



HANDBOOK

FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

AND MODERATORS

2020-21

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HANDBOOK FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND MODERATORS

1. GENERAL

1.1 Authority and Scope

1.1.1 This Handbook is issued on the authority of the Senate of Plymouth Marjon University¹. It sets out policies and procedures approved by Senate relating to the appointment, roles, duties, rights and responsibilities of External Examiners and Moderators for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes leading to academic awards of the University. It is informed by the expectations, practices, advice and guidance set out in the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>).

1.1.2 Plymouth Marjon University recognises the crucial role of External Examiners and Moderators in its quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Specifically, in accordance, with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, it aims to ensure that its External Examiners:

- have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK higher education sector:
- are appropriately experienced in course design and student assessment at the level of the award:
- have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development:
- are experienced in acting as an External Examiner or are supported by the provider in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring:

¹ Plymouth Marjon University is a trading name of the University of St Mark & St John: the Senate replaced the University's Academic Board with effect from August 2018.

- are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the provider and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant partners:
- do not personally benefit from any student outcomes, nor have any connection to any student being assessed:
- have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively:
- are drawn from a relevant variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the University's provision benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny:
- comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate:
- normally hold a limited number of concurrent external examining engagements (i.e. no more than two).

1.1.3 External Examiners and Moderators for University awards are appointed by the University Board of Studies, by delegated authority on behalf of Senate. The University Board of Studies is also responsible, on behalf of and in consultation as appropriate with Senate, for the University's External Examination and Moderation functions as a whole.

1.1.4 In the Handbook, references to 'the Director of School' extend to all members of the School concerned except where indicated otherwise.

1.1.5 Any revisions to this Handbook must be approved by the University Board of Studies.

1.2 Assessment Policy relating to External Examiners

1.2.1 The University operates a "two tier" system of formal meetings to agree assessment outcomes. In furtherance of this system, modules are grouped into cognate groups and subject areas. The "first tier", or Module Assessment Board, confirms marks and awards credit at module level for all students studying the modules in its area,

regardless of which named award the students may be registered upon; the "second tier", the Progression and Award Board, uses those confirmed marks to make recommendations for awards, including classification of award, and make decisions about the progression of students.

1.2.2 The University has established two distinct roles for External Examiners. The first is in relation to support of the duties of Module Assessment Boards; the second is in relation to support of the duties of Progression and Award Boards.

1.2.3 External Examiners acting in the first role are described as "External Examiners"; those acting in the second role are described as "Progression and Award Board External Examiners" (hereafter referred to as "PAB External Examiners"). A module will only have one External Examiner; an External Examiner will normally be associated with a number of modules. External Examiners may be associated with modules or awards at all levels of provision, i.e. both undergraduate and postgraduate. An individual may be both an External Examiner and a PAB External Examiner, although a PAB External Examiner need not necessarily be an External Examiner.

1.3 The Role of External Examiners

1.3.1 The primary role of External Examiners at the University is one of quality assurance and the confirmation of standards, ensuring procedures and processes are in place that will assure appropriate outcomes.

1.3.2 Specifically the University requires its External Examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on;

- whether or not it is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;

- the extent to which its assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the provision for which the External Examiner is responsible and is conducted in line with its policies and regulations;
- whether or not the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience;
- good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment;
- opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

1.3.3 External Examiners are also expected to:

- confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable their role to be fulfilled or provide details to the contrary;
- state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction;
- address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body;
- give an overview of their term of office in their final report.

1.3.4 External Examiners are not engaged in the capacity of second markers, nor are they expected to routinely fix or alter marks. Moreover, External Examiners cannot alter the decisions of properly constituted Progression and Award Boards or Module Assessment Boards in relation to individual students after those Boards have concluded their business. In any case of disagreement that cannot be otherwise resolved, the decision of the External Examiner is final, but the External Examiner must provide the Board with a clear statement of the reasoning behind it, which will be recorded in the minutes of the Board.

1.4 Moderation of Marks

Notwithstanding the preceding paragraph, a Module Assessment Board may only apply moderation to the range of marks within a module, or set pass or other criteria at levels other than those specified in the approved programme and module documentation, with the explicit agreement of the External Examiner.

1.5 Attendance at Meetings

The External Examiner is expected to attend either virtually or in person the meetings of the Module Assessment Board held to confirm marks for modules within his or her purview and there should be one PAB External Examiner present at each Progression and Award Board. These requirements might be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on the advice of the University Secretary and Registrar; however, in such circumstances, External Examiners and PAB External Examiners will still be expected to make their views known, normally in advance of its meeting. In addition to this requirement, a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) accrediting particular provision might stipulate that more than one Examiner must attend.

1.6 External Moderators

In addition to External Examiners, the University also appoints External Moderators to its Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision. Please see Appendix A to this Handbook for further details of the External Moderator role.

1.7 Data Protection

- 1.7.1 All personal data supplied by an External Examiner or Moderator for the purpose of their appointment and subsequently concerning their employment will be stored and used in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. The data will be held securely and for no longer than is necessary. The University will use this personal data for the purposes of appointment, communication about and payment of fees and expenses, and for any other necessary communications. Information relating to an External Examiner or Moderator's name, contact details, previous and current experience relating to his or her role and academic and/or professional credentials may be shared with staff within the institution.
- 1.7.2 The University will not disclose contact details or any other personal details to third parties (i.e. outside the University) without the individual's consent unless required to do so under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. Students can obtain details of the External Examiner arrangements applicable to a specific programme by contacting the Academic Standards Officer in writing, although these will be confined to the name and position of the External Examiner and the institution at which they are based. Unauthorised contact with an External Examiner by a student is regarded as a serious offence of student misconduct.
- 1.7.3 External Examiners and Moderators are also entitled to make Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act 2018.

2. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE POLICIES ON EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 2.1 Plymouth Marjon University operates a policy of two-tiered assessment boards.
- 2.2 External Examiners (excluding External Moderators) are appointed with responsibility for a defined list of modules, except as described in Section 3.5 of this Handbook.

Directors of School are responsible for ensuring that every module offered within their School is assigned to an External Examiner.

2.3 The role of the External Examiner (excluding External Moderators) is to;

- ensure that the standards set for the awards are appropriate for qualifications at this level, in this subject;
- ensure that the standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which they have experience;
- ensure that the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted;
- draw attention to any other particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes;
- report on these and other related matters to the body responsible for the conferment of academic awards;

2.4 In any case of disagreement that cannot be otherwise resolved, the decision of the External Examiner is final, but the External Examiner must provide the Board with a clear statement of the reasoning behind it. This will be recorded in the minutes of the Board.

2.5 Where an accrediting PSRB requires an additional or different role to that predicated by the University's policy, an explicit definition of this role must be written into the agreement with the External Examiner.

2.6 The expected flow of information to and from External Examiners is described in Sections 3 and 6 of this Handbook and in Appendix B, which sets out a generic list of documentation to be supplied to External Examiners.

2.7 External Examiners shall consider the outcomes of assessment and their relationship to the assessment strategies and marking criteria provided to them, and report on the effectiveness of the assessment process in this context. The endorsement of the

External Examiner on the final marksheet agreed by the Module Assessment Board signifies general satisfaction with the effectiveness and adequacy of this relationship but does not necessarily indicate agreement with every confirmed mark.

2.8 The PAB External Examiner should assist the Progression and Award Board in considering student profiles, and ensure that regulations and procedures have been fairly and equitably applied to all students in relation to these profiles in a manner consistent with practice elsewhere in the UK Higher Education sector. The signature of the PAB External Examiner on the recommendation list agreed by the Progression and Award Board confirms the adequacy of this process.

2.9 A Progression and Award Board will not normally be quorate unless the PAB External Examiner(s) is (are) present. If the PAB External Examiner(s) is (are) unavoidably absent, the Chair shall ensure that the PAB External Examiner has been fully involved in agreeing marks and that there is at the meeting a written record of the marks and recommendations on classifications and failures. If absent, the PAB External Examiner shall be consulted about distinction, first class and failing decisions before the pass list is signed.

2.10 The External Examiner shall not act as an additional marker. If an External Examiner requires the alteration of marks, the reasons for doing so and the extent of the sample must be recorded in the minutes of the Module Assessment Board.

3. PROCEDURE FOR THE NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND MODERATORS

3.1 General Policies on the Appointment of External Examiners and Moderators

3.1.1 External Examiners and Moderators for awards of the University are appointed by and are accountable to the University Board of Studies on behalf of Senate.

- 3.1.2 Modules are normally expected to have an External Examiner appointed and in post before they are delivered to students. External Moderators are also expected to be in place for relevant provision in ITT.
- 3.1.3 Only External Examiners and Moderators appointed in accordance with these policies and procedures can carry out the duties of External Examiners or Moderators in relation to awards of the University and modules for which credit contributing to its awards can be assigned.
- 3.1.4 In exceptional circumstances, where the appointment of a separate External Examiner at module level would be disproportionate (due to the number of modules offered and/or the number of students registered on the module/s), the University Board of Studies may allocate provision to the PAB External Examiner on the basis of his or her overall responsibility for the relevant award/s. Where this applies, the rationale for so doing must be recorded in the minutes. In such circumstances, the PAB External Examiner should report on the additional provision by way of his or her standard report, calling upon subject-specialist input where appropriate; his or her rights and responsibilities, with regard to this provision, will be as set out in Section 6.2 of this Handbook.

3.2 Initial Action

- 3.2.1 External Examiner and Moderator appointments will be approved by the University Board of Studies, normally by no later than the final meeting of the previous academic session. It is good practice, accordingly, to identify a potential candidate or candidates at least one year before the commencement of the appointment.
- 3.2.2 The responsibility for ensuring that an External Examiner or Moderator is appointed in respect of each module lies with the Director of School in which the module resides. However, the operational responsibility for the appointment process itself lies with the Academic Standards Officer, under the authority of the University Board of Studies.

3.2.3 The Director of School will identify a suitable External Examiner or Moderator. Before nomination, it is important to ensure that the proposed Examiner or Moderator has a clear understanding of the proposed duties, the University's policies and procedures relating to External Examiners or Moderators (as applicable) and the scale of remuneration. To this end, it may be helpful to send a copy of this and other relevant documents and/or draw attention to the web-based versions before the proposed Examiner or Moderator agrees to the nomination. During this informal contact, it should be ascertained that the Examiner or Moderator is likely to meet the appointment criteria set out in Section 4 of this Handbook.

3.3 Formal Process of Appointment

3.3.1 The External Examiner and Moderator Nomination Form seeks information from the proposed Examiner or Moderator and confirmation of willingness to fulfil the role. It should be e-mailed to the proposed Examiner or Moderator, by the Academic Standards Officer, following initial discussions with the Director of School to ensure that the proposed Examiner or Moderator is likely to meet the criteria for appointment. A copy of this Handbook will accompany the Nomination Form if not already supplied.

