

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Notes of Guidance for External Examiners for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses

A Appointment and Duties

The following are notes intended to outline the duties of External Examiners. Detailed arrangements on individual degree programmes are supplied to the External Examiner by the Secretary of the appropriate Board of Examiners.

1. External Examiners who began a term of office before October 2011 shall be appointed annually on the recommendation of Departments to the Senate for a period of up to four years (normally three years in the Faculty of Science).

External Examiners appointed for the first time from October 2011 shall be nominated by Academic Departments and be appointed by the Senate normally for a period of four years.

2. The role of the External Examiner is to ensure that:
 - (a) degrees awarded are comparable in standard to those in similar degree programmes in other universities in the United Kingdom;
 - (b) the assessment system is fair and is fairly operated in the classification of students;
 - (c) degrees awarded are at the appropriate level as set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (Chapter A1 of the UK Quality Code) and take appropriate account of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement;
 - (d) students achieve the learning outcomes for the degrees set out in the relevant Course Specifications.
3. In order to carry out the duties under paragraph 2 above, the External Examiner may:
 - (a) participate where appropriate in assessment processes for the award of degrees, and in some cases set questions or papers;
 - (b) comment and give advice on course content, balance and structure; on degree schemes; on assessment processes and on schemes for marking and classification;
 - (c) advise on problem cases;
 - (d) moderate and approve examination question_papers which contribute to final classification, including courses where the external examiner is not a member of the Examiner's Board for that year of study;
 - (e) consider any work undertaken outside the University and written reports of such work, and report on the appropriateness of its standard and content for the course.
4. The External Examiner shall be a member of the Final-Year Board of Examiners and, at the discretion of the Board, the Boards of Examiners for earlier years which also contribute to final classification, and shall attend meetings of the Board of Examiners to consider final examination results.
5. The External Examiner shall have access, on request, to any scripts and assessment material contributing to final classifications so that a report can be made to the Board of Examiners on the standard of marking. In those cases where it is agreed that the inviting department should make a selection of scripts to be sent to an External Examiner, the principles for such a

selection should be agreed in advance. Where an External Examiner sees only a selection of scripts in this way, he or she should normally see the scripts of borderline candidates.

6. The External Examiner shall ensure that special consideration is given to candidates whose performance places them at the top and bottom of the group as a whole, or whose performance falls on the borderline between two classifications.
7. The External Examiner shall participate in any *viva voce* conducted with respect to paragraph 6 above (noting that *viva voce* examinations will not be conducted for students on undergraduate courses who commenced their studies in autumn 2008 and later). In all other oral examinations the External Examiner shall monitor any selection procedure and shall attend by mutual agreement with the Department. The principles for the selection of candidates for *viva voce* or oral examination should be agreed with the External Examiner(s).
8. The External Examiners shall satisfy themselves that work undertaken outside the University and written reports of such work, are of an appropriate standard and content for the degree or diploma concerned.
9. The External Examiner shall, in the case of undergraduate students reading "end-on" degrees at the end of their second year (e.g. a student in Physics and Business Studies whose second year would be substantially as the Physics second year, and whose third year would consist entirely of Business Studies courses), prepare, at the end of the student's second year, a report for the Final-Year Board. This procedure is necessary to ensure that the second year examination for the first subject is given appropriate weight in determining the overall final class list. However, this report may be prepared at any time between the time the second-year examinations are taken and the meeting of the relevant Final-Year Board the following summer.
10. In the event of a disagreement on the mark to be awarded for a particular unit of assessment or on the final classification to be derived from the array of marks of a particular candidate at an examiners meeting, very careful account will be taken of the views of the External Examiner.
11. The External Examiner shall confirm by joint signature with the Chair and Secretary of the Board of Examiners, the pass lists indicating assent to the final classification of candidates. External Examiners have the right to withhold their signature if the decision of the Board of Examiners is against their strong recommendation. In the event of an External Examiner withholding a signature, a full report should be made by the Board of Examiners to the Senate.
12. All External Examiners are required to submit an annual written report on a standard form. The report, which will **not** be published, remaining confidential to the University, seeks explicit responses to the topics listed below:
 - (1) the standards demonstrated by the students;
 - (2) the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration;
 - (3) the design, structure and marking of assessments;
 - (4) the procedures for assessments and examinations;
 - (5) whether or not External Examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material needed to make the required judgements;
 - (6) where possible, students' performance in relation to their peers on comparable courses;

