



Canterbury  
Christ Church  
University

# EXTERNAL EXAMINER HANDBOOK (Taught Courses)

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# 1. Introduction

External Examiners are appointed for all award-bearing courses offered by the University. The external examiner system is the principal external means, on a continuous basis, for assuring the maintenance of quality, academic standards, and comparability across the HE Sector. In line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, External Examiners for taught courses are, in their expert judgment, required to report whether or not the University is:

- Maintaining the threshold academic standards for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
- Ensuring that assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
- Ensuring that the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the External Examiners have experience.

To support the University's two-tier Board of Examiner system there are two separate External Examiner roles:

- Module External Examiner
- Progression and Award External Examiner

External Examiners may, if they feel that there are exceptional circumstances, send an additional, confidential report directly to the Vice-Chancellor, if, for example, they consider that assessment is being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standard of the award.

The majority of the content in this handbook applies equally to both Progression and Award Board (PAB), and Module Achievement Board (MAB) External Examiners, so for the most part, only the title External Examiner will be used.

## 2. Induction Arrangements

### 2.1 Primary Contact

All External Examiners will be assigned a Primary Contact. Throughout an External Examiner's term, the Primary Contact will ensure that they are provided with the following:

- Information about the arrangements for review of work and the Module Achievement Board of Examiner date.
- Any course specific information, including a copy of the Course Specification(s) and Course Handbook(s) for the relevant course(s).
- Module handbooks for the modules for which the External Examiner is responsible.
- Any draft assessment papers for review and approval.
- Dates of meetings of Module Board of Examiners.
- Guidance on how to access student work, including on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) e.g. Blackboard, prior to the meeting of the Module Achievement Board of Examiners.
- Opportunities to meet with students on the relevant course(s), where necessary.
- Guidance on the University's operations, policies and procedures for Board of Examiner meetings, regulations, right to work checks and sampling student work.

## 2.2 University Briefing

The University holds an annual briefing session for External Examiners which usually takes place in October. This briefing will typically cover information on the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners and the organisation and operations of Boards of Examiner meetings as well as any relevant updates. All External Examiners are invited to attend.

All briefing information will be available to review on the External Examiners section of the [Quality and Standards Office webpage](#)

## 2.3 Course Briefing

All new Module External Examiner's will receive a course specific briefing with their Primary Contact, other staff and if necessary, students. This meeting will be arranged by the Primary Contact directly. The briefing will cover:

- Intended learning outcomes of the relevant course(s), its modules and how these meet the requirements of the benchmark statements, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Section A and other external reference points, as appropriate.
- Syllabuses and teaching methods of the modules for which the External Examiner is responsible.
- Methods of assessment and marking criteria.
- Guidance and/or a demonstration on how to access samples of work in Turnitin on Blackboard.
- Regulations for the relevant course(s) including those concerned with compensation for failure and opportunities for reassessment.
- External Examiner's role in relation to the examining team as a whole.

Progression and Award External Examiners will be provided with information on the structure and organisation of the Progression and Award Board(s) including the dates of the meetings.

# 3. Module Achievement Board External Examiner

## 3.1 Module Achievement Board of Examiners Meeting

The Module Achievement Board of Examiners (MAB) considers student achievement and performance on individual modules. The key responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

- consider the performance of students on modules;
- confirm the marks achieved by students on modules;
- award credit for the achievement of students on modules;
- award credit for prior experiential learning;
- take account of the decisions made by as the result of the application of the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure or the Temporary Learning Agreement Procedure;
- take account of the agreed outcomes of investigations into cases of plagiarism or academic misconduct;
- apply the Scaling of Marks policy in exceptional cases and in line with the procedures set out in the University's regulations;
- assure the appropriate standards for the modules;
- ensure that the assessment process at a module level is operated in a fair and reliable manner making use of agreed assessment criteria and in line with the University's Regulations and Assessment Procedures;

- where appropriate, to nominate students for prizes and awards and to report them to the relevant Progression and Award Board. All Board of Examiners will operate in line with the University's [Procedures for the Operation of Boards of Examiners](#).

