners

- E3.1 Any credit-rated module or short course which is capable of contributing to the classification of a final award of the University must have a Module External Examiner or Short Course External Examiner associated with it. Module External Examiners may be responsible for shared modules between a number of different programmes. They may also act as Programme External Examiners for one or more of the programmes.
- E3.2 If a Module or Short Course External Examiner is absent from a meeting of a Module Board or Short Course Board then his or her written agreement to the decisions of the Board must be obtained (section 9.3.1, UPR AS12^G/section 9.3.1, UPR AS13^H, refers). The decisions of the Board will be provisional until the agreement of the absent External Examiner has been obtained (see section C3.6).
- E3.3 The following outlines the responsibilities of Module and Short Course External Examiners. They should:
- i be able to judge each student impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment, without being influenced by previous association with the School(s), the staff or any of the students;
 - ii be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere;
 - iii approve and moderate the form and content of proposed assessments, model solutions /marking schedules, where appropriate, and have the right to see all relevant examination scripts;
 - iv sample major coursework assessments;
 - v where appropriate, take part in forms of assessment such as oral examinations, observation of teaching experience, observation of creative presentations and performances etc., as appropriate;
 - vi discuss matters, where appropriate, with internal examiners and others involved in teaching and assessment (such as placement providers/assessors);
 - vii be consulted about any proposed changes to the assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently on the modules and/or short courses for which they are responsible;
 - viii have the right to recommend changes to the marks awarded by the internal Examiners but always in the context of fairness and equity to all candidates: such recommendations are to be made to the Module Board or Short Course Board;
 - ix ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with the regulations for the modules or short courses;
 - x attend all meetings of the Module Boards or Short Course Boards participating, as required, in reviews of decisions and recommendations about individual students;

- xi report to the University annually on the conduct of assessments and on issues relating to assessment and academic standards in this subject area;
- xii report to the Chairman of the Academic Board (the Vice-Chancellor) on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments, which put at risk the standard of the University's award(s).

E3.4 To enable Module External Examiners to fulfil their role effectively, they must be given adequate opportunities to communicate with internal examiners and others involved in teaching and assessment, including placement providers/assessors.

(2) External Examiners Reports (from [UPR AS17](#))

C1.4 Receipt and Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

- C1.4.1 The University considers External Examiners to be a significant part of its quality assurance processes and places great importance on their annual reports as an essential part of the monitoring and evaluation of programmes, modules and short courses.
- C1.4.2 The letter of appointment sent to new External Examiners specifically requires them, as part of their contract, to report annually to the University on the programmes and/or modules and/or short courses for which they are responsible.
- C1.4.3 The annual report is requested each year by AS. Guidance on External Examiners' reports and the report templates are available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- C1.4.4 External Examiners are asked to submit their annual reports to AS where they will be logged as received in AS, before being sent to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (or nominee) for consideration and then to the Student Administration Service Manager for circulation. External Examiners should be asked to address their reports to the Vice-Chancellor.
- C1.4.5 In parallel with consideration in the School, the reports will be screened in AS to identify common issues and areas of good practice.
- C1.4.6 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (or nominee) will identify on the cover sheet (AQ15) reports which are considered to be inadequate, critical or especially commendatory. He or she will identify the appropriate action to be taken. This may include some of the following:
 - i asking the External Examiner for a more detailed report (in cases where successive reports are inadequate and the External Examiner does not respond to such requests, termination of appointment will be considered - see section C.1.3);
 - ii initiating a major review of a subject, module(s) or programme(s) and referring specific issues to the Dean of School or OVC;
 - iii referring specific issues to ASAC, SEEC or SAC, as appropriate (Where a SAC has established a working group to scrutinise Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports of which External Examiner Reports form part, it is implicit that this working group will report any issues of concern to the SAC at the earliest opportunity);
 - iv entering into further discussion with the External Examiner.
- C1.4.7 For programmes offered by collaborative partners only, all External Examiners' reports must be appended to the appropriate Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports (AMERs/SMERs/ASCMRs) and given full and detailed consideration when the reports are discussed by the Programme Committee and SAC or, where established, a working group of the SAC. AMERs should include the Programme Committee's reaction to comments made by the External Examiners and, where appropriate, details of the actions to be taken.
- C1.4.8 The receipt of all reports will be acknowledged by AS, indicating that the reports have been passed to the School for detailed consideration through the annual monitoring and evaluation process. It is the responsibility of a senior member of staff designated by the School (for example, Dean of School or ADoS(AQA)) to ensure that all External Examiners receive, in due course, a considered reply to their report indicating actions taken and planned in response to comments (guidance on responding to External Examiners' reports can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website).
- C1.4.9 The University has the right to reject the view of an External Examiner but only following careful consideration of the issues raised. In the event of a significant issue being raised, a decision to reject the issue must be made in consultation with the DAQA (or nominee).
- C1.4.10 The University has adopted a policy that fees will not be paid to External Examiners until their annual reports have been received.

