

## CODE OF PRACTICE ON EXTERNAL EXAMINING

### INTRODUCTION

The external examining system is a key element for setting, maintaining and assuring academic quality standards at Keele University.

The Keele Code of Practice on External Examining is based on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2018) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Advice and Guidance: External Expertise*.<sup>1</sup> The Code of Practice should be used as guidance for staff, students and external examiners appointed to Keele programmes and contains the following sections:

- [Section 1 Principles](#)
- [Section 2 Role and Duties of Subject External Examiners](#)
- [Section 3 Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners](#)
- [Section 4 Induction and Development of External Examiners](#)
- [Section 5 Examination Boards](#)
- [Section 6 University Chief External Examiner](#)
- [Section 7 Educational Partnership Arrangements](#)
- [Section 8 The External Examiner Report](#)
- [Section 9 Non-fulfilment of Duties and Termination of Contract](#)
- [Section 10 Temporary Suspension of Appointment](#)
- [Section 11 Notice Period](#)
- [Section 12 Public Information Requirements](#)

Additional information for external examiners can be found on the University Quality Assurance webpages: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexaminers/>

It should be noted that the external examining processes described here relate only to taught undergraduate and postgraduate awards. Examining procedures for research degrees are covered separately in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

### 1. PRINCIPLES

- 1.1. The aims of the procedures for external examining are to provide the University with assurances whether or not:

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>

- i) it maintains the academic standards it sets for its awards in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and applicable subject benchmark statements;
- ii) the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of programmes and are conducted in line with the University's policies and procedures;
- iii) the academic standards and the achievement of students are comparable with those in other UK universities.

## **2. ROLE AND DUTIES OF SUBJECT EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

2.1. The core duties of subject external examiners shall be:

- i) to ensure the University's awards are comparable in standard to those in other UK universities;
- ii) to ensure academic rigour and standards are upheld for the University's awards in accordance with the FHEQ, any applicable subject benchmark statements and the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- iii) to ensure that the assessment processes and marking criteria measure student achievement rigorously and equitably;
- iv) to confirm the comparability and appropriateness of academic standards of coursework and examination tasks for modules that count towards students' degree classification;
- v) to ensure that the internal marking is appropriate and consistent, and carried out in accordance with the University's regulations, and that the overall assessment strategy is appropriate for the level of the module;
- vi) to offer, where appropriate, advisory comments and suggestions on the programme content and structure, assessment practice and on the teaching and learning strategies, which includes being consulted on curriculum changes. The University also welcomes suggestions on how the quality of the learning opportunities on the programme(s) could be further enhanced;
- vii) to be a member of, and attend, the Module Examination Board where modules which contribute to the calculation of the final award are considered;
- viii) to provide the University with a comprehensive and timely annual report within four weeks of the examination board, see section 8 The External Examiner Report.

2.2. Evidence of the internal marking process in relation to the sample of assessed work should be provided by the School to the external examiner alongside the sample itself. Any significant differences between first and second markers should have been resolved through the internal moderation process before submission of work to the external examiner.

2.3. Where a module or an entire programme is delivered in different locations, the external examiner will be provided with the information necessary to form a view of student achievement and the consistency of academic standards across the cohort. For more details of these processes, see section 7 Educational Partnership Arrangements.

- 2.4. External examiners must not be involved with the raising and lowering of individual marks within the sample of assessed work. However, where there is a concern over the appropriateness of marks in the sample, the external examiner may recommend that the marks of the entire cohort are reviewed. Any such recommendations require the approval of the Board of Examiners as a whole; the external examiner does not have the right to take a final decision on any proposed adjustments.
- 2.5. While the external examiner will not be involved with any formal approval of changes to modules or programmes, they may be invited on occasion to offer advice to a programme team on curriculum developments. Similarly, the University may consult with its external examiners on changes to the regulatory framework.
- 2.6. External examiners should be allocated to all credit-bearing programmes; Schools delivering a number of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes may include the CPD modules in the role of current external examiners. In instances where the anticipated workload exceeds that expected of an external examiner, a separate external examiner may be employed to specifically oversee CPD provision.
- 2.7. External examiners should:
- i) ensure that they have received adequate information on the aims and learning outcomes, the curriculum, and the regulations for the programmes for which they are responsible;
  - ii) see a sufficient number and range of papers and other assessed work from the whole cohort of students to be able to determine that the internal marking was appropriate and consistent, and be given the opportunity to see the scripts of all students on borderlines and those with failing marks;
  - iii) see examples of all in-course assessments which contribute to the final assessment;
  - iv) be provided with an opportunity to speak with students on the programme to obtain their feedback, which may take place online, for example, via platforms such as MS Teams.
- 2.8. External examiners have the right to:
- (i) see any piece of work which contributes to a student's final assessment;
  - (ii) scrutinise the basis for the assessment of any element in the programme which contributes to final assessment;
  - (iii) request to speak with students in order to obtain their feedback.
- 2.9. Schools should consult external examiners on the range and quantity of scripts they wish to see, including in-course assessments. Mark distribution grids should always be sent to external examiners.