3.3.2 If the proposed Examiner or Moderator does not appear to meet the criteria, the Director of School will be asked whether or not they wish to make out a case for exceptional consideration to the University Board of Studies, with reference to the relevant criteria published in this Handbook.

3.3.3 The proposed Examiner or Moderator will then return the completed the form to the Academic Standards Officer, along with his or her CV if not already supplied. A Virtual Forum appointed by the University Board of Studies will then receive the form, the CV of the proposed Examiner or Moderator and any other supporting documents required to inform its decision. Appointments will be made by the Virtual Forum and reported

to the next meeting of the University Board of Studies. Where the Virtual Forum is unable to reach a decision the full paperwork will be submitted to the University Board of Studies for consideration at its next meeting.

3.3.4 Once the appointment has been confirmed, the Academic Standards Officer will notify the Director of School. A database of all appointments will be maintained by the Academic Standards Officer, who will make the relevant information available to colleagues within the University on request.

3.3.5 If the appointment is not confirmed, or the process is curtailed at any point, the Academic Standards Officer will write to notify the proposed Examiner or Moderator with the reasons for the decision.

3.3.6 The University will also make the name, position and institution of its External Examiners and Moderators available to students who submit a written request to the Academic Standards Officer, with the proviso that it will continue to seek to safeguard their impartiality at all times. For this reason, any unauthorised contact with an External Examiner or Moderator will be regarded as a serious offence of student misconduct and External Examiners and Moderators are expected to refer details of any such direct contact to the University Secretary and Registrar via the Academic Standards Officer.

3.4 Letter and Terms of Appointment

3.4.1 For appointments of the University, the University's Human Resources Department will send a letter of appointment to the External Examiner or Moderator.

3.4.2 This letter will be accompanied by a separate letter, prepared by the Academic Standards Officer, which shall identify the beginning and end dates of the appointment and confirm this Handbook's role in setting out the parameters, terms and conditions of appointment. This separate letter will also set out the details of the total

remuneration for the examining duties, and draw the attention of the prospective External Examiner or Moderator to the dedicated External Examiner or Moderator webpage on the University's website (as applicable) and the information available thereon.

- 3.4.3 The External Examiner or Moderator shall be required to signify acceptance of the appointment and the terms and conditions outlined in it. This confirmation will be retained on file by Human Resources. They will also be required to sign and return a copy of the payment starter form, required to make payments direct into their bank account, at the same time. The appointment will remain provisional until both the signed confirmation and the payment starter form have been returned, and may be cancelled by the University if these have not been received within three months of the date of the appointment letter.
- 3.4.4 The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will normally be for four academic sessions from the date of appointment, inclusive of any resits in the final session of appointment. The start and finish dates of the appointment will normally reflect the academic cycle applicable to the provision. Under exceptional circumstances described in Section 3.6 of this Handbook the appointment period for External Examiners may be extended beyond this period.
- 3.4.5 External Moderators are normally appointed, in the first instance, for two academic sessions rather than four. This is to ensure flexibility with regard to the annual allocation of ITT places through provider led and School Direct provision. On the recommendation of the relevant Director of School, the University Board of Studies may extend the appointment by a further two academic sessions in total.
- 3.4.6 Fees, which are taxable, will be paid in the context of the University's monthly pay round. External Examiners and Moderators will also be reimbursed for any reasonable expenses incurred in connection with their duties, provided these have been notified on the appropriate Expenses Claim Form and accord with the University's financial regulations; these expenses will be paid as soon as possible after receipt.

3.5 Appointment of PAB External Examiners

- 3.5.1 The PAB External Examiner will normally be present at any meeting of a Progression and Award Board at which conferment of any academic award is recommended.
- 3.5.2 The University recognises that, in the case of certain programmes of study leading to an award of the University and/or the University and an award of, or exemption from the examinations of, a PSRB, it may be necessary to appoint additional PAB External Examiners with responsibility for some or all of the contributing modules. This is especially the case if Examiners are appointed by, or in conjunction with, the PSRB to ensure that the standard of the award as a whole accords with the requirements of the professional institution.
- 3.5.3 The procedure for appointing such Examiners will follow, as closely as possible, the procedure for appointing External Examiners described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of this Handbook with the proviso that the additional scope of appointment should be brought to the attention of the University Board of Studies.

3.6 Extension of Duties

- 3.6.1 Exceptionally, for example if a programme and its associated modules is about to be discontinued, an appointment may be extended beyond the standard period until the final student has completed their studies. Difficulty in identifying an appropriate replacement will not normally be considered "exceptional".
- 3.6.2 The extension process will be as set out in Section 3.3 of this Handbook, with the proviso that the Director of School will be required to provide a rationale to the University Board of Studies, stating the grounds for the extension, the proposed new date of expiry of the appointment (if a fixed date is applicable) and the reasons why it is impossible or inappropriate to appoint another Examiner or Moderator. If the term of an appointment is to be extended, the Academic Standards Officer will inform the

External Examiner or Moderator in writing and advise the Human Resources Department accordingly.

- 3.6.3 If the extension is not granted, the Academic Standards Officer will inform the External Examiner or Moderator in writing of the reasons for the decision.

