

Title: EXTERNAL EXAMINERS POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

TYPE: Policy and Procedure

PURPOSE: This document defines policy and provides procedural guidance for the role of external examiners with regards to higher education programmes delivered at, or by, Solihull College and University Centre and is in addition to the requirements of the awarding body.

SCOPE: Staff, external examiners, partner universities/awarding bodies

RESPONSIBILITY: Head of HE & Research

Note: Legal Context N/A

As the current regulator of Higher Education provision, HE Providers must comply with the OfS Conditions of Registration. The B conditions of registration include criterion B3: Quality of the Academic Experience. To demonstrate that criterion B3 is being met, one aspect is that “The organisation makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work”¹ and that “The organisation gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners’ reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations”².

HE Providers in England have no requirement to follow the QAA Quality Code, however SCUC embraces the ethos outlined in both the [Sector Agreed Principles](#) (aligned to European Standards and Guidelines) the [Key Practices](#). The Sector Agreed Principles are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering high-quality student learning experience, and Key Practices set out how a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the Sector Agreed Principles. A Key Practice for Principal 6 (Engaging in external review and accreditation) is that ‘external review, whether optional or required by national quality frameworks or accrediting bodies, is built into the provider’s strategic approach and aligns to internal quality and standards monitoring and evaluation activity’³.

¹ OfS (2022) Securing Student Success: [Regulatory Framework for higher education in England](#), pg 203

² OfS (2022) Securing Student Success: [Regulatory Framework for higher education in England](#), pg 204

³ QAA (2024) [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) pg 11

The UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment and the QAA published [External Examining Principles](#)⁴ which form the basis for this procedure and policy

1. The role of external examiners

- a. External examiners perform an essential function in supporting this diversity of subjects, acting as constructively critical peers.
- b. They support course teams to ensure that students are assessed fairly and transparently by offering independent advice and support on modes of assessment and learning outcomes
- c. They should protect standards and ensure comparability and consistency
- d. They should act as an expert in providing independent critical review, performing the role with integrity and supporting enhancement
- e. They should ensure fairness and transparency in assessment
- f. They should maintain the currency of their knowledge
- g. They should support inclusivity and equity in teaching, learning and assessment.

1.1 Depending on the requirements of the awarding body, this may include:

- a. the approval of assessment tasks, case studies, questions and examinations;
- b. the assessment of results;
- c. the verification of awarded grades;
- d. the adjudication of borderline and problem cases.
- e. RPL/ APL records

2. To promote an effective external examining system, institutions should:

- a. Appoint the right examiners, ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided
- b. Provide adequate training to enable external examiners to fulfil the role
- c. Ensure the role is fully understood
- d. Enable students to understand the value and purpose of external examining
- e. Engage with and support the external examiners they appoint
- f. Engage with and support their own staff acting in the role elsewhere
- g. Review their policies and practices against these principles on a regular basis

3. All External Examiners are appointed by the awarding institution/body and thus directly subject to that organisation's policy and procedures

⁴ UKSQA (2022) [External Examining Principles](#)

- a. In practice, this means that partner institutions and awarding bodies should take responsibility for points 2a, b, c and e; which with SCUC will collaborate when required.

4. To carry out their responsibilities, external examiners must:

- a. be able to judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment.
- b. be given access to all assessed work if required
- c. be provided with samples of the work based on the requirements of the awarding body.
- d. be given the opportunity to meet students
- e. be able to verify that assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved programme regulations.
- f. report to the validating body the results and award recommendations
- g. have access to sufficient student work and quality assurance records to be able to report back to Solihull College and University Centre on student performance and academic standards as well as on the effectiveness of the assessment process overall.
- h. have access to sufficient student work and quality assurance records to be able to report to the validating body on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessment process which put at risk the standard of the validated award.

4.1 Solihull College and University Centre encourages externals to meet with student groups in the course of their duties, particularly where the content of a programme includes the assessment of practical or project work, presentations or exhibitions.

