

**Student Learning & Experience Committee**

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| **Chapter D2:**  **External Examining (Taught Provision)** |

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# 1. Introduction

External Examining is an integral part of the University’s Quality Framework and External Examiner reports are an essential aspect of the quality assurance and enhancement processes operated by the University.

External Examiners are appointed to provide impartial, independent advice and informed comment on the institution’s academic standards and student achievement in relation to those standards, through oversight of the assessment process at module and award level. The examining system is one of the drivers for reflection on and enhancement of students’ learning, teaching, assessment experiences and award outcomes.

All University courses and modules leading to an award of credit at Foundation Degree, Higher National, Undergraduate, Integrated Masters, Masters and Professional Doctorate levels must have one or more External Examiners appointed to carry out the role of External Examiner as defined in this document. In addition, Professional Doctorate courses must appoint an Advanced Independent Work External Examiner (AIWEE), which is detailed within the **[Handbook for External Examiners of Professional Doctorate Advanced Independent Work](https://connect.tees.ac.uk/external-examiners/handbooks-framework/professional-doctorates)**[.](https://connect.tees.ac.uk/external-examiners/handbooks-framework/professional-doctorates)

All Teesside University Externals Examiners are required to adhere to the information contained in this document. The document also applies to External Examiners appointed to courses and/or modules approved through partnership arrangements. Schools must ensure that partners are aware of their responsibilities with respect to External Examining.

External Examiners should familiarise themselves with the following University publications:

* **[Assessment Regulations](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Assessment%20Regulations&folder_id=46)**
* **[Assessment & Feedback Policy](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44)**
* **[Academic Appeal Regulations](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44)**
* **[Academic Misconduct Regulations](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44)**
* **[Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44)**
* **[Extenuating Circumstances Regulations](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44)**

The contents of this document are aligned with the Office for Students regulatory framework, specifically the [**Quality and Standards Conditions**](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/) as appropriate and the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA’s) [**UK Quality Code for Higher Education**](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)and the [**Advice and Guidance: External Expertise**](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise) publication.

This document is supplemented by the External Examining Operational Guidance (Taught Provision), which contains details of the underpinning processes.

# 2. Appointment and Terms of Office

## 2.1 Appointment

The full process for the appointment of External Examiners is detailed within the External Examining Operational Guidance (Taught Provision). The following key points should be noted:

The number of External Examiners appointed to each course must be sufficient to cover all areas of the curriculum under assessment and, in the case of Professional Doctorate Advanced Independent Work (AIW), align with the University’s regulatory requirements.

External Examiners will have appropriate subject expertise and must be drawn from a variety of relevant professional and/or educational contexts, to ensure that the academic provision benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.

Schools must appoint External Examiners in a timely way to ensure that appropriate levels of external oversight are maintained. Ideally a new External Examiner would start their tenure just before the end of their predecessor’s tenure so there is a handover period.

All applications must meet the University’s criteria for appointment, avoid the indicated conflicts of interest and be submitted using the University’s standard application form.

Information is collected annually and held centrally by the Student Learning & Academic Registry (SLAR) to ensure there is clear independence between University staff and External Examiners involved in modules and courses. The information will be checked at the time of appointment.

Where an applicant is new to External Examining, a suitably experienced mentor will be identified to work with the External Examiner for the first year of their tenure. Mentors will normally be existing experienced Teesside University External Examiners. Further information is available in the External Examiner Mentor Guidelines.

Employer Right to Work checks will be undertaken as part of the appointment process and the University is unable to appoint Examiners who are not UK-based.

If an application is unsuccessful, the Course Leader or nominee will contact the proposed External Examiner to provide a rationale.

Schools will consider all applications and make a recommendation to SLAR. Institutional approval is granted after the Student Learning and Experience Sub-Committee has agreed the appointment on behalf of the Academic Board.

Following appointment, External Examiners will receive a contract letter from the University, specifying the courses and/or modules to which they have been assigned, the period of tenure and details of the fee that will be paid.

## 2.2 Change of Duty and Honorarium Scheme

Where an existing External Examiner has agreed to a role change for more than one assessment period, or for the remainder of their tenure, the Change of Duty process will be adopted.

Where an existing External Examiner has agreed to a temporary role change, for a maximum of one assessment period, the Honorarium Scheme will be adopted.

A change to an existing External Examiner’s duty would not normally result in an extension of their tenure period unless this has been specifically requested.

## 2.3 Terms of Office

The duration of a Module/Award External Examiner's appointment will normally be five calendar years, with an exceptional extension available for up to one calendar year to ensure continuity.