- (7) the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them;
- (8) the curriculum, its aims, content and development;
- (9) resources as they impact upon student performance in assessments;
- (10) the basis and rationale for any comparisons of standards made;
- (11) the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort;
- (12) the quality of teaching and learning methods which may be indicated by student performance;
- (13) The functioning of the collaboration between University and partner institution(s) (for collaborative courses only)
- (14) any recommendations the External Examiner may have.

External Examiners' reports should be sent to the Vice-Chancellor within one month of the meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners. Reports will be copied to the Chairs of the appropriate departments and Chairs of the Boards of Examiners and will be made available on request to an incoming External Examiner. In line with Warwick's normal quality assurance and enhancement policies and processes the report will be discussed at a departmental meeting (or equivalent) at which student representatives may be present. Reports will be made available to such other bodies and persons within the University as is deemed appropriate. Copies may also be provided to external bodies which request them and which have a legitimate concern (e.g., professional accreditation bodies), unless the External Examiner explicitly indicates that he or she does not wish this to be done. We cannot guarantee that the contents of your report would not be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. However, the University will not release your name or any other personal details about you to third parties without your explicit consent. External Examiners may, if they wish, submit a further report in confidence to the Vice-Chancellor for the Senate, on any matter relating to the degree or its examinations.

When External Examiners' reports are circulated to Chairs of Departments, they will be asked to complete a pro-forma noting any action taken in response to any recommendations the reports may contain; these responses will be forwarded to the relevant External Examiner.

B Fees and Expenses

An expenses claim form and a report form will either be sent to you in advance or given to you by the Secretary of the Board of Examiners at the meeting of the Board. There are two versions of the expenses form: one for External Examiners of individual research degrees, the other for External Examiners of taught courses; please make sure the correct form is used. If you are acting as External Examiner for both undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses, expenses for both can be claimed either on the same form or on individual forms, whichever is the more convenient. The completed expenses claim form should be returned to the Academic Registrar, Academic Office, for the fee to be entered. Please note that payment of fees is not made until the Examiner's report is received.

Travel expenses can be claimed on the basis of 1st class return rail fare, plus incidental expenses for buses, taxis etc., or for car mileage. If claiming for car mileage please just enter the number of miles: the current mileage rate will be entered in the office. Mileage may only be paid up to a maximum equivalent to the cost of a first class return rail fare.

The actual costs of meals and overnight accommodation can be claimed, up to maxima specified on the reverse of the claim form, but not incidental hotel expenses such as bar accounts or newspapers, **nor expenses incurred by members of University staff accompanying the External Examiner.** Receipts must be attached.

Incidental expenses incurred whilst acting as External Examiner (such as postage, telephone calls) can also be claimed where the charges were paid by the Examiner.

Under Inland Revenue instructions tax will be deducted at source for undergraduate examining fees, but not for postgraduate fees. Expenses are exempt from tax. When your claim is paid you will be sent details of tax deducted etc.

PLEASE NOTE: Fees are authorised when an expenses claim form is received, so if you do not have any expenses to claim you should still return a claim form stating this, otherwise payment of fees will be delayed.

C Data Protection

If you intend to store or process marks of students in any way on a computer, please note that such data would belong to the University of Warwick and that your use of such data must therefore comply with the University's registration under the Data Protection Act 1998. The University Senate has resolved that academic staff are permitted to reveal to an individual student his or her examination marks in confidence. Marks are defined as the marks for each whole separately examined course component or element of coursework and confirmed by the appropriate Board of Examiners. Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 any marks retained for more than 40 days from the announcement of examination results are liable for disclosure, and therefore any records of marks that you may hold beyond 40 days from the date of the Board of Examiners must not be more detailed than those disclosed to students.