

Procedure

External Examiners' Handbook

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Related Forms

- Nomination form
- Change of Personal Circumstances form
- Module Mapping form
- Extension to Term Form
- Change to Remit Form
- In Absentia report form
- Annual Report form
- Expenses Claim form

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

Scope of this handbook

- 1 The policy, procedures and affiliated documents contained within this handbook apply to External Examiners appointed for taught courses leading to awards of the University.
- 2 This handbook aims to inform External Examiners, as well as University employees responsible for their appointment and supervision, of the University's procedures for External Examining.

General principles of the external examining system at Bucks

- 4 Responsibility for the external examining system at Bucks has been delegated by Senate as follows:
 - Responsibility for quality assurance of the process resides with the Education Committee
 - Responsibility for the appointment of external examiners, including extensions and changes to remit, resides with the External Examiner Approval Panel (See: Appendix 1: External Examiner Approval Panel)
- 5 External Examiners are a key element to the University's quality assurance and enhancement systems. They act as independent and impartial advisors and provide informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards.
- 6 In accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) approach to quality assurance Buckinghamshire New University processes have been designed to fully comply with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B7: External Examining.
- 7 The role of the External Examiner at Buckinghamshire New University, in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education on External Examining, is to:
 - Verify the standard of student achievement as being appropriate to the standard set by the University
 - Compare the standards of the courses offered by the University with similar courses in other UK Higher Education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience
 - Evaluate whether the standards are appropriate for its awards or award elements by reference to the academic infrastructure; published subject benchmarks, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), institutional programme specifications, Code for Higher Education and industrial / professional standards (where appropriate)
 - Examine the extent to which the University's assessment, marking scheme, examination and award making processes have been fairly and consistently implemented
 - Consider whether the University's procedures on *Mitigating Circumstances*, *Academic Misconduct* and borderline performance have been equitably and consistently applied
 - Identify good practice and provide feedback on whether the curriculum remains current.
 - Comment on and / or recommend enhancements to the quality of learning opportunities for students.

- 8 External examining is only one facet of the safeguarding of standards within higher education both at Bucks and across the sector. Other areas include:
- Subject Benchmark Statements and Programme Specifications
 - These are produced by the QAA and describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define the skills, competencies, knowledge and understanding of a graduate of the subject.
 - The Programme Specification gives a concise description of the programme including its learning and teaching and assessment strategies. The Programme Specification will indicate what Benchmark Statement has been used to map to during validation.
 - Validation and periodic review
 - Validation (or programme approval) at Bucks is designed to ensure that a new programme adheres to the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmark statements as well as any professional body requirements. Validation will normally involve at least one industry and one academic reviewer. Programmes are normally validated for up to six years after which they must be revalidated. External examiners are not directly involved in the validation process at Bucks, but may be asked for their views as part of curriculum development. Revalidations may also use external examiner reports as part of the evidence base submitted.
 - Periodic review at Bucks is undertaken at approximately six year intervals, and primarily looks at staff pedagogy.
 - External reviews are carried out by the QAA and where relevant by professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Reviews, particularly those conducted at subject level, will often consider external examiner reports as part of the evidence base.

The nomination and approval of an external examiner

- 9 It is a requirement that at least one External Examiner should be appointed to examine each programme or subject area which leads to an award of the University or of a Professional Body.
- 10 In some instances a team of External Examiners is appointed to review a programme or subject area. This may be because the programme is wide ranging and requires expertise in a variety of areas or may be due to the large numbers of students enrolled on the programme.
- 11 External Examiners will normally have an academic background in Higher Education but the University also welcomes professional practitioners as part of a team of Examiners to offer a balance of academic and professional expertise. Professional practitioners will be mentored in their first year by an experienced academic team member. Professional practitioners cannot normally be appointed as a sole Examiner.