When appointing a Professional Doctorate AIW External Examiner to a subject area, the tenure will normally be for six calendar years. Examiners appointed to a subject area can be utilised as and when required during their tenure, up to a maximum of 6 times per calendar year. When appointing an AIW External Examiner to an individual student, appointments will normally be for a maximum of 30 months.

External Examiners must remain available after the last assessments with which they are associated to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.

If a course is withdrawn during an External Examiner’s tenure, and they are no longer required to examine, their contract will normally be terminated early.

The University may seek to terminate an External Examiner’s appointment early if they fail to appropriately fulfil their role.

If an External Examiner wishes to resign from their role, they should do so in writing, giving a 12-week notice period.

# 3. Induction

Following appointment, Professional Doctorate AIW Examiners will be inducted by the Course Leader.

Following appointment, all new Module/Award External Examiners will be offered the opportunity to attend Central and School-based induction events, and where appropriate, an Apprenticeship induction.

Central induction events are offered multiple times throughout the academic year and cover a range of topics including the University’s Assessment Regulations, Assessment Boards, and the Assessment & Feedback Policy. Induction materials are available from the [**External Examiner Website**](https://connect.tees.ac.uk/external-examiners).

Schools will host a separate supplementary induction event. It will provide an opportunity to meet the Course Team, who will give an overview of the School and subject areas, discuss the curriculum, and provide information regarding the practical arrangements linked to the role, for example, attendance at Assessment Boards and a demonstration of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Following appointment, the University will provide access to the following documentation for all newly appointed External Examiners:

* A link to the University’s External Examiners online resources which include:
  + D2 External Examining (Taught Provision).
  + The relevant External Examiners Handbook.
  + Relevant University regulations and policies, including those related to apprenticeship provision, where appropriate.
  + Guidance on claiming fees and expenses.
  + The UK Quality Code for Higher Education and key reference points.
* A copy of the previous External Examiner’s report and School’s response, where available.

Schools will supplement the above information with documentation that is specific to the External Examiner’s appointment, which as a minimum is:

* Course/Apprentice Handbooks (including course specifications).
* Module specifications, including learning outcomes and assessment methods.
* Guidance on marking and moderation practices.
* Relevant QAA subject benchmark statements.
* Details of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements where they are appropriate.
* Links to the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and End Point Assessment Plan, where appropriate.
* School contact details and how to communicate with internal examiners and others involved in the teaching and assessment.

Revised information will be provided as appropriate throughout the tenure period.

Module/Award External Examiners new to the role will be provided with additional support during their first year from a mentor. The mentor will normally be an experienced Teesside University External Examiner with at least one years’ external examining experience at TU. Further information regarding the mentor role is available within the [**External Examiner Mentor Guidelines.**](https://connect.tees.ac.uk/external-examiners/external-examiners/mentoring)

# 4. Role and Duties

## 4.1 Enhancement of Quality

External Examiners will have the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of the student learning experience during their term of appointment.

Schools are encouraged to utilise the External Examiner’s experience of working at other institutions or in practice during their discussions with academic staff to enhance the structure and content of courses and modules.

External Examiners will be asked to comment on any proposed modifications to existing courses and/or modules, partnership locations or to provide advice following changes to PSRB requirements or similar.

There is no formal University requirement for External Examiners to meet with students. However, providing External Examiners with an opportunity to meet with students may be deemed appropriate by the Course Team depending on the nature of the discipline and/or assessment method. Where the Course Team provides this opportunity, clear guidance will be provided to students about the purpose of the meeting. Such meetings may be conducted via online means.

External Examiners are requested, through their annual report, to comment on strengths and distinctive or innovative features in relation to academic standards and assessment, and to provide suggestions for the enhancement of the academic provision under scrutiny.

## 4.2 Scrutiny of Marking

External Examiners are appointed to act as a moderator of academic standards, to comment on the quality of academic provision and the comparability of standards and student performance.

The University’s [**Assessment & Feedback Policy**](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44) articulates the institutional approach to assessment design, feedback and standards, as follows:

* Appendix C defines the University’s approach to internal marking and moderation processes, including the documentation that Schools will make available to External Examiners.
* Appendix E sets out the minimum specification for information to be retained in modules boxes, which are made available to External Examiners, normally through the relevant VLE.
* Appendix F provides a checklist of the information an External Examiner will have access to for each module/award they are responsible for, including sample sizes.
* Annex 1 provides details for the arrangement for Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments.

Where practicable, Module Examiners will be asked to comment on summative first sit assessment and reassessment proposals. This applies to modules at all levels except Level 3 modules and Level 4 modules forming an award of less than 60 credits, where the agreed proposal is not normally subject to Module External Examiner scrutiny. Where suggestions for amendment are provided by an External Examiner, Schools should reply to the External Examiner to confirm how their advice has been acted upon in a timely manner. Further detail is available in Appendix A of the [**Assessment & Feedback Policy**](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44).