4.2 External examiners must be able to:

- Consider each student impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with the award, the staff, or any of the students.
- Have the opportunity to approve the form and content of proposed examination papers and/or coursework as specified in the programme validation documents.
- Have the opportunity to approve forms of alternative assessment.
- Be consulted about and agree to any proposed changes to the structure of the assessment which will directly affect students currently on the award.
- Have access to all assessed work, if so required.
- Participate, as required, in reviews of decisions about individual student's awards.
- Have sufficient access to students, student work and college policies and procedures to be able to provide informative comment and recommendations upon:
 - Whether Solihull College and University Centre is maintaining the threshold academic standards for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for

higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;

- Whether or not Solihull College and University Centre's assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with college and the validating body's policies and regulations;
- Whether or not Solihull College and University Centre's academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience;
- Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiner(s);
- Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students;
- The management of Module and Programme Boards if required.

5. External Examiners' Reports

- 5.1 External examiners are required to provide a written report on the standards being set and achieved including:
- the overall performance of the students in relation to their peers on comparable programmes;
 - the strengths and weaknesses of students;
 - the quality of knowledge and skills (both general and subject specific and including any work-based or work-related aspects) demonstrated by the students and in the light of agreed subject benchmarks, and the national qualifications framework;
 - the structure, organisation, design, marking and fairness of all assessments;
 - the quality of teaching as indicated by student performance;
 - the lessons learnt from the assessments for the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods and resources of the programme, and feedback on whether issues previously raised have been addressed;
 - other recommendations arising from the assessments.
- 5.2 Solihull College and University Centre will respond to Pearson External Examiner reports with an action plan by the end of the academic year. This action plan will be checked by Head of School and the Head of Higher Education & Research.
- 5.3 We will respond to the EE report in the format required by our partner universities.
- 5.4 All EE reports will be scrutinised and collated depending on the validating body by the Head of HE & Research. Reports will be discussed with key faculty staff and a summary report will be presented to the Quality and Standards Committee.

6. Pearson External Examiner Procedure

The Quality Nominee will receive the notification of the appointment of the programme External Examiner.

The Quality Nominee will notify the Head of Higher Education, The HE Quality Administration team, the HE Course leader and the HE Head of School of the appointment and will confirm the contact names to the External Examiner. The External Examiner will be asked to copy the Head of Higher Education into any correspondence with the curriculum area to monitor the Quality Assurance process centrally.

In preparation for the visit, the External Examiner will request two assignment briefs and the associated internal verification documentation to review. They will then provide feedback to in advance of their visit by completing an assignment feedback form and identifying any actions for the assignment briefs.

Pearson do not require the college send assignment briefs to the External Examiner in advance of the visit, however it is strongly encouraged that two assignment briefs are sent in advance to the External Examiner. Reports on these briefs are returned to the HE course leader – and where necessary changes made before the assignments are issued to students.

The External Examiner will ask for assessment plans and other assessment tracking documentation.

External examination usually takes place through an annual remote visit - although actual visits may be put in place to take into account varying programme start and end dates, certification requirements and where additional actions are required.

The External Examiner will usually want to speak to students to gauge their opinion on assessment processes and access to resources; course leaders should therefore arrange visits on a day when students will be available.

The Head of Higher Education may liaise External Examiners new to the College prior to the EE visit to ensure the External Examiner is briefed on the college External Examiner protocols and procedures.

The Head of Higher Education will brief HE course leaders about the Pearson External Examiner process and any changes to the annual process or to the External Examiner reporting procedures, however all course leaders are encouraged to read the latest Pearson [Guide to External Examination](#).

The external examiner may ask for access to:

- All assignment briefs used to generate student evidence for each unit. The External Examiner will want to see the relationship between any tests and related assignments
- A list of students registered on the programme that the External Examiner can map against Pearson records
- All student work for units that have been assessed from which the External Examiner will select a sample
- Assessment records for all student work
- Internal verification documentation for all assignment briefs
- Internal verification documentation for all assessment decisions
- CVs for all staff with a list of the units that they have delivered and assessed
- Centre-devised programme specification
- Staff and student handbooks
- Higher education specific policies, including those on student appeals, malpractice, extenuating circumstances and resubmissions
- Minutes from the most recent Assessment Board.

HE course leaders needing support with the preparation of the visit can request support from the Head of Higher Education & Research.

The EE report will be uploaded to Edexcel Online within 10 days of the visit. The Quality Nominee will download and circulate the report – both Part A and Part B.

Part A of the EE report is shared with students; published via Moodle and discussed in the programme quality boards – all actions are included in the AMR and QIP
The HE course leader and HE Head of School prepare the action plan – The Head of School and Head of HE sign off the action plan and ensure it is sent to the EE

The External Examiner reports for Pearson Higher National provision are summarised by the Head of Higher Education & Research and reported to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.

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