

University Code of Practice

External Examiners

Document reference:	QH:C10
Date first approved:	May 2019
Date coming into force:	September 2019
Date last reviewed:	September 2023
Approved By:	Academic Board
Responsibilities:	Academic Board – Academic Quality and Learning Manager Chair of Board of Examiners - Programme Coordinators
Application to collaborative provision:	Mandatory
Contacts:	Academic Quality and Learning Manager
Applications for exemptions to:	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Report Exemptions to:	Academic Board
Summary/ Description:	
<p>The University adheres to the system of external examining used by universities in the UK and set out in chapter B7 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2014, revised in 2018). External examiners are experienced academics and/or professionals who can provide an independent view of the work of the University and assist it in safeguarding the academic standards of its awards and help to ensure a high quality student learning experience. They help in achieving these objectives by drawing on their experience of working in universities and engaging in professional practice and research in higher education and in their subject.</p> <p>This Code details how the University appoints external examiners, with the decision to appoint being made by the Academic Board given the importance of the external examiner role. In making its decisions Academic Board will apply the criteria and the guidance on avoiding conflicts of interest originally set out in Chapter B7 of the Quality Code. These criteria are designed to ensure that external examiners are suitably qualified for the role and not already involved in the work of the University (as a member of staff or member of the governing body for example).</p> <p>External examiners will be appointed to oversee programmes which lead to the award of higher education qualifications and to the modules within those programmes. Normally this will be the same examiner but may be a different examiner if some of the modules are highly specialist for example or</p>	

if there are professional practice elements. External examiners are members of the Module and Programme Board of Examiners but their role is to ensure that the setting and marking of assessments, and decision making by the Boards is done properly and fairly. They are not directly involved in assessment.

A key feature of the UK external examining system is the annual report which each external examiner is required to provide to the University giving feedback on the effectiveness with which the University is securing the academic standards of its awards – including by comparison with other universities – and assuring the quality of the learning opportunities provided. This Code details how those reports will be considered, with recommendations acted upon at the appropriate level, whether module, programme or university.

The University will follow practice in the UK and properly involve students in this process, including by informing students who the external examiner is for their programme, sharing the full reports, and involving students in discussions about the reports and the actions to be taken in response.

In reading this Code, reference should also be made to the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1) (especially the sections on marking and moderation, and boards of examiners) and the Code on Boards of Examiners (QH:C9).

Further Guidance

See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:

- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: **must** = mandatory **should** = advisable **may** = desirable.
Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of contents	3
Introduction	4
Authority	4
Scope of the Code	4
Application to collaborative provision	4
The role of the external examiner	4
Academic standards and quality	4
Limits of the role	6
Good practice and enhancement.....	6
Meeting students	6
The appointment of external examiners	7
Nomination.....	7
Duration of appointment	7
Criteria for appointment	7
Confirmation of appointment	9
Fees and expenses.....	9
Recording external examiner appointments.....	9
Induction of external examiners	9
Participation in assessment procedures	11
Consideration of assessment tasks	11
Moderation of student work.....	11
Membership of boards of examiners	11
Confirmation of decisions	12
External examiners' reports.....	13
Introduction.....	13
Purpose.....	13
Report form	14
Submission of reports.....	14
Non-submission.....	14
'Insufficient' feedback from external examiners	15
Serious concern	15
University-level issue.....	15
Oversight by the Vice Chancellor	16
Student engagement	16
End of an external examiner's term of office	16
Resignation.....	17
Termination of contract	17

INTRODUCTION

Authority

- 1 The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice.

Scope of the Code

- 2 This Code applies to programmes classified by Academic Board as taught and which lead to the award of the University's higher education qualifications (as set out in the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1)).
- 3 External examiners must be appointed for all provision referred to in paragraph 2 irrespective of the mode or location of delivery. Normally there will be one external examiner covering a programme and its constituent modules (in its full- and part-time versions), unless there are elements of the programme which involve particular specialisms which a single external examiner is unable to cover.

Application to collaborative provision

- 4 Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 2 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

- 5 The role of the external examiner is to assist the University in discharging its responsibility for the standards and quality of the education it provides and the awards it offers, and by assisting the University in identifying good practice and opportunities to enhance its provision.

Academic standards and quality

- 6 The University appoints external examiners to assist it by providing informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:
 - (a) the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the (UK) Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements (published by QAA) and other relevant guidance
 - (b) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's Academic Regulations and supporting Codes
 - (c) the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in UK or European degree-awarding bodies of which the external examiners have experience.