## 3.2 Module External Examiner Responsibilities

Module External Examiners will attend meetings of Module Achievement Boards and provide an annual report at the end of their final Board of each academic year. The annual report will address the allocated modules and comment on the subject / course of which the modules form a part.

The responsibilities of the Module External Examiner are as follows:

- review assessment briefs and provide comments on suitability for meeting module learning outcomes each academic year, where requested by the course team;
- review a sample of scripts for all components of assessment for all examinable modules to which you are appointed;
- review the marking to determine if it is of an appropriate standard;
- attend the relevant Module Achievement Boards of Examiners at which the final assessment is made for the modules to which you are appointed;
- judge the overall standards of student performance on the modules to which you are appointed;
- ensure that written University procedures for marking are observed for the modules to which you are appointed;
- comment on proposed minor changes to both the examinable and non-examinable modules to which you are appointed and new modules in related subject areas;
- bring to the attention of the Module Achievement Board of Examiners any issues relating to the delivery of the modules in the context of the course(s);
- provide an annual written report.

# 4. Progression and Award Board External Examiner

## 4.1 Progression and Award Board of Examiners Meeting

All Progression and Award Boards (PABs) are held at an institutional level to align with the calendars set by Registry in the operational schedule of Board of Examiners. The key responsibilities of the PAB are as follows:

- consider the overall profile of marks for each student and recommend students for awards or make recommendations for a course of action in the case of failure within the regulations;
- make recommendations about students, not in their final year, with regard to progression or make recommendations for a course of action in the case of a student not being eligible to progress to the next level;
- confirm arrangements regarding the timing of reassessment where required;
- award credit to students on modules passed by compensation;
- ensure that the assessment process at a course level is operated in a fair and reliable manner making use of agreed degree classification criteria and in line with the University's Regulations and assessment procedures;
- assure the appropriate standards for the awards;
- consider any issues relating to the delivery of modules in the context of the course(s) as reported from Module Achievement Boards;
- where appropriate, to recommend student awards and prizes for courses, taking into account any recommendations made by the Module Achievement Boards.

## 4.2 Progression and Award Board External Examiner Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Progression and Award External Examiner are to contribute to the decision of the Progression and Award Board. PAB External Examiners do not need to be subject specialists as the PAB does not focus on individual assessments. PAB External examiners will attend meetings of the Progression and Award boards and provide an annual report at the end of their final Board of each academic year.

## 5. Attendance at Board of Examiner Meetings

All University Board of Examiner meetings are conducted online via Microsoft Teams and all External Examiners are full members of the relevant University Board of Examiners. All Board of Examiner dates will be provided by the Primary Contact.

Progression and Award Board of Examiners are expected to attend the PABs to which they have been invited.

Module External Examiners are invited to attend all relevant Boards of Examiners and are expected to attend at least one out of the exam boards that are held within the academic year, preferably the final Board of Examiner meeting.

Where a Module External Examiner is unable to attend a Module Achievement Board of Examiner meeting, or in the event of IT failure, they should submit brief written confirmation to their Primary Contact, in advance of the meeting, or if prevented from doing so as soon as possible after the meeting that they have:

- reviewed the students' work from the allocated modules;
- are satisfied that threshold academic standards have been maintained and that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly;
- are satisfied for the Chair of Module Achievement Board to sign-off the profiles for the relevant modules.

Where an External Examiner raises concerns about module profiles, or if there are significant issues identified by the course, discussions should take place in the relevant Module Achievement Board of Examiner meeting with the attendance of the External Examiner so that a final decision can be agreed, in line with the University regulations.

## 6. Reviewing Student Work

External Examiners will be provided with access to the module Blackboards and Turnitin and will be required to review a representative sample of work from across the mark bandings.

A representative sample is considered to be a sample of work from marks or grades spread across the range, including fails. There is no requirement for all failed pieces of work to be in the moderation sample.

Where work is submitted via an alternative platform (other than Turnitin), the Course Director will liaise with the External Examiner to provide an appropriate sample in line with the above requirements.