### **3. NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 3.1. The responsibility for nominating a potential external examiner lies with the Head of School or equivalent. The nomination should be approved by the Head of School or equivalent before the nomination form is forwarded, together with a

current CV of the nominee, to Quality Assurance for initial consideration. All nominations will then be scrutinised by the Quality, Academic Standards and Education Policy Sub-Committee (QASEP). Nominations which meet the University's appointments criteria will then be recommended to Education Committee for formal approval, which is granted on behalf of Council via delegated authority from Senate. External examiners would not normally commence their term of office prior to this formal appointment by Education Committee.

- 3.2. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity during a period of major change. An external examiner may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment to the University. External examiners would not normally hold more than two external examiner appointments at different institutions for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.
- 3.3. The Head of School or equivalent has a responsibility to ensure that where an external examiner has entered the final year of their term of office, steps are taken to identify a suitable replacement. In exceptional circumstances, an extension form (available on the Keele University External Examiners webpage) can be submitted to QASEP to extend the term of office of an external examiner for a fifth year. This is only typically approved where there is a rationale to support an exceptional case.
- 3.4. The following appointments criteria should be applied in the consideration of nominations for external examiners.

The University will appoint external examiners who can show appropriate evidence of the following:

- i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- ii) competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- v) 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;
- vi) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- vii) 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);

- viii) meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs);
- ix) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- x) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

3.5. To avoid conflicts of interest, the University must not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- i) a member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its partners, or a current employee of the University or one of its partners;
- ii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
- iii) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- iv) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
- v) 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 module(s) in question;
- vi) 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 have completed their programme(s);
- vii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution (*NB: the School must ensure that no reciprocal arrangement exists or is created when proposing an external examiner for appointment*);
- viii) the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution;
- ix) the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.

*NB:* additionally, anyone who has served as an external examiner in the previous five years cannot be an external reviewer or advisor at the University.

3.6. The above criteria are there to enhance the transparency and consistency of institutional practice in appointing competent staff as external examiners. Any application for exceptions from the criteria in individual cases will therefore be carefully considered by QASEP. There may be rare cases, for example where only a very small pool of eligible examiners exists or where the appointment of an external examiner from business, industry or the professions is advisable, when the Committee will agree to recommend the appointment of an external examiner who does not fully meet the criteria.

3.7. If an External Examiner leaves academia before or during their term, their eligibility must be reviewed to ensure that their knowledge remains current, with appointment reconsidered if they cannot demonstrate ongoing engagement with sector developments.

- 3.8. It may be necessary for a programme to have more than one external examiner to cover the subject range or where this is a requirement of the PSRB. In such circumstances, and in consultation with Quality Assurance, a team of external examiners can be established. The allocation of responsibility for particular levels/modules to be examined by each external examiner should be set out clearly at the time of appointment in the contract issued to each external examiner. It is good practice, wherever possible, to seek to stagger appointments to teams of external examiners to facilitate the induction of new members of the team.
- 3.9. QASEP may from time to time review the number and subject spread of its external examiners and may decide to increase or decrease the number of examiners in particular subject areas in consultation with the relevant School.
- 3.10. In some cases, where provision is large and complex, a School may wish to appoint one of its external examiners as the Senior External Examiner to take an overview over the provision as a whole. Where this is the case, it will be made explicit at the time of appointment and a clear statement on the remit of the role will be provided in the contract letter.
- 3.11. It is permitted that an external examiner may have responsibility for more than one Keele award at a different level where these are closely aligned. The contract letter will give details of the report requirements.