Maintaining threshold academic standards

- 7 The University expects external examiners to provide feedback on whether:
- (a) the programme and its component parts continue to be coherent and their outcomes aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor set out in the applicable qualifications framework, supplemented where applicable by one or more subject benchmark statements
 - (b) the programme reflects any additional professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements
 - (c) assessments in modules of the same level are of a comparable standard and the curriculum remains current
 - (d) assessment criteria, marking schemes and arrangements for classification are set at the appropriate level.

Measuring achievement, rigour and fairness

- 8 The University expects external examiners to provide feedback on whether the assessment process is properly designed and applied, and is carried out in a manner that is fair and equitable to all students concerned as well as enabling students to achieve the intended outcomes.
- 9 External examiners are asked to pay attention to whether:
- (a) the types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the respective level of study and the expected outcomes
 - (b) the marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied, and whether internal marking is therefore of an appropriate standard, and is fair and reliable
 - (c) the assessment processes are carried out in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures
 - (d) procedures governing mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct and borderline performances have been considered fairly and equitably applying the University's rules and procedures.

Comparability of standards and student performance

- 10 The University expects external examiners appointed at programme level to provide feedback on the comparability of standards and student performance including looking at comparability across:
- (a) the modules within a single programme
 - (b) programmes within a single subject area (where applicable)
 - (c) programmes within a single subject area across higher education providers of which the external examiner has experience
 - (d) any of the above, across cohorts during the examiner's period of appointment.

Limits of the role

- 11 External examiners are not permitted, and **must not** be asked, to undertake any of the following:
- (a) setting assessment tasks (whether coursework, examination scripts or other)
 - (b) marking of student assessed work
 - (c) revising the marks awarded for the work of individual students.

Good practice and enhancement

- 12 The University also appoints external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations on
- (a) good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiners
 - (b) opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.
- 13 The University **may** from time to time invite feedback from external examiners on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the University's Academic Regulations and supporting Codes which together make up its arrangements for managing academic standards and quality.

Meeting students

- 14 External examiners may as part of their induction to the University and, along with the Programme Coordinator, meet with students. Such meetings are not restricted to the beginning of the examiner's term of office and the University will, where possible, and particularly if requested by the external examiner, arrange for external examiners to meet with student representatives on the programme (without staff members present). While this is not officially part of the assessment process, the University regards this as good practice and an opportunity for the external examiner to gain an impression of the programme from the students' perspective.
- 15 In certain circumstances, external examiners may be *required* to meet with students, for example:
- (a) to *observe* an assessment event (such as a performance) as part of their role in verifying standards and the fairness and rigour of the assessment process (being the equivalent of reading a sample of written examination or coursework output), but not as part of determining the mark awarded to individual students for such an event
 - (b) where required by any PSRB for purposes of accreditation and where specified as part of the module/programme approval.

THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 16 The appointment of an external examiner (including extensions to existing appointments) **must** be approved by Academic Board on the recommendation of the relevant Programme Coordinator and the Academic Quality and Learning Manager.
- 17 The University will normally appoint one external examiner per programme unless there is a specific reason to appoint more than one, for example because of the specialist nature of some aspects of the programme (for example relating to placement or practise elements).

Nomination

- 18 Each Programme Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that their programme (including all variants and modes of delivery) is subject to the oversight of one or more appropriately qualified external examiners nominated and appointed in accordance within this Code.
- 19 Each Programme Coordinator is responsible for nominating potential new and replacement external examiners using the approved nomination form. Completed forms **must** be sent to the Academic Quality and Learning Manager.
- 20 Nominations **must** make explicit which programmes, modules or other elements the nominee will be responsible for overseeing as external examiner.
- 21 In deciding whether to make a nomination the Programme Coordinator **must** be satisfied that the nominee will have sufficient time to carry out the role having regard to the number of external examinerships currently held by the nominee. Nominees already holding two or more external examinerships **should not** be nominated for a third role unless the roles in question are sufficiently limited to ensure the nominee can carry out all three roles.

Duration of appointment

- 22 External examiners **should** be appointed for a period of four years. External examiners **must not** be permitted to serve for more than four years other than where the provision in question is running out and it would be inappropriate and ineffective to involve a new external examiner.
- 23 An external examiner **must not** be appointed for a further term of office unless no fewer than five years have elapsed since the previous term of office.