External Examiners are not permitted to write remarks on students' work. Comments should be recorded as part of the annual report. All comments made relating to individual assessment may potentially be made available to students under the Data Protection Act 2018.

# 7. Annual Reports

## 7.1 Purpose and Function

All External Examiners are expected to submit an annual report after the final Board of Examiner meeting in each academic year of their term of office. Annual reports are used by the University's Academic Board to assess whether the modules and courses are meeting their stated aims and outcomes, and whether they are maintaining their threshold academic standards for the award, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualification and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements.

The purpose of a Module External Examiner annual report is to:

- Enable the relevant Course Director(s), internal examiners, the Faculty, and the Academic Board and its committees to judge whether academic quality and standards are being maintained.
- Recommend any necessary improvements to further develop the relevant course(s), immediately or at the next review as appropriate. It follows that this report is vital in the whole process of course review.

The purpose of a PAB External Examiner annual report is to provide assurance to the University that its procedures for progression, award and classification are being observed; that threshold standards are being maintained and the standards set for the award are appropriate for the level of the qualification.

## 7.2 Submission of Annual Reports and Feedback to External Examiners

All External Examiners are asked to submit their report to the Quality and Standards Office via the specified submission method by the required deadlines. Reports must be submitted using the University's templates only. Instructions on how to submit can be found on the External Examiners section of the [Quality and Standards Office webpage](#).

External Examiners are asked not to name individuals, as annual reports will be made available to students and staff of the institution. Where reports are found to identify individuals, the External Examiner concerned will be asked to amend the report or, if this is not possible, the names will be removed, prior to publication.

On receipt of the Module External Examiner annual report, the relevant course team will provide a written response to the report. The response will highlight any good practice identified, discuss issues raised and draw attention to any actions that will be taken. All reports are discussed at such bodies as Course Boards, Boards of Study, and Student Voice Forums. If any External Examiner report raises a significant issue, the course team will raise the matter with the Education Committee for review.

On receipt of a PAB External Examiner report, the Registry will provide an institutional written response. If any report suggests a serious problem, or one requiring urgent attention, the Director of Quality and Standards will take the matter forward directly to the relevant senior staff and the Education Committee for review and consideration.

Exceptionally, External Examiners are entitled to report any serious matter, particularly where it relates to academic quality and standards, directly to the Vice-Chancellor, in confidence. For more information contact [external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk)



# 8. Terms of Appointment

## 8.1 Conditions of Appointment

### 8.1.1 Term of Office

The standard length of an External Examiner's appointment is 4 years and 3 months. The final 3 months allow for the completion of final reports required in case of reassessment in the last academic year of the period of appointment as well as handover to the newly appointed External Examiner if required.

An exceptional extension of one year can be requested.

### 8.1.2 Right to Work Check

The University has a legal responsibility to check that external examiners have the right to work in the UK before work commences. No External Examiner will be appointed without having undergone a successful right to work check.

All External Examiners are entitled to a University computing account upon appointment. Staff Accounts are set up automatically once the External Examiner has completed their Right to Work check. Failure to complete the Right to Work Check will delay External Examiner set up on the University system. It is therefore essential the right to work check is completed before duties commence.

Once a Staff account has been set up, HR will advise the External Examiner of their username and how to log on to the VLE. The primary contact will be responsible for ensuring that an External Examiner has access to the relevant VLE sites to enable them to undertake their external examining duties.

Once an External Examiner has a University computing account, the primary contact will grant them copies to previous External Examiner reports and associated course responses upon request.

## 8.2 External Examiner's Rights and Responsibilities

To support External Examiners in undertaking the role, the rights of External Examiners are as follows:

- External Examiners should have adequate access to all student work from the modules of which they are examining.
- External Examiners are entitled to meet students for the purposes of induction or where there is a need to oversee practical assessments and should be given reasonable opportunity to do so. This also includes via online meetings if necessary.
- External Examiners are guaranteed full independence to make judgements about the examination process and award of qualifications and no Examiner shall be dismissed for exercising such judgement.
- No arrangement for marking made by Course Directors shall limit in any way the role of the External Examiner.