Finding a new External Examiner

- 12 Schools are responsible for identifying the appropriate number of External Examiners for the programmes, taking into account the size and scope of the subject areas and the number and level of modules.
- 13 Overall, Schools are responsible for ensuring that:
 - There is a comprehensive and adequate number of External Examiners appointed to a course or group of courses which is academically diverse or incorporates a large number of modules.
 - Nominations for External Examiner appointments are identified and processed in a timely manner and in accordance with the University's criteria.
- 14 As a guide, modules totalling 240 credits would represent a reasonable workload. The process for nominating and appointing an External Examiner can take several months to conclude and Schools should bear this in mind when starting to find a suitable Examiner. (See Appendix 2: External Examiner Nomination Process).
- 15 Where a programme or subject area has appointed a team of External Examiners, the School is responsible for ensuring that:
 - Appointments are phased to allow for continuity
 - The responsibilities of any proposed new External Examiner are clear in relation to the team
 - Coverage of all modules is clearly specified on the module mapping spreadsheet
 - At least one member of the team attends each of the appropriate Boards of Examiners.
- 16 External Examiners should be identified and the nomination process commenced at least six months before the current Examiner retires. This will offer a suitable handover period and allow the new Examiner the opportunity to familiarise themselves with all aspects of duties involved before their appointment begins.
- 17 If an External Examiner resigns without giving an appropriate period of notice then the School will nominate another appointee as soon as possible.

- 18 In the case of newly validated programmes the requirements for External Examining (either an extension to an existing remit / term or a new appointment) should be identified in the Validation Proposal document. An External Reviewer used during the Validation process itself may be considered for appointment as an External Examiner once the programme has been validated provided that they meet all criteria.
- 19 Internal Sources:
- Many academics rely on their own professional networks to identify suitable candidates when a vacancy arises
 - Vacancies can also be advertised on the University's External Examiner web pages
 - External Reviewers to validation events can subsequently be appointed as External Examiners for that programme. However, current appointed External Examiners cannot be used as formal reviewers in new curriculum developments.
 - Current External Examiners may be able to suggest potential candidates. The Academic Registry maintains a database to assist colleagues in identifying potential clashes with existing appointed External Examiners which would contravene the national appointment criteria.
 - Potential External Examiners can make *ad hoc* enquiries via the University's External Examiner web pages. Academic Registry will be responsible for forwarding these to the appropriate school for consideration. The Head of School will respond directly to the potential nominee and will inform Academic Registry of the outcome.
- 20 External Sources:
- **HE Institutions:** Other HE institutions, delivering similar programmes, may be contacted to ascertain if their staff would wish to apply as an External Examiner.
 - **Professional Bodies:** Professional bodies often have lists of approved Examiner Examiners.
 - **Advance HE (formerly Higher Education Academy [HEA]):** The HEA lists potential Examiner Examiners and offers workshops and fora for those wishing to become External Examiners via their discipline pages (www.heacademy.ac.uk/disciplines). They also publish The Higher Education Academic: A handbook for external examining which also offers useful advice and guidance on all aspects of the external examining process.
 - **JISCmail email list:** Many institutions advertise for External Examiners on JISCmail (external-examiners@JISCmail.ac.uk)
 - **EdExcel Database:** Edexcel provides details of External Examiners by sector. Contact: he@edexcel.org.uk

Appointment Criteria

- 21 External Examiners nominated to the External Examiner Approval Panel should normally meet the following national criteria:
- Have knowledge and understanding of the UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
 - Be competent and experienced in the discipline covered by the course

- Have academic and / or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined and / or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
 - Have competence and experience in designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and of operating assessment procedures
 - Have sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of both academic and where appropriate, professional peers
 - Be familiar with the standard to be expected of students in the course to be assessed
 - Be fluent in English. Where a programme is delivered and assessed in a language other than English, fluency in the relevant language is required unless other arrangements have been put in place to ensure the External Examiner is provided with sufficient information to make their judgement
 - Meet the criteria set out by professional and statutory or regulatory bodies
 - Be aware of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
 - Have experience in the enhancement of the student experience.
- 22 In addition, the following criteria are *desirable*. Wherever possible, external examiner nominations should:
- Be drawn from the top one-third of institutions by subject according to the latest NSS ranking
 - Hold Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), with preference given to nominees who hold Senior or Principal Fellowship
- 23 Where a team of External Examiners is being appointed, the School will ensure there is an appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners.
- 24 Retirees can be considered for appointment providing there is sufficient evidence of continuing engagement in the appropriate academic area or professional practice for up to two years post retirement.
- 25 An External Examiner **cannot**:
- Be a member of the Governing Body, a member of staff or student of the University, nor of the staff of an institution with which Buckinghamshire New University has a collaborative partnership, either formally or informally
 - Be a former member of staff or student of the University or of an institution with which Buckinghamshire New University has / had a collaborative partnership within a period of five years prior to their appointment as an External Examiner
 - Have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
 - Assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
 - Be in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
 - Be 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 of study