Criteria for appointment

- 24 In deciding whether to approve the appointment of an external examiner, Academic Board **must** have regard to the criteria stated below (under both headings: person specification and conflicts of interest). Where an appointment does not adhere to the criteria, Academic Board **must** record this fact and the reason for the decision.

Person specification

- 25 Each nominee **must** be able to demonstrate appropriate evidence of:

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

Conflicts of interest

- 26 The University will not appoint as external examiner anyone falling within the following categories or circumstances:
- (a) a member of the governing body of the University or one of its partners or organisations with which it works to deliver higher education (including placement providers) or an employee of the same
 - (b) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
 - (c) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
 - (d) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
 - (e) anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
 - (f) former staff or students of the higher education provider unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
 - (g) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another higher education provider
 - (h) the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and provider

- (i) the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same higher education provider.
- 27 Where the nominee has been involved in the development or approval of the programme or modules for which they are being nominated, Academic Board **must** be satisfied that this involvement will not compromise their ability to provide independent scrutiny of the programme or modules.
- 28 Where the nominee is from industry or a profession and cannot therefore meet the criteria set out in paragraph 25, approval **may** be granted provided that this appointment is additional to appointing a nominee who can meet the criteria.
- 29 If a conflict of interest is identified following the appointment of an external examiner this **must** be brought to the immediate attention of the Academic Quality and Learning Manager who will consult with the Chair of Academic Board to determine what action is required.

Confirmation of appointment

- 30 The Academic Quality and Learning Manager is responsible for providing those appointed as external examiners with a formal letter of confirmation of appointment with a copy provided to Programme Coordinator.

Fees and expenses

- 31 External examiners will be paid fees at the rate specified by Academic Board, and reasonable expenses in accordance with the University's scale of expenses. Fees covering the preceding academic year will be paid on receipt of the annual report.

Recording external examiner appointments

- 32 The Academic Quality and Learning Manager is responsible for ensuring that a central record of external examiner appointments is maintained, including details of:
 - (a) the name and home institution (if applicable)
 - (b) the nominating department
 - (c) the date of appointment and length of period of appointment
 - (d) any exception to the appointment criteria approved by Academic Board
 - (e) the programmes and modules for which the external has been appointed to oversee
 - (f) the date of receipt of the external examiner's annual reports.

INDUCTION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 33 New external examiners **must** be provided with sufficient information to enable them to understand and fulfil their responsibilities.

- 34 The Academic Quality and Learning Manager is responsible for providing each new external examiner with a formal letter of appointment and an external examiner's pack which includes the following:
- (a) a summary of the University's standards and quality framework, and details of how to access the full version of the framework
 - (b) a copy of this Code
 - (c) a copy of the Code on Boards of Examiners (QH:C9)
 - (d) a copy of the University's Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1)
 - (e) the previous three years' external examiners' reports (where applicable) and the University's responses to those reports
 - (f) an invitation to visit the University for the purposes of induction.
- 35 The Programme Coordinator is responsible for providing each new external examiner with such of the following information as is agreed with the external examiner. The information **should** be provided within one month of the external examiner's appointment (or such later date as is agreed with the external examiner):
- (a) the programme specification and module descriptors for each programme/module within the remit of the external examiner
 - (b) the assessment criteria for the assessment tasks for the programmes/modules in question
 - (c) the student handbook(s) for the current session
 - (d) information about the staff and facilities for learning and teaching
 - (e) information about any other external examiners and their remits relating to the programme
 - (f) copies of the Programme Review and Enhancement Plans for the relevant programmes for the previous three years
 - (g) copies of the previous external examiner's reports for the previous three years
 - (h) a copy of the most recent Periodic Development Review and subsequent action plan (if applicable)
 - (i) a copy of any external professional, statutory or regulatory body accreditation (if applicable)
 - (j) dates for forthcoming examination and assessment deadlines and boards of examiners meetings.
- 36 The Programme Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that appropriate discussions are held with the external examiner as to how communications will take place, the evidence which the examiner will require to fulfil this role, and how this will be communicated between the University and the external examiner. Discussions **must** include agreement over the timing of the external examiner's involvement especially in relation to the moderation of assessment tasks as well as to the moderation of student work.
- 37 Staff **should** seek to utilise the external examiner as a resource throughout the year, for example seeking their opinion on proposed changes to programmes and modules.

PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Consideration of assessment tasks

- 38 To facilitate the role defined in this Code, the external examiner is entitled to be consulted on all draft assessment tasks, irrespective of their format, level or stage within a programme. The precise range of tasks which the external examiner wishes to see, and the timing of the consultation, **must** be discussed with the external examiner in advance (see para. 36 above).
- 39 'Assessment tasks' are defined as all those forms of assessment, whether examination, coursework, performance, practical or oral, which contribute to the summative assessment of a module. The Programme Coordinator is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the internal scrutiny of assessment tasks and for consultation with the external examiner on the draft tasks.
- 40 The professional opinion of the external examiner on the validity of assessment tasks is persuasive but not binding. The Programme Coordinator has final responsibility for determining the assessment tasks on behalf of the Module Board. Where the Programme Coordinator acts contrary to the advice of the external examiner, the external examiner must be informed of the reasons for this, and the Academic Quality and Learning Manager **must** be copied into any correspondence.

Moderation of student work

- 41 'Moderation' in this context means the process through which the external examiner is able to verify the appropriateness and comparability of standards and the fairness and rigour of the assessment process based on an agreed sample of student output. It does not refer to giving an opinion on the mark awarded in specific cases.
- 42 To facilitate their role, the external examiner is entitled to see all student output as defined in this Code. The precise output to be seen **must** be agreed between the Programme Coordinator and the external examiner in advance. Agreement is subject to the external examiner seeing a sample from the top, middle and the bottom of the range of marks awarded within a module including all fails and all first class/distinction level work.
- 43 Where an external examiner, on reviewing the sample referred to above, considers that the sample reveals evidence of significant over- or under-marking they **may** recommend to the Module Board the rescaling of the marks. The final decision remains that of the Board and **must** be applied to all student work for the assessment task in question and not just those pieces of student output viewed by the external examiner. An external examiner may request to see a larger sample if this would help in judging the appropriateness of the marking.

Membership of boards of examiners

- 44 External examiners are appointed as members of Module and Programme Boards through which they can carry out their role as specified above.

- 45 External examiners **must** be invited to all relevant Module and Programme Boards being given sufficient notice of the dates of meetings.
- 46 External examiners are expected to attend all meetings of the Module and Programme Boards to which they are appointed other than the meeting following the reassessment period. For logistical reasons, attendance and participation may be conducted via electronic means such as Zoom. In such cases, the external examiner will be given the opportunity to provide written comments in advance of the meeting.
- 47 As a member of Module and Programme Boards, external examiners **must** be given the opportunity to:
- (a) report on the quality of the assessments, standard and accuracy of marking, and conduct of the assessment process generally
 - (b) offer suggestions to enhance the process of assessment and the quality of the learning opportunities
 - (c) comment on the conduct of the Board of Examiners.
- 48 The chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible to Academic Board for ensuring that a Board of Examiners acts in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations and Codes as published in the Quality Handbook. If an external examiner has serious concerns about the conduct of a Board of Examiners which require an immediate response (prior to submission of the external examiner's report) they are encouraged to raise those concerns with the chair of Academic Board.

Confirmation of decisions

- 49 The chair of the Module and Programme Boards (as applicable) **must** invite the external examiner to sign the official results sheet for the module(s) or programme(s) which they have been appointed to oversee. Signature provides confirmation that:
- (a) the recorded results are an accurate record of the decisions made by the Board;
 - (b) that the Board has been conducted fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the University's published procedures; and
 - (c) that the academic standards achieved are broadly comparable.

Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with each and every individual decision.

- 50 Where an external examiner is not prepared to sign the official results sheet they **must** submit a written report within 48 hours to the chair of Academic Board (and copied to the Academic Quality and Learning Manager and Programme Coordinator) stating their reasons for refusing to sign. On receipt of the report, the chair of Academic Board **must** consult with the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the Programme Coordinator. If the matter cannot be resolved the chair **must** report the matter to the full Academic Board which will determine whether to approve the results, notwithstanding the external examiner's refusal to sign, or whether to order other action it deems appropriate, for example the reconvening of the Board of Examiners.