External Examiners are responsible for maintaining relevant employment, and if applicable PSRB accreditation, for this role. Any significant changes must be notified to the University in a timely manner.



## 8.3 Early Termination of Contract

The University reserves the right to terminate an External Examiner's contract before the end of the External Examiner's term of office in one or more of the following circumstances:

- failure to fulfil the terms of the contract by failing to submit annual report(s), attend meetings and/or return students' work following examination;
- failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair the integrity of the examination process and the independence of the External Examiner;
- withdrawal of right to work in the UK by Home Office;
- dismissal by the main employer of the External Examiner for improper conduct in relation to the person's employment;
- disbarment from being able to practise where there is a clinical or professional element to the Course of Study;
- changes to employment and/or PSRB accreditation which would affect their ability to maintain their role;
- breach of University policies, including its Equal Opportunities Policy or equivalent;
- the course or modules assigned have been withdrawn or suspended by the University for an indefinite period meaning that the External Examiner post is no longer valid;
- the University has made changes to its Board of Examiners operations which means that the post is no longer valid.

## 8.4 Resignation or Retirement

Where an External Examiner is unable to continue with the role until the end of their appointment, or likely to be unavailable for an extended period of time during their appointment, they should notify their Primary Contact at the University in writing, as soon as possible. Notification should be in sufficient time, ideally to finish the academic year up through the contract end month (normally November), to enable appropriate alternative arrangements to be made so as not to impact on the assessment process and the student experience.

# 9. Fees and Expenses

## 9.1 Fee Payment

All External Examiners are required to be paid on a PAYE basis, through the University payroll. Payment will be made directly into their bank account upon receipt of their annual report. Deductions will be taken at source to cover tax and National Insurance contributions. External Examiners should expect to receive payment on the last working day of each calendar month for reports submitted by the 5th of each month except for the month of December when reports should be submitted by the 1st of the month in order to receive payment prior to the Christmas break.

The fee amount is set at the beginning of the term of office and detailed in the Confirmation of Appointment Letter and/or any subsequent Confirmation of Extension or Amendment letters.

External Examiners for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology are an exception to this rule; fees are paid at the end of the academic year when the course team can assess the division of labour. Fees can therefore change year on year for those External Examiners.

Payslips can be accessed via the University's self-service system, StaffSpace.

## 9.2 Claiming Expenses

External Examiners are expected to make their own travel arrangements and claim associated expenses from the University. The University can assist with accommodation arrangements providing sufficient notice is given.

Expenses claims must be submitted on the University's External Examiner Expenses Claim form. These will be reimbursed by the owning school in accordance with the University's expenses allowances. Claim form and associated guidance can be found on the External Examiners section of the [Quality and Standards Office webpage](#).

## 10. Key Contacts for Enquiries

ENQUIRY	CONTACT OR DEPARTMENT
Board of Examiner dates Course Briefing	Primary Contact and/or Course Administrator
Review of Student Work and/or Summative Assessment Questions	Primary Contact/Course Director
Annual Reports submission	Quality and Standards Office <a href="mailto:external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk">external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk</a>
Blackboard or Turnitin and access to student work	Primary Contact or Course Administrator <i>If you have not been provided with your computer account login details, please contact the Quality and Standards Office</i> <a href="mailto:external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk">external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk</a>
Hotel arrangements Expense Claims	Course Administrator
Welcome letter University Briefing New Starter forms (i.e., Personal Details or HMRC forms) Payment of Fees Right to Work Check General queries (non-course specific)	Quality and Standards Office <a href="mailto:external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk">external-examiners@canterbury.ac.uk</a>

## 11. Key University and External Documents

<a href="#">Information for External Examiners</a>
<a href="#">Regulations for Taught Awards</a>
<a href="#">Assessment Procedures</a>

[Academic Framework](#)

[Annual Report Templates](#)

[Expenses Claim Form and Guidance](#)

[StaffSpace Guidance: quick guides](#)

[About Canterbury Christ Church University](#)

[Vision 2030](#)

[QAA Framework for Higher Education](#)

[QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

[Advance HE External Examining Handbook](#)