- Normally be over-extended in their duties by holding more than the equivalent of two major appointments including that with the University
 - Concurrently be members of a panel established to internally review the course or area they examine
 - Be replaced by an individual from the same subject area or School in the same institution
 - Be appointed under reciprocal arrangements between courses Schools in the University and another institution i.e. External Examiners cannot be appointed from the subject area in an institution where a member of Buckinghamshire New University staff is currently an External Examiner
 - Normally be appointed to a course or group of courses which already has an External Examiner appointed from the same institution and / or School unless an exceptional case can be made, e.g. maternity leave, sudden illness or death of an External Examiner
 - Normally be re-appointed as an External Examiner within five years of a previous appointment with the University. The maximum number of re-appointments permitted is one.
- 26 The External Examiner Approval Panel will consider exceptions to any of the above criteria providing Schools provide detailed rationale for managing the appointment to ensure the programme of study is not compromised.

Mentoring of external examiners with no previous experience

- 27 Where a nominee has no previous experience as an external examiner for any degree-awarding body, arrangements should be proposed by the nominating School to support the examiner during the first year of their appointment.
- 28 This will be through the appointment of a more experienced examiner to act as a mentor as follows:
- a Ideally, a suitable mentor will be another experienced external examiner appointed to the same team of examiners or from the same subject area.
 - b Where this is not possible – e.g. where the size and nature of provision make it impractical to appoint more than one external examiner – another experienced external examiner from a different subject area in the School may be appointed.
 - c If no other mentoring arrangements can be agreed, the External Examiner Approval Panel may consider individual arrangements on a case by case basis.
- 29 The role of the mentor will be to act as an independent source of advice and guidance to inexperienced external examiners. This might include, for example:
- Advice and guidance on relevant University policies and regulations, including clarification and reassurance on the role
 - Matters relating to communication and engagement with the programme team
 - Involvement in review and moderation activity, including sampling arrangements, consistency of marking, dealing with borderlines and fails
 - Moderation across locations and across collaborative provision (where necessary)
 - Module and Assessment Board processes and the role of the external examiner within these processes

- Preparation of the annual report and discussion of areas on which the report might focus (though the report itself should be authored by the examiner directly)
 - Developments and current issues in the subject area and/or higher education generally pertaining to external examining
- 30 Mentors should have normally completed at least one year of their appointment at Bucks and will be expected to have submitted a comprehensive report to a timely manner.
- 31 Details of all mentoring arrangements, including the name of the proposed mentor, **must** be specified in the nomination form by the nominating School and approved by the External Examiner Approval Panel.
- 32 Approved mentors with an existing contract to the University (i.e. options [a] and [b] above, paragraph 28 above) will be remunerated to the sum of £100.
- 33 Once a mentoring arrangement has been approved, the nominating School will be responsible for providing the mentor with the mentee's contact details and any suggested topics for discussion (e.g. any recent programme changes requiring particular monitoring).
- 34 There will be no requirement for a mentor to meet face to face with their mentee other than during formal visits to the University, for example through attendance at assessment boards. Contact is expected to be via email, telephone, Skype etc.

Eligibility to work in the UK ('Right to Work')

- 35 In order to comply with its legal duties under the Asylum and Immigration Act (1996) the University must ensure it has checked that any person undertaking paid work with the University, even if the work is not undertaken on a contract of employment, is eligible to work in the UK.
- 36 On appointment External Examiners are required to provide one of the documents specified in the Home Office "Right to Work Checklist" in order that their right to work in the UK can be confirmed. Academic Registry will take a copy of the documentation and sign it as having seen the original; they will then complete the checklist for the file record. Follow-up checks will be taken in accordance with Home Office requirements.
- 37 Further information is available on the Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) web site: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>.