- 51 Where Academic Board decides to approve the results notwithstanding the external examiner's refusal to sign, it **must** provide a written report to the external examiner stating its reasons, such report to be copied to the chair of the Board of Examiners and the Programme Coordinator.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Introduction

- 52 External examiners play a critical role in enabling the University to maintain the academic standards of its awards. Part of the commitment they make when appointed is to provide an annual written report to the University on a number of matters relating to the modules and/or programmes which they have been appointed to oversee.
- 53 The following sets out the way in which reports will be considered within the University.
- 54 In summary the process is as follows:
- (a) report received (electronically) by the Quality Office
 - (b) Quality Office forwards report to the Programme Coordinator (who, upon receipt, initiates payment of the external examiner's fee by the Finance Officer)
 - (c) possible issues of serious concern raised by Academic Quality and Learning Manager with Programme Coordinator
 - (d) Programme Coordinator responds to external examiner with copy provided to Academic Quality and Learning Manager
 - (e) Programme Coordinator brings report and responses to Quality Enhancement Committee for discussion, highlighting any issues of serious concern and how they have been addressed
 - (f) Academic Quality and Learning Manager brings report and responses to Academic Quality and Standards Committee for discussion, highlighting any issues of serious concern and how they have been addressed
 - (g) Programme Coordinator discusses programme- or module-level issues with programme team and students, and reports on actions taken in Programme Review and Development Plans; Programme Coordinator informs external examiner of actions being taken or reasons for not taking action.

Purpose

- 55 The purpose of the requirements set out in the following paragraphs is to ensure that the University has in place demonstrably effective processes for addressing issues raised by external examiners at whichever level the issue may relate (i.e. whether concerned with practice at a programme/module level or with a university requirement). These processes are designed so that external examiners are consistently provided with feedback on the issues they have raised, actions taken or reasons for actions not being taken. This feedback serves to assure external examiners that their input is valued and will contribute to the enhancement of

the University's academic provision as well as assisting the University to maintain the academic standards of its awards.

Report form

- 56 External Examiners are required to use the form approved by AQSC. The purpose of the form is to ensure that external examiners provide consistent information irrespective of the subject area they are appointed to oversee. The form is designed to reflect external benchmarks. It also requires external examiners to provide, as part of their final annual report at the end of their term of appointment, a reflective review of their work and observations during their period of appointment.

Submission of reports

- 57 The completed form **must** be returned to the Academic Quality and Learning Manager, and **must** be submitted electronically using the email address published on the form.
- 58 In addition, and exceptionally, external examiners are entitled to send a separate report to the Vice Chancellor in confidence, where the examiner wishes to raise issues of serious concern directly and privately with the Vice Chancellor.
- 59 For undergraduate programmes commencing in September of the academic year, reports **should** be submitted within one month after the meeting of the Programme Board. This deadline is designed to enable the programme teaching team to reflect on the external examiner's feedback and develop actions as part of the Programme Review and Enhancement Plan. Any new issues which arise during the reassessment process will also be considered. Where an external examiner, having submitted the report by the deadline, considers that there are further issues raised during the reassessment – or other subsequent assessment - process, they may submit an additional report (or part thereof) as they consider appropriate.
- 60 For postgraduate Master's programmes, reports **should** be submitted no later than one month after the meeting of the Programme Board at the end of the Master's (dissertation) stage enabling an overview of the whole programme to be provided. The external examiner **may** submit an interim report at the end of the Diploma stage if deemed appropriate.
- 61 Where a programme commences delivery other than in September of any academic year, the timing of the report **must** be determined by the Programme Coordinator in consultation with the external examiner(s) and the Academic Quality and Learning Manager provided that this decision ensures a report is made annually.
- 62 As reports will be made available in full to students (para. 73) the external examiner **must** not include the identity of any student in their annual report.

Non-submission

- 63 Where a report has not been submitted by the required date, the Academic Quality and Learning Manager will write to the external examiner asking the external examiner to advise

the University within 14 working days of the reasons for non-submission and the likely date on which it will be submitted.

- 64 If the Academic Quality and Learning Manager does not receive a response within 14 working days or does not receive a satisfactory response they **must** consult with the Vice Chancellor and the Programme Coordinator to agree what further action should be taken, including whether payment of the fee should be withheld.

‘Insufficient’ feedback from external examiners

- 65 Where the Programme Coordinator or the Academic Quality and Learning Manager consider that the feedback provided by the external examiner through the form - and taking into account the feedback provided through other means (such as at the Board of Examiners) - is ‘insufficient’, the Academic Quality and Learning Manager **should** write to the external examiner requesting more detailed feedback. (For example, one or two word answers to each question on the report form does not generally represent an effective discharge of the external examiner’s responsibilities for advising the University that academic standards are comparable).
- 66 If the Academic Quality and Learning Manager does not receive a response within 14 working days or does not receive a satisfactory response they **must** consult with the Vice Chancellor and the Programme Coordinator to agree what further action should be taken, including whether payment of the fee shall be withheld.