3.7 Termination of Appointment

- 3.7.1 If an External Examiner or Moderator is not meeting the responsibilities specified in this Handbook, or in the written agreement with them, or in the written requirements of an accrediting body or PSRB, or if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the University may take action to terminate the Examiner or Moderator's duties. In such cases, the Academic Standards Officer, following a decision of the University Board of Studies shall write to the Examiner or Moderator, stating the effective date of termination (which shall normally be at least one calendar month from the date of the letter), and the reasons for it. In the case of an External Examiner appointed by an accrediting body, he or she shall also write to the Chief Executive of the accrediting body requesting termination of the appointment.

- 3.7.2 An External Examiner or Moderator who wishes, for any reason, to terminate his or her duties shall write to the Academic Standards Officer stating the effective date of termination (which shall normally be not less than one calendar month from the date of the request) and, unless there are personal reasons for withholding this information, the reasons for it. The University will pay any outstanding remuneration due to an External Examiner or Moderator, including any reasonable expenses that they have incurred.

4. APPOINTMENT CRITERIA FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND MODERATORS

4.1 An External Examiner or Moderator's academic or professional qualifications and expertise shall be appropriate to the modules to be assessed, both in level and in relevance to the cognate group of modules, and equip the External Examiner or Moderator to fulfil the role described in Section 1 of this Handbook.

4.2 In specific terms, this means that prospective External Examiners are expected to show appropriate evidence of the following;

- knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- 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;
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- fluency in English;
- meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
- awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

- 4.3 The specific requirements for prospective External Moderators are set out in Appendix A.
- 4.4 A proposed External Examiner or Moderator who fulfils the required criteria may be appointed without previous experience as an External Examiner or Moderator. This will normally be subject to appropriate mentoring arrangements being put into place so that advice can be made available to them, on request, from an experienced colleague; the mentoring will normally be carried out by the PAB External Examiner as a part of their standard duties.
- 4.5 External Examiners and Moderators shall be independent, impartial in judgement, able to devote the necessary time to their duties on behalf of the University and, as far as possible, free of any conflict of interest. To secure this, the University Board of Studies will not normally appoint anyone in the following categories or circumstances;
- a member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the University or one of its collaborative partners;
 - anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
 - anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
 - anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
 - 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;
 - former staff or students of the University unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the External Examiner or Moderator have completed their programme(s);

- a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution (i.e. programmes delivered within the same Faculty, School, Department or similar unit of organisation);
- the succession of an External Examiner or Moderator from an institution by a colleague from the same institution;
- the appointment of more than one External Examiner or Moderator from the same Faculty, School, Department or similar unit of organisation of the same institution;
- a previous External Examiner or Moderator with the proviso that, in exceptional circumstances (such as the duration of the previous appointment being less than the maximum term), an External Examiner may be reappointed after a period of at least five years has elapsed since their last appointment;
- anyone who already holds two or more External Examiner and/or Moderator appointments.

4.6 Exceptionally, the University Board of Studies may determine that there is a legitimate case for making an appointment that does not fulfil all the criteria. Where this applies, the reasons for doing so will be recorded in detail in the University Board of Studies minutes which are circulated to Senate members.

5. ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENT CRITERIA FOR PAB EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

5.1 PAB External Examiners are nominated from the External Examiners for modules that contribute to one or more of the awards to be recommended by a Progression and Award Board. It follows, therefore, that the criteria for PAB External Examiners are identical to those for External Examiners, but the nominee should normally also have substantial experience of overseeing assessment regulatory systems. Their term of office will normally last two years but can be extended for a further period of up to two years subject to the approval of the University Board of Studies.

5.2 The criteria for the appointment of PAB External Examiners for programmes accredited by a PSRB shall also accord as closely as possible with the University's criteria for the

appointment of External Examiners, as described in the previous section. If the University's criteria are substantially different from the requirements of the accrediting body, it shall be the responsibility of the University Board of Studies to ensure that a second PAB External Examiner is nominated in order to satisfy them.

6. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

6.1 External Examiners at Module Level

6.1.1 Plymouth Marjon University affirms the crucial role of the External Examiner, at Module Assessment Boards, in ensuring that standards are maintained. In order to undertake that role, the rights and responsibilities of Examiners must be explicit.

The rights of External Examiners are as follows:

6.1.2 External Examiners will be notified on appointment of the total remuneration for the examining duties (as per Section 3.4.2 of this Handbook). The Academic Standards Officer will inform the Examiner of any subsequent changes in remuneration.

6.1.3 The University will ensure that all External Examiners are informed about organisational procedures, practices and academic regulations and that they are provided with sufficient evidence to enable them to discharge their responsibilities. Specifically, the Director of School will notify External Examiners, on appointment and annually thereafter, of the modules for which they are responsible (for example, by way of the relevant Programme Handbook or Handbooks) and ensure that they receive, in respect of each module for which they have responsibility, the module assessment strategy and its relationship to the learning outcomes of the module(s), together with a statement of the way in which the elements of assessment will meet the strategy. If this information is unchanged since the Examiner last received it, it will suffice for the Director of School to confirm that.