External Examiners are required to consider the consistency and accuracy of marking standards for courses, through reviewing the marking within each module, and between modules of the same level.

External Examiners are not permitted to alter the mark of any individual student.

If an External Examiner does not agree with the marks awarded within a sample of work, they can propose a level of moderation (additional to that already undertaken via the Assessment & Feedback Policy) or re-marking to be undertaken by the internal markers. To ensure fairness, this must apply to all students who have undertaken the assessment.

External Examiners should not normally be expected to adjudicate between internal markers. Differences between internal markers will be resolved before a sample of work is seen by the External Examiner. This could be by a third marker, or consultation with senior colleagues within the School. In all cases it should be transparent to the External Examiner how the final mark was decided. If, in exceptional cases, a mark has not been agreed internally, the views of the External Examiner can be considered in determining the final mark.

## 4.3 Assessment and Reassessment Boards

Schools will inform External Examiners of the dates and times of the Module, Progression/Award Assessment Board(s). AIW External Examiners are not required to attend Assessment Boards.

In some instances, it is mandatory that Module/Award External Examiners attend Assessment/Reassessment Board(s), such as where Apprenticeship End Point Assessment outcomes are being considered. Such Assessment Boards may not be able to take place if the External Examiner is absent.

External Examiners are full members of Assessment Board(s) and should make all reasonable arrangements to attend [face to face or via online means] all relevant meetings relating to the provision to which they are appointed.

Where, in exceptional circumstances, a Module/Award External Examiner is unable to be present at a non-apprenticeship Assessment or Reassessment Board, this should be agreed in advance with the relevant School at the earliest opportunity. A mechanism will be put into place for Schools to obtain the External Examiner’s written comments/report ahead of the Assessment Board(s) and Endorsement of Assessment Process form.

Module/Award External Examiners attend Module and/or Progression/Award Assessment Boards to scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of the assessment process to which they have been appointed, confirming the results at module and/or the decisions taken at course level as appropriate.

External Examiner endorsement of the assessment process is achieved either through the completion of the relevant form, available from the [**External Examiners Handbook**](https://connect.tees.ac.uk/external-examiners/handbooks-framework/external-examiner-handbook) or via the submission of their endorsement in some other written format.

In exceptional circumstances, an External Examiner may be unable to endorse the results of the Assessment Board(s). Where the matter cannot be resolved by the Board, the Chair of the Board must notify SLAR. The SLAR will consider the circumstances and, in consultation with the School and the External Examiner make a recommendation. Where an External Examiner has a serious concern about the academic standards and considers the proposed recommendation insufficient, they may raise their concern directly with the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).

Results will not be released to students until the External Examiner’s endorsement of the Assessment process has been received.

# 5. External Examiner Reporting

All External Examiners that have engaged in assessment activities during the academic year, are required to complete an annual report.

The process for the submission and consideration of each report is briefly described in the sections below. Further information is available within the relevant External Examiner Handbook.

## 5.1 Annual Reporting

Within the Annual Report for taught, Professional Doctorate and apprenticeship provision, External Examiners are expected to comment on:

1. The academic standards of the University’s awards in accordance with the [**Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) Qualification Frameworks**](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks)**,** [**Characteristic Statements**](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements)**,** relevant [**Subject Benchmark Statements,**](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements) and in comparison with other similar HE institutions with which the External Examiner has experience.
2. The rigour of the assessment process that measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes of the course in line with the University policies and regulations.
3. Any instance of exceptional practice observed and opportunities to enhance the student learning experience.
4. Whether sufficient evidence and information was available to them to fulfil their role.
5. Whether any matters raised in previous reports have been satisfactorily addressed or if there are any areas of significant concern.

In addition, External Examiners for integrated apprenticeship End Point Assessment provision will also comment on whether:

1. There is a robust approach to maintaining and enhancing the quality and validity of End Point Assessment in line with the End Point Assessment (EPA) Plan and in accordance with the requirements within the [**External Quality Assurance Framework**](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/5505/eqa-framework-august-2020-a.pdf)**.**

External Examiners will normally submit one Annual Report each academic year, covering both assessment and reassessment periods, using the appropriate online template, to meet the deadlines set by the University (normally 6 weeks after the final Assessment Board).

Where External Examiners are appointed to several courses/modules, or multiple cohorts, or at a number of partners or locations, care must be taken to ensure that comments relating to a specific course, module, cohort of students, partner or location are clearly identifiable.

External Examiners in the first and last year of their tenure are invited to give an overview of their experiences.

External Examiners may, at any point during their tenure, submit a separate confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).

The University reserves the right to request additional information from an External Examiner if the submitted report contains insufficient detail to determine their opinion of the academic standards of the module/award concerned.