C1.4.11 If, after several requests, an annual report is not received the External Examiner's appointment will be terminated (see section C.1.3).

(3) External Examiners' concerns and disagreements (from [UPR AS14](#))

E4 Matters of concern to External Examiners

E4.1 In addition to preparing annual reports, all External Examiners are free to write directly to the Chairman of a Board of Examiners, the Dean of School and, ultimately, the Vice-Chancellor on any matter of concern to them.

E4.2 Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme, and the matter has not been resolved through the submission of a confidential report to the Vice Chancellor, he or she may invoke QAA's concerns scheme: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/qaa-concerns-scheme.pdf?sfvrsn=c13dfd81_6 or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

E5 Disagreements between or with External Examiners

E5.1 Where disagreements involving External Examiners arise, which result in a Board of Examiners being unable to agree a recommendation, it is for the Academic Board to ensure that the matter is resolved. This responsibility is delegated to an External Examiners' Disputes Committee, which is an ad hoc committee of the Academic Board.

(NOTE: The student(s) concerned will be informed that the recommendation of the Board of Examiners has been deferred pending further discussion and will be notified of the date by which it is expected the matter will be resolved.)

E5.2 The composition of the External Examiners' Disputes Committee shall be as follows:

- i a senior member of the academic staff, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor and appointed by the Academic Board, who shall be Chairman
- ii one (1) member of the academic staff, nominated and appointed by the School (these members should be experienced External Examiners)
- iii Secretary and Registrar (or nominee)

E5.3 The External Examiners' Disputes Committee will meet as necessary and is empowered to investigate and take decisions on disputes. A quorum of three (3) is mandatory.

E5.4 The Committee will not be required to report on individual disputes but the Academic Board reserves the right to request a report, where it deems this to be appropriate.

E5.5 Dissenting Examiners retain the usual rights of all External Examiners to write, in confidence, to the Vice-Chancellor and, ultimately, to the QAA (or any relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body) if it is believed that there is a systematic failing with academic standards (section E4.2 refers).

(4) Termination of External Examiners (from [UPR AS17](#))

C1.3 Termination of External Examiner Appointments

C1.3.1 An External Examiner's appointment and period of tenure is dependent upon him or her carrying out his or her role and responsibilities as specified in sections C and E, UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes'.

C1.3.2 If an External Examiner consistently fails to carry out his or her duties as specified in the regulations then his or her period of appointment should be terminated.