Nomination process

See Appendix 2: External Examiner Nomination Process.

Pre-Nomination

- 38 Once a potential External Examiner for appointment to a course or group of courses has been identified, the academic responsible for that course or subject area will ensure:
- The potential External Examiner is approached informally by the School to ascertain their willingness to act in this role
 - The potential External Examiner is provided with sufficient information to enable them to identify whether they are able to carry out their duties effectively. This

information should include details of the course or group of courses for which the External Examiner will have responsibility, contractual arrangements including payment of fees and expenses and their general responsibilities / duties.

Completion of the nomination form

- 39 If the proposed nominee is willing to accept an appointment, the nomination form is completed in full and passed to Student and Course Administration.
- 40 Student and Course Administration will check that the nomination form meets the University's criteria and that all the information on which it can be assessed effectively and rigorously is provided.
- 41 A completed mapping spreadsheet, showing module responsibility of the appointment, is attached to the nomination form and is signed by the Head of School.
- 42 Once approved, Student and Course Administration will forward the External Examiner nomination form to Academic Registry for further processing and consideration.

Approval of Appointment

- 43 Following receipt of the External Examiner nomination form Academic Registry is responsible for ensuring that:
 - The nomination has been properly completed by the School
 - The criteria for appointment have been met as specified by the University
 - The nomination is presented for approval and appointment
- 44 All External Examiner nominations must be approved by the External Examiner Approval Panel. Senate will receive a summary report of all approval decisions for endorsement.
- 45 Where an External Examiner nomination is not approved, the appropriate School is responsible for informing the nominee.
- 46 Following approval of an External Examiner nomination by the External Examiner Approval Panel it is the responsibility of Academic Registry formally to notify the External Examiner and the School. The letter of appointment will clearly state the start and finish dates of the appointment, the course or group of courses for which the External Examiner has responsibility and the expectations associated with the appointment.
- 47 The letter of appointment will specify that remuneration is conditional upon the External Examiner properly carrying out their duties. This includes the timely submission of an Annual Report, and required visits to the University or to students on placement as detailed in the letter.
- 48 External Examiners are required to confirm their acceptance of their appointment in writing and to provide the relevant documentation relating to their eligibility to work in the UK.
- 49 It is the responsibility of the External Examiner to give notice of changes of circumstances and key contact details.

Appointment to Overseas or Academic Partner Organisation programmes

- 50 Where a programme is delivered at the University and also through a franchise / collaborative agreement or by flexible and distributed learning (within the UK or overseas), the same External Examiner will be appointed to examine the programme in all institutions and in all modes of delivery, taking into account criteria regarding workload.
- 51 Where a programme which is awarded by Buckinghamshire New University is delivered or assessed in a language other than English, the External Examiner will be required to have the appropriate language skills or a translation must be provided for all assessments examined and all associated documentation.
- 52 The University is responsible for the quality of all its programmes and awards, and all External Examiners for these programmes and awards will be appointed directly by, and report directly to, the University.

Appointment of External Examiners for courses awarded by other awarding bodies

- 53 The University is responsible for the appointment and remuneration of the External Examiners with the responsibility for programmes awarded by external awarding bodies. These External Examiners are subject to the regulations of the University.

Appointment period and changes to term or remit

Period of, Suspension and Resignation of Appointment

- 54 An External Examiner will normally be appointed for a period of four years. The period of appointment will normally commence on 1 October and end on the 30 September. Periods of appointment may commence on different dates depending on the requirements of the particular course of study. The start and end dates of the appointment must be identified on the nomination form by the School.
- 55 Subject to certain criteria (e.g. ill health, maternity leave, a sabbatical or a change in personal circumstances) an External Examiner can suspend their appointment. If they wish to resume their appointment, the original end date will remain the same.
- 56 Where an External Examiner resigns their office prior to the expiry of the appointed term the School is responsible for obtaining written confirmation of the resignation. This should state the grounds for resigning. The School will advise Academic Registry and nominate a replacement External Examiner. Normally the University would require at least 3 months' notice. In consultation with Academic Registry the School is responsible for the temporary re-allocation of the modules until another External Examiner is found.