- 6.1.4 The External Examiner may comment on these, but may not require immediate changes with effect for the current delivery of the module unless, in his/her opinion, the standard of the award or award element is at risk. This is because students will also have been informed of the outcomes and methods of assessment and may have made choices based upon that information.
- 6.1.5 The Director of School will ensure that the External Examiner has the opportunity to approve any examination papers and other elements of assessment before they are undertaken by students, including those applicable to resits. In so doing;
- only the final version of an assessment, agreed by the module team and free of drafting errors, should be sent;
 - it should be accompanied by an explanation of how, and for what, marks will be assigned, and model answers if appropriate to the discipline and type of assessment;
 - the External Examiner may propose changes, as well as comment on the standard and suitability of the assessment with particular emphasis on the place of the assessment in the module assessment strategy;
 - in consulting with External Examiners on the nature and content of assessments, the Director of School will seek the advice of the relevant External Examiner as to whether or not examinations and coursework should be treated in the same way.
- 6.1.6 External Examiners shall receive the elements of assessment (i.e. each assessment item such as a coursework assignment or an examination paper) with their respective marking schemes, relevant quantitative data and an adequate sample of the students' work at the earliest possible opportunity, and at least one month before the relevant Module Assessment Board meets. The External Examiner will scrutinise at least 20% of the total assessment diet for a module, including samples at all grade descriptor levels and all work proposed for failure; moreover, the sample should not normally be confined to work that has been double-marked. All failing dissertations submitted at the second attempt should also be seen by the External Examiner. A cover sheet, on which the External Examiner can make any comments on that particular assessment

element, may accompany the sample of student work although, as stated in Section 1.3.4 of this Handbook, External Examiners shall not act as additional markers.

- 6.1.7 The External Examiner has the right to access all work submitted for assessment of any module for which she or he has examining responsibility. This right includes the right to observe the assessment of practice if placement learning contributes to the provision.
- 6.1.8 This procedure is intended to enable the External Examiner to comment to the Module Assessment Board and subsequently report to the University on the appropriateness of the assessment and the standard of the students' performance.
- 6.1.9 The Module Assessment Board may only apply moderation to the range of marks within a module, or pass or other criteria at levels other than those specified in the approved module descriptor, with the explicit agreement of the External Examiner, which will be recorded in the minutes of the Board.
- 6.1.10 External Examiners may expect that any comments made in their report will be addressed adequately and may expect to receive feedback on their report as described in Section 7 of this Handbook.
- 6.1.11 External Examiners have the right, exceptionally, to report in confidence, directly to the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Senate if they are concerned about matters of particular importance relating to academic standards or quality of provision. The University will provide a considered and timely response to any such report received, outlining any actions that will be taken as a result. The report and response will be received at the University Board of Studies for information and comment and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), as Chair of the University Board of Studies, will report to the next meeting of Senate with the outcome.
- 6.1.12 Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all

published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, s/he may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

The responsibilities of External Examiners are as follows:

6.1.13 External Examiners are appointed to cognate groups of modules by the Authority of Senate and are expected to attend the meetings of the Module Assessment Board either physically or virtually as appropriate, having already sampled students' assessed work. The requirement for an External Examiner to attend the Board may be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on the recommendation of the University Secretary and Registrar; however, in such circumstances, an External Examiner will still be expected to make their views known, normally in advance of its meeting.

6.1.14 External Examiners are full members of and act as consultants and advisers to Module Assessment Boards. They shall be entitled to contribute to discussions of the overall curriculum and assessment strategy for the programme/s within the remit of such Boards.

6.1.15 External Examiners should satisfy themselves that;

- programmes and their component parts continue to be coherent and their outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor set out in the applicable qualification framework, supplemented where applicable by one or more subject benchmark statements;
- programmes reflect any additional PSRB requirements;
- assessments in modules at the same level are of a comparable standard;
- the curriculum remains current;
- assessment criteria, marking schemes and arrangements for classification are set at the appropriate level;

- the types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the respective level of study and the expected outcomes;
- the marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied, and that internal marking is therefore of an appropriate standard, fair and reliable;
- the assessment processes are carried out in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures;
- procedures governing extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and borderline performances have been considered fairly and equitably applying institutional regulations.

External Examiners may scrutinise samples of work in all modules in order to do so.

6.1.16 Whilst External Examiners are not normally involved in detailed assessment processes at Certificate level, in the case of programmes leading to an award beyond that level, they should still be acquainted with the curriculum and arrangements for assessment and progression so that they are able to endorse the level and standards of programmes as a whole. Where students enrol on a programme offered only to Certificate level, however, the full range of duties apply.

6.1.17 Where major anomalies or other causes for concern have been identified, the External Examiner shall be alerted and, in consultation with the Chair, recommend a solution to the Module Assessment Board. In such cases no marks may be confirmed or credit assigned without the written agreement of the External Examiner.

6.1.18 Once the Module Assessment Board has agreed the marks, with or without moderation, the External Examiner shall return the mark sheet to endorse the outcomes of the assessment process they have been appointed to scrutinise. Marks may not be altered after this point, and may only be corrected in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the External Examiner. The endorsement of the External Examiner on the final mark sheet agreed by the Module Assessment Board signifies general satisfaction with the effectiveness and adequacy of the relationship

between the assessment strategy and the learning outcomes of the module, but does not necessarily indicate agreement with every confirmed mark.

6.1.19 An External Examiner who declines to endorse the mark sheet shall in all instances report to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, as described in Section 6.1.11 of this Handbook.

6.1.20 The External Examiner will consider the outcomes of assessment and their relationship to the assessment strategies and marking criteria outlined to them, and report on the effectiveness of the assessment process in this context. The report should be submitted within four weeks of the June Module Assessment Board to the Academic Standards Officer on the appropriate External Examiner report form. In addition, supplementary reporting requirements may be placed on specific External Examiners, where required by the relevant professional bodies, and the relevant Director of School will ensure that these are communicated to the External Examiner/s concerned.