#### **4. INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 4.1. Following formal approval of the nomination by Education Committee, the Quality Assurance team will issue each external examiner with a contract which clearly sets out the provision to be examined, start and end dates of the appointment, and the conditions of the appointment, including the fee attached to the position. Requirements for attending the examination boards are detailed in paragraph 2.1 (vii) and the appointment letter.
- 4.2. External examiners will be required to formally accept their appointment and provide the University with evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK in line with UKVI requirements. Original copies of the documents detailed in the letter of appointment will need to be presented for formal verification. External examiners will be required to follow the University's procedure for the verification of eligibility to work as a condition of their appointment. Anyone sponsored under a Skilled Worker visa by another employer is likely to be restricted from undertaking external examiner duties. This is because UKVI rules on 'additional work' generally prevent them from undertaking duties that fall outside their contracted working hours with their main employer, which is when external examining activity typically occurs.
- 4.3. The responsibility to ensure that all external examiners are informed about the University's procedures, practices and regulations is shared between Quality Assurance and the Schools.
- 4.4. The Quality Assurance webpages have a [dedicated section](#) for the University's external examiners to provide them with access to a wide range of additional information including links to:

- (i) the most recent external examiner reports and responses for the relevant programme(s) and a copy of the report template;
  - (ii) the University's education policies;
  - (iii) guidance from AdvanceHE and QAA;
  - (iv) programme specifications;
  - (v) University regulations.
- 4.5. In order to support external examiners, Quality Assurance has developed an online training programme, which provides information about the University, its regulations and examination board structures, and the role of an external examiner. This is supplemented by a visit to meet with the programme team and an induction on subject specific matters, which is organised at a mutually convenient time with the School. These arrangements for induction need to be completed at the beginning of the appointment term. Schools should provide appropriate support and mentoring to external examiners who are new to the role to ensure they can undertake their responsibilities confidently and effectively.
- 4.6. In addition to the materials provided by Quality Assurance, the School will provide external examiners with school specific information. This will be provided either via the KLE or by email:
- (i) key dates in the academic calendar and dates of examination boards;
  - (ii) contact details for key staff;
  - (iii) marking protocols (question and assignment setting; model answers; double marking; moderation);
  - (iv) minutes of examination boards.
- 4.7. It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to provide information about the programme to the external examiner. Where possible, these will be either on the KLE or sent by email:
- (i) programme handbooks, details of the curriculum, programme specific regulations;
  - (ii) assessment briefs;
  - (iii) samples of assessed work.
- 4.8. Academic Assessment Officers must ensure that assessment briefs are shared with the external examiner for review, normally prior to the start of the semester.
- 4.9. The Programme Director is responsible for facilitating a meeting with students to gather their feedback at the request of the external examiner.
- 4.10. Should external examiners have any questions regarding the information provided in the induction or about the role in general, the contact details provided in the contract letters can be used. Occasionally it may be possible to overlap appointments of examiners so that first-time examiners have the opportunity to shadow their predecessor in the role.

## **5. EXAMINATION BOARDS**

- 5.1. As detailed above in 2.1 (vii), external examiners are a member of the Module Examination Board where modules which contribute to the calculation of the final award are considered. External examiners are expected to attend the module examination board; the majority of exam boards will meet online, typically via MS Teams. Arrangements must be agreed between the examiner and school in advance of the meeting and dates of meetings should be confirmed at the earliest opportunity to facilitate attendance.
- 5.2. For most undergraduate programmes within the Faculty of Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences, and in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the University operates a two stage board process, with module examination boards preceding central award boards. The constitution, membership and responsibilities of module examination boards are set out in University Regulation D3 Boards of Examiners.<sup>2</sup> External examiners normally contribute to the relevant module examination boards for undergraduate year 2 (Level 5), undergraduate year 3 (Level 6) and postgraduate (Level 7) in the consideration of module results and progression/award recommendations.
- 5.3. Where the programmes under consideration are new, or are delivered in partnership, the School may request the involvement of the external examiner at a year 1 (Level 4) module examination board. This needs to be specified in the external examiner nomination for agreement by QASEP. External Examiners are required to attend Foundation Year (Level 3) examination boards.
- 5.4. Module exam boards typically meet after each semester. External Examiners are not normally required to attend the semester one exam board.<sup>3</sup> However, normal sampling activity should still be carried out, then observations fed to the School and reported on in the annual external examiner report.
- 5.5. In the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, some Schools operate a single stage board for its undergraduate programmes which acts as both a module examination board and as an award board. For the Foundation Year and Masters programmes, single stage boards are also used. Keele programmes taught by a partner may operate on a different timescale to the main University calendar and therefore progression and award decisions may have to be taken by a specially convened examination board, acting on behalf of the University Examination Board. All degrees are awarded by Senate.
- 5.6. Schools must ensure that external examiners are given time to complete their review of samples of assessed work at least 48 hours before the exam board takes place and should also be provided with access to the examination board papers for review at least 24 hours ahead of the meeting. This allows any issues raised by external examiners to be raised before the meeting and a plan of action agreed.
- 5.7. In order that they can carry out their duties external examiners can expect the following:

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations/regulationd3/>

<sup>3</sup> Other than for certain professionally regulated programmes, where this is made explicit in the contract letter.

- i) be provided by the School with a sufficiently broad sample of work, normally in the region of 10%, which contributes to the final assessment, in order to satisfy themselves the cohort of students is fairly assessed. The sample would normally include, for taught undergraduate programmes, all first class work, all fails and examples of high, mid and low graded work. For taught postgraduate programmes, the sample should be representative of the top, middle and bottom of the performance range. The external examiner on a taught postgraduate programme would normally see at least 10% of dissertations (or equivalent) or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure). If the total number is less than 10, all dissertations should continue to be externally examined. For modules with more than one piece of assessment, the external examiner can normally expect to see samples from all assessments contributing to the final module mark. Wherever possible, the external examiner should be sent the samples of work in advance to allow the external examiner to request re-marking or re-sampling prior to the board;
- ii) have access to all relevant grading schemes and assessment criteria together with a record of marks for each assessment component for the module.

5.8. Where the subject examined includes an element of assessed performance, practical work or presentation, the external examiner should be given the opportunity either to attend such assessment events or to view a representative sample of these assessments via another medium agreed between the external examiner and the School.<sup>4</sup> Additional visits to observe assessment events need to be agreed by the School with Quality Assurance in advance. Additional external examiner visits and associated expenses are to be funded by the School.

5.9. External examiners should ensure that any reservations which they may have on the academic standards of a programme, the fairness and appropriateness of the assessment, the level of marks awarded, and the procedures followed in the assessment process should, wherever possible, be expressed at the meeting of the Board of Examiners, before a final decision on marks is made.

5.10. At the end of the module examination board, the external examiner will be invited to provide initial comments on the board procedures and the standards of student achievement. Any comments provided will be recorded in the examination board minutes but this does not preclude the external examiner from providing additional or alternative comment in their annual report.

5.11. By providing early notification of exam board dates and holding them online, thus removing the need to travel to Keele campus, should ensure external examiners are able to attend. On the rare occasions where an external examiner is unable to attend an examination board due to exceptional circumstances, the School will seek to put in place alternative arrangements.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Such ephemeral evidence may for example be provided in the form of visual or audio recordings, scripts, PowerPoint slides or posters. Guidance for External Examiners and Schools on the recording of assessments can be found on the University's External Examiners webpage

<sup>5</sup> Details of the relevant procedure can be found on the QA webpages:  
<https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexamininandassessment/examinationboards/>

Where an external examiner fails to attend at short notice, thus not allowing any alternative arrangements to be made beforehand, the outcomes of the board will remain provisional until such time that the Chair of the University board has been assured that due process has been followed. This is normally done in consultation with the external examiner. The arrangements for alternative or temporary alternative external examining will be overseen by the Deputy Registrar or Head of Quality Assurance.

## **6. UNIVERSITY CHIEF EXTERNAL EXAMINER**

- 6.1. The University appoints a University Chief External Examiner to ensure that at the main Central Progression and Award Boards awards and decisions on progression are made consistently, fairly and that the University Regulations and Guidance to Examination Boards are comparable to, and reflect good practice.
- 6.2. In addition to fulfilling their responsibilities at subject level, the University Chief External Examiner is responsible for providing an overview of the soundness and robustness of the University's Examination Board procedures at University level.
- 6.3. For this purpose, the University Chief External Examiner will:
  - i) Advise on:
    - The assessment and progression Regulations and Guidance relating to Examination Boards, and be consulted on any proposed changes to these;
    - The University degree algorithm.
  - ii) Contribute to the Central Progression and Award Boards, to attend Levels 4-6 as well as the Reassessment Board, to:
    - Confirm the procedures for assessment have been followed;
    - Confirm the Guidance for the Examination Boards is being adhered to;
    - Offer advice on matters of precedent; and
    - At the invitation of the Chair of the Examination Board, to adjudicate, or to provide a recommendation.
  - iii) Following the Central Progression and Award Boards:
    - To provide an annual written report to the University on the conduct of the assessment, progression and award process.
- 6.4. The University Chief External Examiner will not be expected to veto decisions made by the Chair of the Central Progression and Award Boards and to adjust individual marks.
- 6.5. The University Chief External Examiner has the right to see all relevant paperwork relating to assessment, progression and award and to make a confidential report to the Chair of Senate.
- 6.6. The University Chief External Examiner is nominated for the position from the current undergraduate external examiners who are in their final year from within