Termination of Appointment

- 57 An External Examiner who fails to carry out their duties may be recommended to the External Examiner Approval Panel for termination of their appointment. In this case the School will present a statement to the Panel detailing the grounds for proposed termination. Once this has been agreed, Academic Registry will write to the external examiner formally terminating the appointment.
- 58 The appointment of an External Examiner may be terminated in the following instances:
- Changes in award structure which render the appointment no longer applicable
 - Non-fulfilment of External Examiner duties including non-submission or submission of an incomplete / inadequate annual report and / or failure to attend a Board of Examiners (where attendance is required) without reason or explanation from the External Examiner
 - Unprofessional conduct, e.g. fraudulent expenses claims
 - Irretrievable breakdown of relationship with course teaching teams that would disadvantage students on the course / award
 - Conflict of interest that arises during the appointment
- 59 If an appointment is to be terminated because of changes in the award, the Head of School or Head of Academic School is responsible for informing the External Examiner and Academic Registry in writing giving the reasons. Subsequently the External Examiner may be re-appointed at a future date in accordance with University procedures.

Re-appointment

- 60 External Examiners may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances after five years has elapsed since their last appointment at Buckinghamshire New University providing the appointment criteria have been met.

Extensions to Term and / or Changes to Remit

School Responsibilities

- 61 During the period of appointment it may become necessary to make changes to an External Examiner's appointment to meet the needs of the programme or School. Any proposed changes should first be discussed and agreed with the External Examiner.
- 62 There are two forms of change:
- d **Extension to term:** The appointment period may be exceptionally extended for up to one year (giving a maximum of 5 years).
 - e **Change to remit:** An External Examiner's remit may be amended to cover additional modules or courses to the end of their existing or extended appointment term. This would normally be required to comply with criteria regarding workload.
- 63 In both cases, the School must provide a detailed rationale as to why a change is necessary and (where relevant) why an exception should be permitted.
- 64 Once the External Examiner has agreed to having their appointment remit or term (or in some cases both) amended, the request form is completed and forwarded by Student and Course Administration to Academic Registry.

Academic Registry Responsibilities

- 65 Academic Registry will present documentation for approval by the External Examiner Approval Panel. If approved, Academic Registry will formally notify the External Examiner and the School of the approval, detailing the changes to the appointment.
- 66 Where an External Examiner's extension to term or change to remit is not approved, the School is responsible for informing the External Examiner.

Induction and briefing

Information provided on appointment

- 67 In addition to the formal letter of appointment all External Examiners will receive the following detailed information from the School:
- Mapping spreadsheet outlining areas of responsibility
 - School contact details, academics and academic administration
 - Boards of Examiners where attendance is required
 - Expectations if required to meet with students
 - Outline of expected types and format of assessments to be examined, including anticipated sample size. This will be based on information available at the time of appointment and will be updated by the School annually when the delivery model for the year is confirmed.
- 68 All the University's **formal documents** can be found on the website at <https://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>. The following documents are most relevant to the role of External Examiner:
- Academic Appeals Process
 - Academic Assessment Regulations
 - Academic Misconduct
 - Academic Qualifications Framework
 - Assessment of Students
 - Boards of Examiners Handbook
 - E Submission, Marking and Feedback Policy / Procedures
 - Fitness to Practice Procedure
 - Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2013-2017
 - Mitigating Circumstances
 - Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Induction

- 69 All newly appointed External Examiners will be invited to attend an induction day which will be held annually. Professional practitioner External Examiners who do not have a background in academia, and appointees who have not previously held an External Examiner post, will be especially encouraged to attend the induction day. Existing External Examiners will also be invited for updating on any changes to procedures and policies and the opportunity to share good practice.
- 70 For External Examiners who are unable to attend, a presentation outlining the University's procedures and expectations is available via the website. Academic Registry will be responsible for monitoring the Induction process and will report attendance to Senate as part of the Institutional report.

Duties and responsibilities of an External Examiner

- 71 The primary duty and responsibility of an External Examiner will be to act as an independent and impartial adviser to the University. The External Examiner is expected to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:
- The threshold academic standards set for the University's awards in accordance with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmarks are being maintained
 - The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations
 - The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience.