Serious concern

- 67 Where the Vice Chancellor, Academic Quality and Learning Manager or Programme Coordinator considers that an external examiner’s report discloses an issue of serious concern the Academic Quality and Learning Manager **must** ensure that appropriate action is taken, that a response detailing the action taken is provided to the external examiner, and that a report is provided to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- 68 ‘Serious concern’ is interpreted as follows:
- (a) evidence that the academic standards of the provision may be at risk
 - (b) evidence that university regulations or procedures are not being adhered to.

University-level issue

- 69 The Academic Quality and Learning Manager is responsible for making an annual report to Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) on University-level issues raised in external examiners reports and for providing feedback to external examiners as determined by AQSC. The report will also include examples of good practice which are considered transferable beyond the programme to which they relate.
- 70 ‘University-level issue’ is interpreted as follows:

- (a) where consistency across the institution is desirable and therefore practice, or a change of practice, should be considered for implementation across the institution (this could include examples of good practice)
- (b) an issue the Programme Coordinator or Board of Examiners is not empowered to act upon (e.g. because it is defined in the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1) or the issue lies within the jurisdiction of another university body).

Oversight by the Vice Chancellor

- 71 All reports are read by the Vice Chancellor and an acknowledgement sent to the external examiner.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- 72 The University is committed to involving students in the consideration of feedback from external examiners as part of its commitment to working with students as partners (Code on Students as Partners (QH:F1)). Students will be informed via Canvas of the name, position, organisation and term of office of all external examiners appointed to oversee their programme and the modules which comprise that programme.
- 73 Once an external examiner's report has been received by the University it will be made available in full to students via Canvas (with the exception of any confidential report made directly to the Vice Chancellor). Students will also be invited to discuss with the Programme Coordinator issues raised by the external examiner as part of the Programme Review and Enhancement Plan, including discussing appropriate actions.
- 74 Under no circumstances is a student permitted to contact an external examiner directly about any matter relating to their studies or decisions of examiners or Boards of Examiners. Student concerns may only be raised directly with University staff or through the procedures for Academic Appeals or Complaints by Students. If an external examiner receives a communication from a student the external examiner **must** immediately inform the Academic Quality and Learning Manager and not respond to the communication.

END OF AN EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S TERM OF OFFICE

- 75 At the start of the academic year in which an external examiner's term of office is due to end, the Academic Quality and Learning Manager will advise the Programme Coordinator of the need to begin the process of identifying a suitable replacement and, once identified, triggering the process of nomination set out in this Code.
- 76 It is essential for the smooth operation of the external examiner system that there is no gap between the end of a term of office and a replacement appointment unless this is entirely unavoidable.

Resignation

- 77 Where an external examiner is unable to complete their term of office for personal or professional reasons they **must** notify the Academic Quality and Learning Manager and the Programme Coordinator giving three months' notice. The Academic Quality and Learning Manager and Programme Coordinator will discuss with the external examiner how the end of the term of office will be managed, for example addressing any implications for the external moderation process, attendance at Boards of Examiners and the annual report.
- 78 The Programme Coordinator will then begin the process of identifying and nominating a suitable replacement.

Termination of contract

- 79 Where the Chair of a Board of Examiners or a Programme Coordinator is concerned that an external examiner is not performing their duties in accordance with this Code (other than submitting the annual report, explained above para. 63 above), they **must** discuss their concerns with the external examiner and seek to clarify actions which would be desirable to resolve those concerns.
- 80 If the above action does not resolve the concerns, the Chair or Programme Coordinator **should** make a formal written request to the external examiner setting out actions deemed appropriate.
- 81 If the concerns remain unresolved, the Academic Quality and Learning Manager **should** discuss the matter with the Programme Coordinator and Vice Chancellor. Where they agree that the concerns are valid and that reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the concerns, the Vice Chancellor **may** direct that the external examiner's appointment be terminated. The Vice Chancellor will write to the external examiner informing them of this decision and the reasons for it.
- 82 The termination and reasons for it will be reported to the next meeting of the Academic Board.

<End of document>