the faculties of Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. A nomination form is completed by the Quality Assurance team, which is submitted for consideration by QASEP prior to approval by Education Committee.

- 6.7. In addition to the standard external examiner expectations in relation to independence and calibre, expectations for the University Chief External Examiner extend to include the following:
- i) Being a senior academic in their field;
  - ii) Normally, employed by Keele as a current or recent external examiner from the faculties of Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences or Natural Sciences, having satisfactorily fulfilled their contract, providing the University with high quality and insightful reports;
  - iii) Having held at least one other external examiner appointment prior to taking up their term of office at Keele;
  - iv) Being an authoritative figure in their academic/professional field;
  - v) Having completed an external examiner induction process at the University;
  - vi) Being willing and able to attend the Central Progression and Award Boards and provide the University afterwards with a detailed, constructive and timely report on matters relating to quality and standards.
- 6.8. The duration of term of office is normally three years.
- 6.9. In exceptional circumstances the University may be required to implement its policy for the Management of Academic Awards and Student Progression during interruptions to Normal Timescales (INT). Section 5 of this code of practice provides guidance relating to the operation of examination boards and in the event of a discipline examination board not being quorate under INT rules the business of the discipline examination board will be referred up to be covered by the University Examination Board which may for this purpose convene an extraordinary meeting. The contribution of the University Chief External Examiner is required for Central Examination Boards arranged via the implementation of the INT policy but their contribution to the board may be via teleconference or videoconference. An additional fee will be paid to the University Chief External Examiners on these occasions.

## **7. EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

- 7.1. Where the programmes are delivered in partnership either jointly with or solely by a partner institution, the School may request the involvement of the external examiner at a year 1 (Level 4) examination board. Keele programmes taught by a partner may operate on a different timescale to the main University calendar and therefore progression and award decisions may have to be taken by a specifically convened examination board, acting on behalf of the University Examination Board. Examination board arrangements are set out in the operational handbook for each partnership.
- 7.2. With regard to any programmes that include educational partnership provision, the external examiner is required to report explicitly on all aspects, including the equity and consistency of quality and standards, making it clear where

comments relate to educational partnership programmes. Therefore, a single external examiner would normally be appointed to cover both the cohort based at the University and at the partner institution.

- 7.3. Consideration may need to be given to external examining arrangements for other types of educational partnership, which should be discussed with the Quality Assurance and Educational Partnerships teams. This may include additional responsibilities, which will be considered as part of the nomination and approval process and confirmed in contract letters.

## **8. THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT**

- 8.1. External examiners report annually to the University. Quality Assurance receives the reports on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. External examiners' reports are key documents in assuring the academic standards of the University's awards. As such, the reports are considered thoroughly at School, Faculty and senior management level. It is therefore essential that external examiner reports are comprehensive and cite any evidence upon which judgement or comment is based. The annual reports should never make reference to individual students or staff by name.
- 8.2. Each external examiner is required to submit a full and detailed annual report electronically to the email address [externalexaminers@keele.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@keele.ac.uk) within four weeks of the module examination board taking place. Where an examiner reviews modules at different award levels; they will be required to submit a report for each one e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate and MRes. There may be instances where an examiner's nomination covered modules on significantly different programmes, in these cases; there may be a need for more than one report. Requirements for the reports are set out within the contract letter.
- 8.3. The designated template for the report can be found on the University's Quality Assurance webpages. Reports which do not meet the minimum requirements in terms of completeness and level of detail are returned to the external examiner with a request for further detail. Payment for duties undertaken will only be authorised once a full and complete report has been received by the University.
- 8.4. In addition to core content in relation to standards and student achievement external examiners are invited, in their reports to:
- i) confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled;
  - ii) state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction;
  - iii) highlight good practice and evidence of enhancement;
  - iv) address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body;
  - v) comment on any meetings with students and the insight gained, and
  - vi) give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).
- 8.5. Once reports are received, they are checked by Quality Assurance for completeness and then forwarded to the School. The School will ensure that the report and any recommendations contained therein are considered carefully.