6.1.21 External Examiners may undertake discussions with students in order to inform their judgement of the quality of the student learning experience. However, the University's Assessment Policy does not permit External Examiners to conduct viva voce examinations to determine an individual student's marks or to make recommendations for awards.

6.1.22 At the end of their term of appointment, External Examiners shall include in their final report any matters that they wish to draw to the attention of their successor.

6.2 PAB External Examiners

6.2.1 In addition to the rights and responsibilities of External Examiners, PAB External Examiners have the following rights and responsibilities.

The rights of PAB External Examiners are as follows:

- 6.2.2 PAB External Examiners will be kept informed of the range of awards for which they are responsible.
- 6.2.3 PAB External Examiners will be notified, on appointment or when nominated, of the total remuneration for their examining duties. The Academic Standards Officer will inform the Examiner of any subsequent changes in remuneration.
- 6.2.4 PAB External Examiners shall have access to the University regulations relevant to their role (including the Student Regulations Framework) and may access the Programme Specifications for each programme for which they have responsibility via the University website.
- 6.2.5 Consultation with PAB External Examiners on the nature and content of individual assessments is neither required nor encouraged by the University because that role is undertaken by the External Examiner at module level.
- 6.2.6 PAB External Examiners shall be entitled to contribute to discussions of the overall curriculum and assessment strategy for the programme/s within the remit of the Progression and Award Board.
- 6.2.7 PAB External Examiners may expect that any comments made in their report will be addressed adequately and may expect to receive feedback on their report as described in Section 7 of this Handbook.
- 6.2.8 PAB External Examiners have the right, exceptionally, to report in confidence, directly to the Vice-Chancellor of the University if they are concerned about matters of particular importance relating to assessment, standards or procedures of the programmes within their remit. The University will provide a considered and timely response to any such report received, outlining any actions that will be taken as a result.

6.2.9 Where a PAB External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, s/he may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

The responsibilities of PAB External Examiners are as follows:

6.2.10 PAB External Examiners shall be members of a Progression and Award Board, participate in its meetings and provide a critical perspective with regard to its regulatory underpinning. The requirement for a PAB External Examiner to attend the Board may be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on the recommendation of the University Secretary and Registrar; however, in such circumstances, a PAB External Examiner will still be expected to make their views known, normally in advance of its meeting.

6.2.11 PAB External Examiners shall, as members of a Progression and Award Board, consider the range of each student's marks as confirmed by the Module Assessment Boards.

6.2.12 PAB External Examiners shall, as members of a Progression and Award Board, make recommendations on progression and award, having taken due account of the student's overall performance, any extenuating circumstances, and the relevant Regulations. In relation to Honours degrees, PAB External Examiners are not normally involved in progression decisions from Level 4 to Level 5 but should nevertheless be acquainted with the curriculum and arrangements for assessment at Certificate level and progression therefrom.

6.2.13 PAB External Examiners shall, as members of a Progression and Award Board, ensure that the standard of awards is maintained at a level comparable, in their experience, with that of similar awards elsewhere in the UK. By confirming the academic standards of a Bachelor's programme, External Examiners are implicitly endorsing the level and standards of related Level Four and Five qualifications such as Certificates and

Diplomas of Higher Education. Note, however, that this and the immediately preceding paragraph do not exempt Certificate level work from External Examiner scrutiny on programmes for which students enrol with the aim of achieving a Certificate level award.

6.2.14 PAB External Examiners shall submit an annual report, within four weeks of the main meeting of the Progression and Award Board, to the Academic Standards Officer using the University's report form.

6.2.15 PAB External Examiners shall sign the Conferment List to endorse the assessment process they have been appointed to scrutinise. The endorsement of the PAB External Examiner(s) on the Conferment List agreed by the Progression and Award Board relates to;

- student profiles;
- issues of fairness and equity to students in the application of regulations and procedures;
- the processes of assessment and their relationship to the strategies and criteria outlined to them.

The endorsement does not relate to the marks of, or classification of awards to, individual students. A PAB External Examiner who declines to endorse the Conferment List shall in all instances report to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, as described in Section 6.2.8 of this Handbook.

6.2.16 PAB External Examiners shall participate as required in any review of decisions taken about the assessment of an individual student's work to which they have been party.

6.2.17 At the end of their term of appointment, PAB External Examiners shall include in their final report any matters that they wish to draw to the attention of their successor.

7. EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

- 7.1 External Examiners' reports are an important component of the University's Quality Assurance processes. The aspects that the University require its External Examiners to comment upon are specified in the appropriate Report Form.
- 7.2 The University requires its External Examiners to report to it, by way of the Academic Standards Officer, using the appropriate Report Form which will be e-mailed to them before the relevant Boards. This Form should not be retained by External Examiners for subsequent re-use. If a PSRB also requires a report from an External Examiner, it will be the responsibility of the Examiner to provide it in the form and with the coverage specified by that institution. Where the same programme is offered on more than one site, as the result of a validation, franchise or other collaborative provision agreement, an External Examiner may be asked to supply separate reports with appropriately differentiated content. This may also apply with regard to closely-related provision (such as a Foundation Degree and associated progression award).
- 7.3 External Examiner reports are made available to students, by way of Staff-Student Liaison Committees and other relevant meetings at which students are present, and may also be the subject of Freedom of Information disclosure requests. Accordingly, External Examiners are required to maintain the confidentiality of Module Assessment Boards and Progression and Award Boards in their reports.
- 7.4 If it is necessary to refer to individual cases or decisions, External Examiners are required to do so in a confidential addendum to the report and are also required to anonymise staff and student details throughout. Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018, students have the right to access any comments or reports made about them during any stage of the assessment process, including the examination process and any such comments may be disclosed upon receipt of a Subject Access Request; External Examiners, therefore, should not record any comments that might potentially identify an individual student, even when their details have been anonymised. The requirement to make reports available in full to students will not

apply where External Examiners, exceptionally, report in confidence directly to the Vice-Chancellor (see Section 6.1.11 of this Handbook): however, in such circumstances, External Examiners must not make any comments that might potentially identify an individual student in response to a Subject Access Request.