Interim Visit

- 72 The University strongly encourages External Examiners to make at least one interim visit per year as agreed with the School as this helps improve engagement. This visit allows External Examiners to:
- Network with other External Examiners
 - Meet with School Staff and Course Teams
 - Meet students if a requirement of the appointment
 - Review student work (if appropriate)
 - Be updated on new regulations / processes
- 73 Where an interim visit is not possible and / or practical, Schools are encouraged to consider other ways whereby engagement with external examiners may be promoted.

Assessment

- 74 In relation to assessment, external examiners will be expected to:
- Comment on whether assessments set have been through the relevant internal approval process and are of an appropriate standard for the task, level and nature of the module. To confirm that they are accurate and clear with detailed instructions and that they enable achievement of the specified learning outcomes.
 - Moderate the achievement of students against the standards set by the University and / or Professional Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) for all modules that count towards an award of the University.
 - Give assurance that the internal marking / moderation is fair, consistent and with appropriate feedback.
- 75 Where an assessment has been electronically marked and internally moderated External Examiners will be required to moderate electronically. (Reference: E-Submission, Marking and Feedback Policy).
- 76 The following exceptions may apply:
- Level 4 is not normally included unless it contributes to the overall award or is required by PSRB

- In Design-based and some other undergraduate courses only Level 6 modules count towards the final degree classification.

Sampling

- 77 Normally, a sample of assessed work is provided to the External Examiner; this will be of a sufficient size to enable them to form a view as to whether the internal marking has properly assessed the students' performance against the appropriate standards and fair, consistent and appropriate feedback has been given.
- 78 The range and number of samples should be agreed with the External Examiner and will usually be the same sample as that selected for the internal moderation. The criteria for selection are:
- The number selected should be approximately the square root of the number of assessments submitted and not fewer than eight
 - For small cohorts (fewer than 10) all work is considered
 - The sample covers the full range of marks awarded, but there is no requirement to include all First Class marks or all failed marks in the sample
 - However, all failed Level 6 and Level 7 Projects and Dissertations will be seen by the External Examiner
 - The Marks Collection sheet for the whole cohort is provided to the External Examiner

Sampling of Studio Based or Performance courses

- 79 As with text based assessment the purpose of the sample is for the External Examiner to see enough student work to be able to make a judgement as to whether the internal marking and moderation process has properly assessed the students' performance against the appropriate standards.
- 80 In many cases the External Examiner will attend or see a recording of the final Degree Show or final performances and will view all work displayed / presented to get a general feeling for the cohort. This is acceptable, but a full discussion about individual students will be limited to those selected for the sample.
- 81 The lead academic will choose the sample; this will be based on the placement of the work within the range of marks rather than on the nature of the work. The External will generally view the sample work without the internal assessors present (unless this is a live presentation or performance), but will have the opportunity for dialogue with internal assessors about how they arrived at the mark. All internal assessors should normally be available for consultation with the External Examiner if required.
- 82 In agreement with the course team, the External Examiner may meet with those students whose work is included in the sample. This meeting will not be a viva voce, as this can only be conducted by internal assessors to help them to arrive at a mark. An External Examiner meeting with a student is expected to use the discussion to help them reach an understanding of the work in question.

Students in Practice

- 83 External Examiners must ensure that the assessment of practice is operated equitably in clinical placements and that it is of an appropriate standard. External Examiners are

normally required to meet with students to determine their views of the assessment of practice process and meet the Mentors (assessors of practice) to discuss their role.

- 84 Where applicable, External Examiners may wish to attend a random sample of tripartite meetings that take place between the student, mentor and lecturers who are involved in the grading of practice.

Marking

- 85 An External Examiner may not change individual marks. (Reference: Assessment Process for Students).
- 86 Where they identify an inconsistency in the internal marking and moderation process External Examiners are required to:
- request additional samples to moderate and / or
 - request that the internal moderator / assessment team revisits part or all of the sample and / or
 - recommend an overall scaling of the marks for a module based on a clear rationale

Boards of Examiners

- 87 As part of the monitoring of its quality standards the University requires External Examiners to attend Module Boards and / or Assessment Boards to agree that the module marks are being confirmed and awards made in accordance with the University's regulations.
- 88 External Examiners are an equal member of the relevant board whether at module, programme, award or other level.
- 89 External examiners are expected to:
- Confirm that decisions made at the relevant boards are in accordance with the University's regulations
 - Confirm that all students are treated in an equitable manner as per the University's regulations
 - Identify good practice and suggest means of dissemination