Payment of the annual fee is conditional upon the timely receipt of a satisfactory Annual Report, or in the case of an Advanced Independent Work External Examiner, their attendance at an oral examination.

The University reserves the right to terminate an External Examiner’s tenure if a report is not received within a reasonable timeframe of the deadline.

## 5.2 Consideration of External Examiner Reports

All External Examiner reports will be read by SLAR before being passed to the School who will prepare a written response to the External Examiner. Schools will forward the Annual Reports to any relevant partners.

Schools will consider the matters raised in the report through the appropriate forum (course team meeting, School committee, Student Voice Forum etc.) and where relevant will construct a response detailing how and when appropriate actions will be taken, and good practice disseminated.

To safeguard and enhance academic standards and the student learning experience, a formal response to significant concerns raised within the External Examiner reports should be sent to the External Examiner within 20 working days of receipt of the report by the School. Where, for good reasons, it is not possible to respond to the External Examiner in this time, an initial response acknowledging the matter is under discussion can be given with a follow-up communication provided later.

Where an External Examiner’s suggestion is not acted upon, the School must provide an explanation.

Where an External Examiner raises an institutional level matter, for example relating to the assessment regulations, SLAR will liaise with the School/Partner to provide a response.

External Examiner reports and School responses will be used to inform the University’s quality assurance processes, such as course approval, periodic review and Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement processes. In addition, Academic Board annually considers the outcomes of External Examiners’ reports and monitors the resulting action plan.

# 6. Causes for Concern

The University will respond to any concerns an External Examiner has in relation to their duties or matters that arise during their tenure.

In exceptional cases, where an External Examiner has a serious concern about academic standards and the quality of provision that cannot be resolved by the School/Partner through the normal reporting process, the School/Partner, SLAR and the External Examiner will agree a resolution.

If an External Examiner considers a concern so significant that it poses a risk to academic standards, and they have exhausted all internal procedures, including writing in confidence to the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee), they may raise the matter with the Office for Students (OfS).

# 7. Fees and Expenses

## 7.1 Fees and Honorarium Scheme

All External Examiners will be paid a one-off annual fee, normally following submission of the Report. If an External Examiner submits more than one report per academic year, they will only receive one fee payment per year. All fees are subject to PAYE tax.

The fee band is determined by the nominating School at appointment and is based on the volume of work that an External Examiner has been appointed to undertake.

The External Examiner Honorarium Scheme can be used in exceptional circumstances where an External Examiner is required to undertake work outside their normal duties. An honorarium payment should only be used to cover one assessment period. If this is likely to be exceeded, a Change of Duties will be progressed via the normal process.

If an External Examiner formally changes their duties within their tenure period, the fee will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. This includes changes in duties arising from course reviews and modifications.

External Examiners, who have been appointed as a mentor, will be paid a one-off mentoring fee.

If a course(s) closes before the end of an External Examiner’s tenure, the External Examiner will be notified, and will no longer be paid the annual fee for the remainder of the tenure period.

## 7.2 Expenses

Schools will agree with External Examiners what reasonable expenses may be incurred at the start of the tenure period.

The External Examiner must submit their Expense Claim Form, together with receipts, to the School, within one month of incurring such expenses.

# 8. Information Provided to Students

The External Examiner’s Annual Report (and School response in the case of a significant concern) will be made available to students via the University’s e-Vision system.

A standard statement regarding the role of the External Examiner is included in all Course Handbooks, and External Examiner Reports are discussed at Student Voice Forums.

Students must not attempt to contact an External Examiner and External Examiners are not permitted to respond to contacts made by third parties including students or their representatives. If an External Examiner has been contacted by a student or third party, they should report the matter immediately to their home School.

Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers will be present at Academic Board meetings where the annual outcomes of External Examiners’ reports and the resulting action plan is discussed.

# 9. Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Data Protection Law (DPL) regulates the processing of personal data, both as electronic and paper records. The University requires External Examiners to abide by the provisions within DPL.

All personal information supplied by External Examiners for the purposes of their appointment will be held securely, for no longer than is necessary and in accordance with Data Protection Law. The External Examiner name and home institution will be included in the Course Handbook and made available to students.

External Examiner reports will be disclosed upon receipt of a Freedom of Information request. Therefore, the University would expect that neither individual staff or students could be identified (by name or ID number) within the report.

# 10. Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements

Occasionally, External Examiners may have sight of certain confidential information included in assessments submitted by students who are on placement. The External Examiner may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement/non-disclosure agreement (NDA) at the request of the placement provider.

External Examiners will be expected to sign these agreements, and this will not affect their ability to make reports to any relevant regulatory body as may be required during the performance of their duties.