C1.3.3 Guidance on the criteria for the termination of External Examiners' contracts is available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

From [UPR AS12](#) and [UPR AS13](#):

The University's regulations and procedures relating to the setting, review, submission, marking and moderation of examinations and coursework, reflect the good practice principles set down in the expectation and indicators contained in Chapter B6 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

5.1 Setting and review of assessments

- 5.1.1 All assignment tasks (including examination papers) should not normally be identical in detail on successive occasions that a module runs, nor at first and second (referred/deferred) sitting of a module. While the nature of an assignment task and the learning outcomes assessed can be the same, this requirement will reduce the possibility of cheating or plagiarism by students utilising work produced by other students in earlier years. However, an identically worded coursework task may be used where the assessment is based on an individual student's experience since this will produce a unique response. Likewise, it may be appropriate to use an identically worded coursework task at a second (referred/deferred) sitting in order to assess progress in achievement of learning outcomes based upon feedback provided on the first attempt.
- 5.1.2 All summative assessment (coursework as well as examinations) should be reviewed by an academic colleague prior to being handed out to students. This activity may be achieved within a module team or may be assigned to an appropriate individual, for example, an internal moderator. The review process should ensure that learning outcomes are addressed and the total assessment load is satisfactory.
- 5.1.3 Where a single element of coursework counts for **30%** or more of a module grade, approval of the appropriate External Examiner should also be sought for that element of coursework before being handed out to students. However, it is not expected that the External Examiner should be asked to approve each individual project or individually negotiated portfolio. For elements of coursework counting less than **30%** of a module grade, the coursework assessment tasks will be reviewed retrospectively by module External Examiners.
- 5.1.4 School, discipline or programme Grading Criteria are used to inform the grade awarded to a given piece of student work. Where these Grading Criteria provide insufficient granularity to be useful for student feedback and guidance, additional Marking Schemes which are directly correlated to the module learning outcomes should be published for each assessment task.

5.2 Publication and use of Grading Criteria

- 5.2.1 The following minimum requirements apply to the development, publication and use of grading criteria:
- i every Programme must publish Grading Criteria in the Programme handbook(s);
 - ii Grading Criteria must relate to the University's Grade Descriptors and associated numeric grades, described in section D1.1, UPR AS14⁵;
 - iii relevant Grading Criteria should be available for all assessments that students on the programme will encounter;

5.3 Submission of coursework

- 5.3.1 Applications for coursework extensions are approved by the School with academic responsibility for the module concerned (see section 4, i, c and d, Appendix I, UPR AS12). If an extension is granted, the revised hand-in date is taken as the deadline for the coursework.

5.4 Marking of student work

- 5.4.1 All examination scripts should be marked anonymously. Wherever possible summative student work must be submitted and marked anonymously. There are some situations where it is not feasible to mark work anonymously, or where there is no significant scope for bias to affect the outcome of the marking process. The following forms of assessment are examples of assessments that are exempt from the need to be submitted and marked anonymously:
- i assessments where candidates can be identified during the assessment process (for example, oral presentations, performances, observed practice assessments);
 - ii assessments where an assessor's familiarity with individual submissions makes anonymity impossible (for example, dissertations, work involving ongoing student/staff interaction, work subject to formal formative feedback);
 - iii assessments where there are particular circumstances relating to the submission that may identify it as the work of a particular student or group of students (for example, individually negotiated titles, alternative formats relating to a study needs agreement);

- iv objective tests, such as multiple choice questions, and other assessments, such as highly structured mathematical or technical problems, where there is little or no opportunity for evaluative interpretation of the answer.

5.4.2 Blind double marking is the process whereby two assessors work independently and neither marker is aware of the other's assessment decision in formulating their own mark.

5.4.3 Blind double marking culminates in a single agreed mark.

5.4.4 For modules at levels **6** and **7**, a coursework assignment requires blind double marking if:

- i it counts for over **50%** of the module assessment; **and**
- ii is marked by more than one first marker; **and**
- iii the question or title has been developed and/or agreed on an individual basis.

5.4.5 An example of an assessment task that must be blind double marked is the individual project/dissertation module. Assignments where students, for instance, respond to a common question but draw on practice in order to answer that question do not need to be blind double marked. Blind double marking replaces internal moderation.