Attendance at Boards

- 90 The University recognises that External Examiners, due to their own work commitments, may not be able to attend both Module Board and Assessment Board of Examiners (where applicable). However, at a minimum the University requires the External Examiner to attend or participate in at least one of these events to enable them to comment on how the University is conducting its assessment process. Participation could be facilitated by the use of WebEx or other similar IT solution if attendance is otherwise impossible.
- 91 If an External Examiner cannot attend either the Module Board or Assessment Board of Examiners they may wish to attend the Progression Board for those programmes where a percentage of Level 5 marks contribute towards to the final award.
- 92 Where a team of External Examiners is in place at least one member of the team should attend each of the appropriate Boards of Examiners

- 93 It is the responsibility of the External Examiner to inform the School if they are unable to attend a required Board and to complete an *In Absentia Report* detailing their view of the moderation process for presentation at the Board.
- 94 If an External Examiner fails to attend an applicable Module Board or Assessment Board of Examiners without prior notification, it is the responsibility of the School to inform Academic Registry. Academic Registry will monitor the attendance of the External Examiners and will report any unaccounted absence to Senate.

Additional duties

- 95 The following may also apply:
- Where required, meet with students undertaking modules / courses to which the External Examiner is appointed. The School will inform the External Examiner whether, as part of the moderation process for the particular modules / courses in question, they are required to meet the students. The External Examiner may request to meet with students, even if this is not an absolute requirement for the particular role, and should discuss this with the course team. The School will give clear guidelines to students regarding the purpose of the meeting.
 - To ensure transparency in the University's examining processes students are made aware of the identity and current position of the External Examiner moderating their award. However, External Examiners are advised that it is inappropriate for students to make direct contact with them regarding their individual performance; should this occur they should refer the student to the School.
 - To be available following retirement of office to moderate any referral results from the last Board of Examiners, as appropriate.
- 96 For further details in relation to the responsibilities of an External Examiner, particularly in respect of the operation of Boards of Examiners, please refer to the University formal documentation on Boards of Examiners.

The Annual Report

- 97 External Examiners are required to electronically submit to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, via Academic Registry, an Annual Report by the deadline of 1 August or as agreed with the School and Academic Registry.
- 98 Academic Registry will be responsible for ensuring the payment of the annual fee is processed upon receipt of the External Examiner's Annual Report and confirmation of participation at the required Board(s).
- 99 Where an External Examiner fails to submit an Annual Report no fee will be paid and, following reasonable requests to submit the report, consideration will be given to the termination of the appointment.
- 100 By providing an annual report External Examiners give clear and informed feedback to the University on the various areas as defined in the Role of the External Examiner (see paragraph 7 above). In addition the report will comment upon:
- Whether the External Examiner received sufficient evidence to enable them to fulfil their role
 - Whether any issues raised in previous reports had been or were being addressed
 - Address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body
 - To give an overview of their term of office when concluded
- 101 Names of all students and staff **must** be omitted from the reports.
- 102 If an External Examiner is looking at both postgraduate and undergraduate provision they are required to submit two separate reports within the agreed timescale.

Submission of the report

- 103 For most full-time undergraduate courses, External Examiners are required to submit to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, via Academic Registry, an electronic report to via the link provided by 1 August annually in order to inform the University's annual review processes. For courses that do not run to the standard full-time undergraduate academic year a submission date will be agreed with the School and Academic Registry on appointment.
- 104 The report needs to be as comprehensive as possible to allow the University to benefit from the External Examiner's comments and manage its standards and quality effectively. Should the report be insufficient in detail Academic Registry will ask the External Examiner to enhance their report.
- 105 In exceptional circumstances, if an External Examiner wishes to raise a particularly significant or sensitive issue, they may report such issues individually and confidentially directly to the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The Vice-Chancellor will initiate any actions deemed appropriate and respond to the External Examiner accordingly. Such reports will not be shared with students.
- 106 If an External Examiner has serious concerns about issues relating to standards within the University and has exhausted all internal procedures, including a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, it is the right of the External Examiner to refer their concerns either to the relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body or to the QAA to be investigated through the Cause for Concern procedures. Such actions

cannot be considered as grounds for terminating the External Examiner's appointment by the University.