The School will then draft a formal response to the external examiner outlining the actions taken in response to any recommendations.

- 8.6. Student representatives are actively involved in the consideration of external examiners' reports and draft responses, normally through School Education Committees (SEC). The School is responsible for sending the approved response to the external examiner in a timely manner following approval by the SEC. The Faculty Education Committee (FEC), which also includes student representatives, will subsequently consider the reports and the School responses.
- 8.7. In parallel, all external examiner reports will be scrutinised by Quality Assurance to identify serious concerns or issues of a pan-institutional nature. These will be summarised in an overview report and considered, alongside the University Chief External Examiner Report by the Education Committee. Where appropriate, the Dean of the Faculty, Deputy Registrar or Head of Quality Assurance may respond separately to an external examiner where such matters have been identified. The annual report from the University Chief External Examiner (see Section 6) will provide an assurance of examination board processes at University level.
- 8.8. External examiner reports will also form part of the evidence considered during the annual programme review process and the reapproval process. The feedback from external examiners will also be drawn upon in revisions to the University's regulations.
- 8.9. An external examiner has the right to report directly and confidentially to the Vice-Chancellor on matters which would be considered to pose a serious risk to the academic standards of a Keele Award.

## **9. NON-FULFILMENT OF DUTIES AND TERMINATION OF CONTRACT**

- 9.1. The University reserves the right to pay a reduced fee if the duties set out in paragraph 2.1 are inadequately fulfilled. This may include circumstances such as where a report is received with insufficient detail, where it is received significantly outside the required timescales or in case of repeated non-attendance at examination boards.
- 9.2. There may be circumstances where it is necessary to terminate the contract of an external examiner, in particular if the external examiner:
  - i) fails to attend an examination board (where attendance is required, either in person or online), without making alternative arrangements, and/or
  - ii) fails to produce a complete annual report within four weeks of the main examination board, and/or
  - iii) has an unresolved conflict of interest in relation to the appointment, and/or
  - iv) breaches the confidentiality with regard to personal information of students, and/or
  - v) brings the University into disrepute.

- 9.3. Where a conflict of interest arises for an external examiner during the term of office, it would be normal procedure for that external examiner to resign and a replacement examiner found.
- 9.4. In such a case, and only once the University has assured itself that all reasonable steps have been taken to alleviate the situation, a formal decision will be made by the Deputy Registrar or Head of Quality Assurance in liaison with the relevant School to terminate the contract.

**10. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF APPOINTMENT**

- 10.1. An external examiner appointment may temporarily be suspended by the University or the external examiner, for example due to illness, maternity leave or other unforeseen circumstances. Another suitable external examiner will then be appointed to take on the role on a temporary basis to cover the period of absence. A request for temporary suspension should be made to Quality Assurance by the relevant School.
- 10.2. The original end date for an external examiner who temporarily suspends their appointment remains that as advised in their original contract.

**11. NOTICE PERIOD**

- 11.1. External examiners wishing to resign their position are required to give the University reasonable notice in writing. Normally the University expects external examiners to carry out their duties until the end of the academic year. Exceptionally, the external examiner may cease their role by giving at least three months' notice, or sooner if a suitable replacement can be appointed by Senate.

**12. PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

- 12.1. The University will, as a matter of course, make external examiner reports available in full to students on its internal website, alongside the School responses and an explanation of the external examining process. A register of the names and home institutions of external examiners is public on the University's website to provide assurance to students and other stakeholders of the integrity of the University's examination processes.
- 12.2. Schools share all relevant external examiner reports with students directly, for example via the KLE and Student Staff Voice Committees. However, Schools will make it clear to students that it is not appropriate for any student to contact the external examiner directly.

**13. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION**

<b>Document Name</b>	Code of Practice on External Examining
<b>Owner</b>	Academic Registry

<b>Version Number</b>	7
<b>Approval Date</b>	16 June 2026
<b>Approved By</b>	University Executive Committee
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	June 2026
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	7 June 2023
<b>Date for Next Review</b>	June 2029
<b>Related University Policy Documents</b>	Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice; Marking and Moderation Policy
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	External Examiners