5.4.6 Feedback on marked student work must be consistent with the University's Grade Descriptors.

5.5 Internal moderation of marked student work

The University needs to be assured that robust, effective and consistent moderation processes are being applied across all Schools. Staff should refer to the detailed guidance on moderation produced by the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre.

5.5.1 Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance of the quality of marking and feedback. The process of internal moderation involves checking that the marks have been awarded fairly and consistently and in accordance with the grading criteria/marketing scheme. The process also provides the opportunity to reflect on and refine assessment and feedback practices. Moderation must take account of the marks awarded to the full set of assessed work for the task, module or programme, in the context of the academic standards for the award. It is, therefore, not about making changes to an individual student's marks.

5.5.2 The module leader is responsible for ensuring that internal moderation has taken place.

5.5.3 Staff undertaking moderation should have a minimum of two (**2**) years' experience in UK Higher Education.

5.5.4 All summative assessments must be internally moderated, with the exception of those assessments that have been blind double marked (see section 5.4.2) and assessments that have undergone objective marking including by a computer. Student work from each assessment in a module should be sampled.

5.5.5 Where there is more than one (**1**) marker the moderator should identify and consider any differences in the distribution of marks between markers.

5.5.6 Moderators must select a minimum sample size that is equal to the square root of the total number of items, but not fewer than five (**5**), selecting work from across the range of grades awarded. If there are fewer than five (**5**) items of assessment, then all items will be reviewed. Where there is more than one marker, the sample must include at least three (**3**) items from each marker.

5.5.7 The outcome of the moderation process will be one or more of:

- i the marking is fair and consistent, requiring no change to either the marks or the feedback provided to students;
- ii the marking is consistent but too harsh or too generous, requiring all relevant marks to be adjusted up or down following consultation with the relevant marker(s);
- iii there are significant inconsistencies in marking, requiring a re-mark of all work following consultation with relevant marker(s);
- iv the quality of the feedback provided by one or more markers requires improvement;
- v the feedback provided by one or more markers requires greater consistency.

The marks of individual students should not be changed as a result of internal moderation. If agreement cannot be reached between the internal moderator and the marker(s) about any aspect of the marking process, the Dean of School or their nominee will appoint a second moderator.

5.5.8 Clear documentation must be provided to evidence the process of moderation and this must be made available to the external examiner.

5.5.9 For assessment that involves judgements of transient events (for example, oral presentations, interviews) and other less traditional forms of assessment that do not lend themselves to the above procedure, the School must take appropriate steps to ensure the assessment process is safe.

5.6 **Checking for errors in examination and coursework marking**

5.6.1 All examination scripts and any other assessments that are not returned to students should be checked to ensure that no part has been overlooked by the examiner(s) and that the total mark is arithmetically correct. This includes coursework which comprises objective assessments where the total mark requires manual calculation.

5.6.2 Where, at any point in the subsequent moderation process, an error in the mark calculations is identified the whole set of assessments should be checked to ensure that the same error does not occur elsewhere.

5.7 **External Examiners**

5.7.1 Appropriate samples of marked student work should be reviewed by External Examiners, selected from across the range of grades awarded (however, see section 5.7.2). Where moderation is required, the sample provided for the External Examiner is the same as that used for the internal moderation process. However, the External Examiner has the right to review all relevant examination scripts and in-course assessments.

5.7.2 With the agreement of the External Examiner, samples of marked student work from the referred/deferred examination period do not need to be reviewed by External Examiners, providing that:

- i the External Examiner is satisfied with the standard of marking of student work during the first-sit examination period;
- ii the External Examiner has reviewed the referred/deferred assessments prior to their use;
- iii all marginally-failed referred/deferred student work is internally moderated or blind double marked, as appropriate (see section D1.1, UPR AS14⁵, for the definition of a marginal fail grade);
- iv all other marking and internal moderating requirements, as defined in sections 5.4.1 to 5.7.1 above, are adhered to.