- 7.5 The Academic Standards Officer will acknowledge receipt of the report and forward it to the Director of School, correcting any minor typographical errors and/or anonymising staff and student details before circulation. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the University Secretary and Registrar, the Quality and Standards Manager and the PAB External Examiner will also have access to the report by way of the relevant electronic folder.
- 7.6 The Academic Standards Officer will alert the Quality and Standards Manager and the University Secretary and Registrar immediately to any major concerns identified in a report. The University Secretary and Registrar will then invite the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to consider, on behalf of the University, whether exceptional action beyond that described in this Handbook should be taken. The Director of School in which the cognate group of modules or the programme(s) reside is responsible for ensuring that any matters identified for attention are addressed by the appropriate person and/or in the appropriate forum.
- 7.7 Consideration of External Examiners' reports will be undertaken in a meeting of staff teaching on programmes to which modules contribute, where discussion will be informed by the full context of the delivery of modules in the programme as a whole. In the case of PAB External Examiner reports, the Quality and Standards Manager will liaise with relevant staff at all levels to address their contents.
- 7.8 The Director of School will arrange for a response to each External Examiner's report to be drafted, using the appropriate form. The response will follow the running order of the points made by the External Examiner as far as possible, quoting from the relevant sections of the report in preference to paraphrasing, and will specify;

- the means of disseminating good practice identified by the Examiner and the person responsible for doing so, with a timescale for completion;
- the mechanisms whereby issues raised have been considered and addressed;
- actions taken or to be taken on issues raised in the report and the person/agency responsible for taking them, with a timescale for implementation;
- clear reasons for not accepting any recommendations or suggestions.

7.9 The Director of School will e-mail a set of approved response forms for his or her School to the Academic Standards Officer, who will forward each form to the External Examiner and maintain a central record of such responses (along with the reports). In the case of reports from PAB External Examiners, the Quality and Standards Manager will compile a response; this will be forwarded to the External Examiner under the same conditions, once approved by the University Board of Studies. In order to close the "quality loop", External Examiners are asked to confirm that issues raised in their previous report have been addressed by way of the formal response.

7.10 Where applicable, the Director of School will also e-mail an updated version of the response form to the Academic Standards Officer, indicating progress with regard to the stated actions, to be forwarded to the relevant External Examiner prior to the relevant Assessment Board.

7.11 The Directors of School will each include an overview report of issues raised by External Examiners in their Annual Reports, with particular reference to generic issues. These reports will be considered at the University Board of Studies in the context of the University's annual monitoring process. In addition, the Academic Standards Officer will compile a brief institutional overview for receipt at Senate. The presence of student representatives on the University Board of Studies and Senate ensures that they are given the opportunity to be fully involved in this process, enabling them to understand all the issues raised and the institution's response.

- 7.12 The University may terminate its agreement with an External Examiner who fails to submit a report that is adequate in either form or coverage (see Section 3.7 of this Handbook).
- 7.13 Where a programme has ceased to recruit, the requirement for annual reporting may be relaxed subject to the agreement of the University Board of Studies on the recommendation of the Director of School. However, a final report will always be required when a programme has closed.

8. INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND MODERATORS

- 8.1 An annual induction programme will be offered to all External Examiners and Moderators within a year of appointment. Apart from clarifying the role of External Examiners and Moderators in the University's assessment procedures, the induction programme will brief External Examiners and Moderators on assessment strategies and appropriate criteria.
- 8.2 Where this requires physical attendance, reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be paid through the normal procedures for payment of such expenses in accordance with the University's Financial Arrangements.
- 8.3 The induction programme will include an input from Schools, especially in relation to assessment strategies and marking criteria of the provision for which the Examiner will have responsibility or, in the case of External Moderators, appropriate inspection criteria. Additional induction may be provided by a School, in the context of specific appointments, subject to prior notification by the Director of School. The PAB External Examiner will also be invited to participate, and the programme may provide an opportunity for External Examiners and Moderators to meet with students as well as academic and professional services staff.

9. APPOINTING EXTERNAL EXAMINERS FOR OTHER AWARDING BODIES

Exceptionally the University may be required to appoint External Examiners for another awarding body, other than the University. Unless otherwise specified in the Memorandum of Agreement underpinning the arrangement, the procedures followed will be those described in this document.

10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

As the University is responsible for the standards of its awards, the arrangements with regard to External Examiners and Moderators for collaborative programmes will be made in accordance with this Handbook.