See section 9.3 if the External Examiner is also absent from the Module Board of Examiners for the referred/deferred examination period.

5.8 **Return of marked student work**

- i Where blind double marking has taken place, the provisional mark agreed by the markers is the only mark provided to the student. Feedback to the student should be consistent with the grading criteria/marketing scheme. Any inconsistencies in individual marker comments should be resolved before the feedback is given to the student.
- ii Students' coursework will be returned to them together with feedback no later than four (4) calendar weeks after the submission deadline. Any exceptions to this must be agreed by the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) or the Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) and notified to students in advance of the expiration of the four (4) week period. For work of an on-going nature, such as a major project or dissertation, supervising staff will ensure that students are provided with feedback at interim stages.

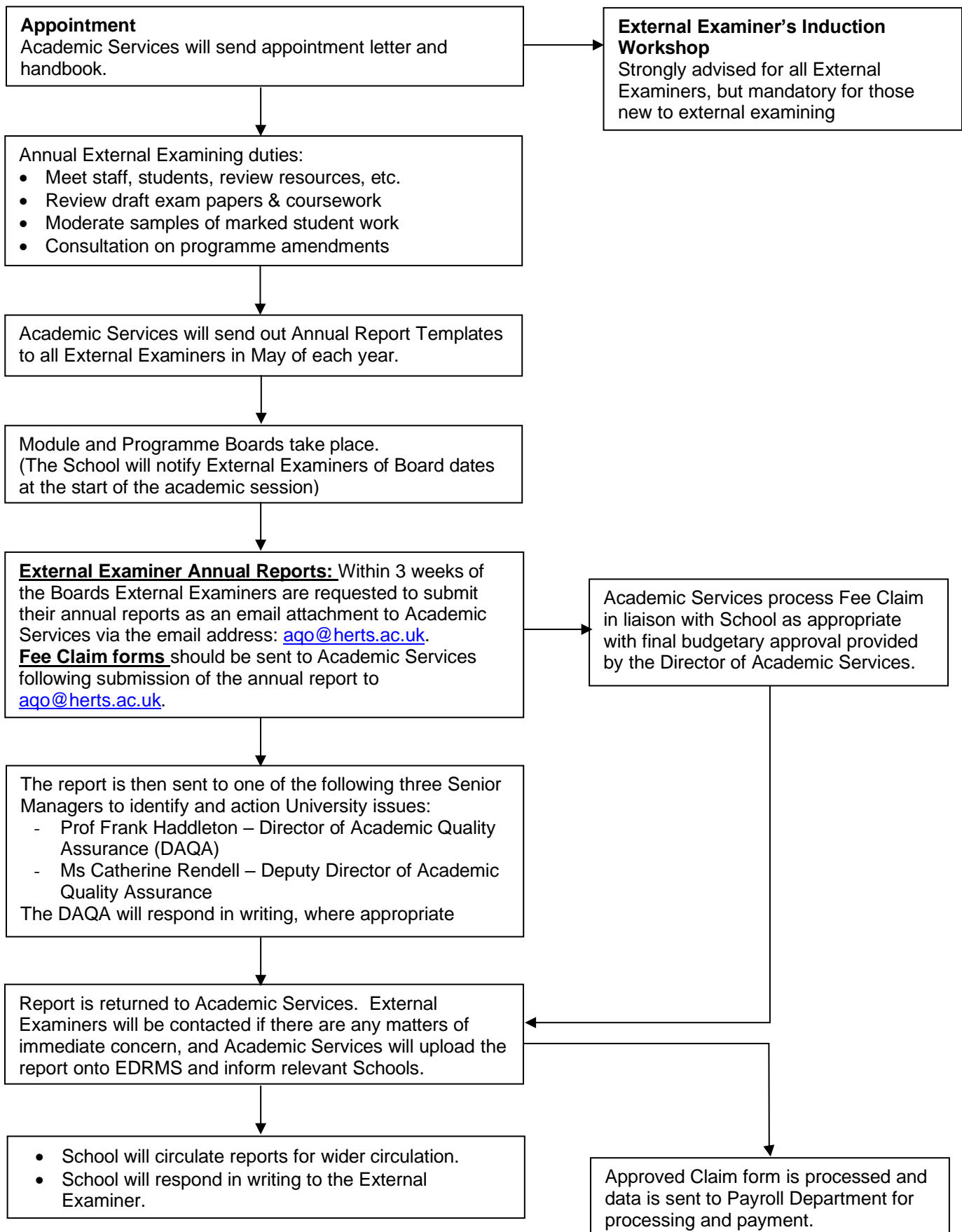
5.9 **Provision of feedback on examinations**

5.9.1 Schools must ensure that, if sought, feedback on performance in written examinations is available to students. Schools are responsible for determining the nature and extent of feedback but subject to the following:

- i Students who are resitting an examination are entitled to guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of their examination performance;
- ii Students should normally receive individual feedback although in some circumstances more generic feedback, which does not address the individual case, may be appropriate;
- iii If requested, feedback must include a breakdown of marks and any markers' comments.

5.9.2 Markers must ensure that any comments on assessments, including examination answers, are not inappropriate and only relate to the answer and grading criteria/marketing scheme.

Administrative Flow Diagram of External Examiner Appointment and Reports



UH quality-assurance-related terms, abbreviations and acronyms

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|--|
| AB | Academic Board | KAM | Key Account Manager |
| ADAQA | Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance | LCS | Library and Computing Services |
| ADoS(AQA) | Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) | LO | Learning Outcome |
| AD(L&T) | Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) | LRC | Learning Resource Centre |
| AMER | Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report | LTIC | UH Learning & Teaching Innovation Centre |
| APCL | Accredited Prior Certified Learning | MEF | Module Evaluation Feedback Reports |
| APEL | Accredited Prior Experiential Learning | MoA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| APL | Accredited Prior Learning | NSS | National Student Survey |
| APO | Academic Partnerships Office | OfS | Office for Students |
| AR | Academic Registry | OVC | Office of the Vice-Chancellor |
| AS | Academic Services | PGT | Postgraduate Taught programme/student |
| ASA | Academic Support Agreement | PL | Programme Leader |
| ASAC | Academic Standards and Audit Committee | PO | Partner Organisation |
| ASCMR | Annual Short Course Monitoring Report | PS | Programme Specification |
| ASO | Academic Services Officer | PSRB | Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body |
| CAQA | Centre for Academic Quality Assurance | PT | Part-time study mode |
| CATS | Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme | PTES | Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey |
| CEG | Chief Executive's Group | PU | Procedures Unit (within Academic Registry) |
| CEP | Continuous Enhancement Planning (of programmes) | PVC(ESE) | Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) |
| CODP | Collaborative Operational Delivery Plan | QA | Quality Assurance |
| CP | Collaborative Provision | QAA | Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |
| CPAD | Continuing Professional Academic Development programme | QE | Quality Enhancement |
| CPAG | Collaborative Provision Advisory Group | QLM | Quality Liaison Manager |
| CPL | Collaborative Partnership Leader | QUERCUS | UH's Student Record System |
| CPU | Collaborative Partnerships Unit | SAC | School Academic Committee |
| CQMC | Consortium Quality & Management Committee | SAIO | School Academic Integrity Officer |
| DAQA | Director of Academic Quality Assurance | SAMP | Student Academic Misconduct Panel |
| DDAQA | Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance | SAP | School Assessment Panel |
| DLT | Director of Learning & Teaching | SAS | Student Administrative Service |
| DMD | Definitive Module Document | SCD | Short Course Descriptor |
| DoS | Dean of School | SCO | School Community Organiser |
| DVC | Deputy Vice-Chancellor | SEEC | South East England Consortium (Credit Accumulation/Transfer) |
| ECs | Exceptional Circumstances | SEG | School Executive Group |
| EE | External Examiner | SIP | Student Information & Planning (within Academic Registry) |
| EPA | End-Point Assessment | SNA | Study Needs Agreement |
| ESEC | Educational Student Experience Committee | SPMG | Student Performance Monitoring Group |
| FACES | <i>Friendly, Ambitious, Collegiate, Enterprising, Student-focussed</i> (the University's values) | SVQ | Student Voice (Module Feedback) Questionnaire |
| FCF | Flexible Credit Framework | SW | Sandwich study mode |
| FHEQ | QAA Framework for HE Qualifications | UG | Undergraduate taught programme/student |
| FT | Full-time study mode | UH | University of Hertfordshire |
| FtP | Fitness to Practise | UPRs | University Policies and Regulations |
| GO | Graduate Outcomes survey (replacing DLHE) | VC | Vice-Chancellor |
| GPA | Grade Point Average | VCE | Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group |
| HHEC | Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium | VCSU | Vice-Chancellor and Students' Union Group |
| HHEC CSG | HHEC Consortium Strategy Group | WBPL | Work-Based and Placement Working |
| HSU | Hertfordshire Students' Union | | |