APPENDIX A – EXTERNAL MODERATORS

1. As with all providers of Initial Teacher Training in Higher Education in England, the University is responsible for the quality of the training it provides and for the quality assurance and outcomes of that training. The role of the External Moderator is to provide an external perspective on the attainment of other providers' trainees being assessed for the award of EYTS/QTS which, in turn, is intended to verify the accuracy of the assessments made by the provider. External Moderators also assist the University by advising on good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The role of External Moderator aligns with Secondary ITT, Primary ITT and EYITT compliance criteria R3.4 2015.
2. Notwithstanding the definition set out in the previous paragraph, the University's External Moderators are subject to the same appointment procedures as its External Examiners (as set out in Sections 3 and 4 of this Handbook) and their rights and responsibilities are broadly comparable.
3. Prospective External Moderators are expected to show appropriate evidence of the following during the appointment process;
 - knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality, as applicable to Initial Teacher Training (ITT);
 - competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
 - relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
 - sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the field of ITT to be able to command the respect of academic and professional peers;
 - the ability to offer an informed external perspective on the attainment of EYTS/QTS by trainees;

- fluency in English;
 - meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
 - awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
 - competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
4. External Moderators are responsible for a defined list of modules through which QTS/EYTS are awarded. These may or may not correspond to specific programmes. They are not responsible for academic work linked to any module, but may look at academic work if it relates to evidence against the relevant Standards (QTS/EYTS).
5. External Moderators will normally visit the University's Teacher Education Partnership (MARJON TEP) during the final term of training on their designated training route into teaching (the timing varies according to the specific route).
6. The responsibilities of External Moderators will include:
- detailed scrutiny of a sample of trainees across the provision;
 - observation of the teaching of trainees in a designated sample;
 - discussion with mentors and/or quality assurance tutors of all the evidence available of the judgements made on the trainee outcomes and quality of training;
 - scrutiny of quality assurance arrangements, drawing on the evidence gained from the above activities;
 - producing a report that includes an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision observed, clearly linked to the standards for QTS/EYTS and ITT criteria, and including an evaluation of the accuracy of the assessments of trainees' attainment against the standards for QTS/EYTS.
7. External Moderators are also expected to familiarise themselves with the following external guidance:

- DFE statutory guidance on the criteria that organizations must meet to provide initial teacher training (ITT);
 - Guidance for inspecting initial teacher training under the common inspection framework from September 2015.
8. External Moderators normally report annually, by way of a standard report form which is sent to them immediately before their visits by the Marjon Teacher Education Partnership and should be returned to the Partnership via the Academic Standards Officer. They are expected to report within four weeks of the date of their visits, so that their findings can be discussed at the end of the period of training. The Teacher Education Partnership will determine an appropriate feedback mechanism for External Moderators.
9. The fees and expenses for External Moderators will be processed on the same terms as for External Examiners.

APPENDIX B - GENERIC LIST OF DOCUMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

ON APPOINTMENT

BY HUMAN RESOURCES:

- A letter setting out the terms and conditions of employment (with associated documentation).

BY THE QUALITY AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS UNIT

- A letter from the Quality and Academic Standards Unit, setting out the beginning and end dates of the appointment: the role of the Handbook for External Examiners and Moderators: details of the total remuneration for the examining duties: and a link to the dedicated External Examiner webpage.
- Details of induction arrangements (once date confirmed).

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED ANNUALLY /UPDATED ANNUALLY

BY THE QUALITY AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS UNIT

- External Examiner Handbook (via link on webpage)
- University Generic Grade Descriptors (via link on webpage)
- University Generic Level Descriptors (via link on webpage)
- Student Regulations Framework (via link on webpage)
- Assessment Policy (via link on webpage)
- The annual schedule of fees (by e-mail to all External Examiners)
- Travel and subsistence claim forms (by e-mail to all External Examiners – supplied by the Administrator to the Registrar)

- Summary of annual themes (by e-mail to all External Examiners)
- (PAB External Examiners) details of the awards for which they have responsibility, with links to the definitive documents.
- The response to the previous External Examiners' report, and the previous report itself in the case of newly-appointed External Examiners.
- The report form to be completed.

BY STUDENT ADMINISTRATION:

- Details of the modules for which they are responsible (for example, by way of the relevant Programme Handbook and Module Handbooks accessed through Learning Space).
- Assessment tasks and briefs, examination papers, including resit work to be forwarded and approved prior to release to the students. These will be accompanied by an explanation of how, and for what, marks will be assigned, and model answers if appropriate to the discipline and type of assessment.
- An adequate sample of the students' work for each element of assessment, to be decided by negotiation (see Section 6.1.6 of the External Examiners' Handbook).
- In the case of Certificate Level modules (where programmes lead to an award beyond that level), curriculum and arrangements for assessment and progression.
- Relevant quantitative data for each module and element of assessment.
- The confirmed minutes of the previous Module Assessment Board.
- Summary of the progress of actions taken in response to previous report.

Indicative Timeline:

<i>Available by</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
September / October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Examiner Handbook • University Generic Grade Descriptors • University Generic Level Descriptors • Student Regulations Framework • Assessment Policy • The annual schedule of fees • Travel and subsistence claim forms • PAB External Examiners details of awards 	QASU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the modules for which they are responsible • The confirmed minutes of the previous Module Assessment Board 	Student Administration
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to the previous end-of session report 	QASU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An adequate sample of the students' work for each element of assessment (Semester A / Term 1 modules) 	Student Administration

Available by	Document	Responsibility
April/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of annual themes • External Examiner Report Form template 	QASU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An adequate sample of the students' work for each element of assessment (Semester B, Terms 2 and 3 modules) 	Student Administration
May/June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the progress of actions taken in response to previous report (where applicable) 	QASU
June/July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant quantitative data for each module and element of assessment • Assessment tasks and briefs, examination papers, including resit work to be forwarded and approved prior to release to the students for next academic year 	Student Administration

Control Page

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