UH Quality-assurance-related terms, abbreviations and acronyms:

Blind double marking: a process in which each marker is in receipt of assessments that have not been annotated by another marker and marking takes place without communication between the two markers prior to moderation.

Formative assessment: 'Formative assessment has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained.'

Grading criteria – broad statements of student achievement associated with each grade band. They inform the grading (marking) of all assessments, and are aligned to the University's Grade Descriptors (i.e. for undergraduate work 50-59 = Good, 60-69 = very good, etc. See [UPR AS14](#), section D1.1). Schools decide whether School Level Grading Criteria are appropriate or whether departmental, discipline or even programme level Grading Criteria are appropriate. Separate Grading Criteria are produced at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Internal and external review: the reviewing of draft examination papers and items of coursework before they are set, which seeks to ensure that assessment tasks are at the correct academic level and reflect the learning outcomes.

Internal and external moderation: the set of processes (internal checking that everything has been marked and that the marks are arithmetically correct, internal moderation of a sample of marked work (internal blind double marking where appropriate), external moderation of the same sample of marked work) which together seek to ensure that the marks awarded are accurate and consistent with the grading criteria and marking scheme.

Learning outcomes: precise and clearly articulated statements about the learning expected to result from the successful completion of a unit of learning. At the University of Hertfordshire learning outcomes are always specified for each Programme of Study and module. They are normally written in terms of what a student should know or be able to do at the end of the programme or module.

Level Descriptor is a statement, either generic or Module specific, describing in general terms the nature of the learning at a particular level of study. The level does not necessarily relate to a set year of study although this is often the case with the full time mode of study.

The *SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for HE* are seen as an example of good practice and can form the basis for more specific level descriptors for individual Modules:
(<https://seec.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SEEC-Credit-Level-Descriptors-2021.pdf>)

The level descriptors will be related to a qualification and the current qualification descriptors have been developed by the QAA in the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications in UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* – 2014: (<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>)

Marking schemes: are specific to each assignment and are used to provide fine grained feedback reflecting performance at a specific level. They are elaborations of the module learning outcomes and identify grading criteria for what is being assessed in a particular item of assessment.

Plagiarism: the misappropriation or use of others' ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise), without acknowledgement or permission. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional.

Reliability: refers to the need for the measurement of student attainment to be consistent and repeatable.

Summative Assessment: 'Formal assessment of students' work, contributing to the final result.' (QAA Glossary)

Validity: refers to the need for assessment to measure what it is supposed to measure, i.e. whether the student has attained the appropriate level of knowledge and skills required by the grading criteria for a particular assessment task and that these are aligned with the learning outcomes of the module and programme



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