Assistant Director (Complaints and Concerns)
 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
 Southgate House
 Southgate Street
 Gloucester
 GL1 1UB

Email: concerns@qaa.ac.uk

Consideration of External Examiners' reports

- 107 Academic Registry is responsible for reviewing all External Examiners' Annual Reports and coding them appropriately using the traffic light system.
- A **Green** code signifies: a very good report, with no areas for concern but which may have some areas for improvement.
 - An **Amber** code signifies: a good report, but with areas of minor concern and / or some areas for improvement.
 - A **Red** code signifies: immediate action is required by the School or University.
- 108 Within the reports individual response areas will be coded green, amber or red and the overall coding will depend on the number of responses that fall into each of the three categories.
- 109 Once the reports have been coded they are made available to the Schools to access and respond to the External Examiners' comments.
- 110 Schools will be required to respond specifically to areas of concern indicated within reports that otherwise have a satisfactory overall coding.

School response to the reports

- 111 Course Teams are required to respond formally to the External Examiner by providing a detailed response within the report template to any issues raised, as soon as is practical, or at least by the start of the next term. The response will be confirmed and endorsed by the Head of Academic School before the report is sent back to the External Examiner.
- 112 Schools must ensure that the reports and detailed responses are fully considered by the Course Team (including partner institutions where appropriate) in line with the annual review requirements of the University.
- 113 Where a Course Team does not wish to act on comments made by an External Examiner, clear reasons for this should be included in the response.
- 114 For courses governed by professional bodies, the Schools are responsible for determining the need to inform professional bodies of responses and / or actions taken in respect of an External Examiner's annual report.
- 115 A copy of the relevant Programme Report and Action Plans will be sent to the External Examiner by Student and Course Administration.

- 116 Academic Registry will publish all External Examiner reports on the web. Schools are responsible for sharing External Examiner reports and the School response with students via the appropriate Programme Committees and through appropriate Blackboard sites. The Students' Union will also share the reports with students via the Student Engagement Group. This does not apply to confidential reports addressed to the Vice-Chancellor.

University Summary Report

- 117 Academic Registry will produce an annual summary report based on the External Examiners' reports and the University responses to them. The summary report will highlight areas of good practice and enhancement and flag any issues for debate through the Education Committee. Final approval will be through Senate.

Fees and Expenses

- 118 The University as a recipient of public funding is required by its auditors to comply with certain procedures and to apply appropriate standards of economy. External Examiners are respectfully requested to bear this in mind when making a claim.
- 119 Payment of fees and expenses to External Examiners will be made by BACS transfer into the External Examiners' nominated account. Payments are made on the last working day of each calendar month providing all claims have been approved within the School and Academic Registry and passed to Payroll by the 10th of the month.
- 120 Schools wishing to make an additional payment to an External Examiner must ensure the payment is made via payroll. Any breach of this arrangement would incur serious financial penalties for the University by HM Revenue & Customs.

Fees

- 121 The External Examiner's annual fee will normally be in accordance with the University's External Examiner Fee scale. Exceptionally, this may be varied at the discretion of the External Examiner Approval Panel.
- 122 The annual fee payable to each External Examiner will be detailed in the appointment letter.
- 123 The annual fee will only be paid on receipt of the annual report and confirmation of visits to the institution as required by the School in the appointment letter.

Expenses

- 124 Claims for expenses incurred by an External Examiner during their appointment with Buckinghamshire New University, must be submitted within 3 months of the date of expense and the original receipts and tickets must be stapled to the claims form. Credit card statements, booking, registration or application forms, cheque stubs etc. do not qualify as receipts.
- 125 **Any claims made outside the 3 month period or claims without receipt will not be reimbursed.** Tips or gratuities are not reclaimable. All expenses must be submitted on a claims form and sent to Student and Course Administration for authorisation.
- 126 What can be claimed for:
- Mileage @ 45p per mile for claims from 1 January 2012 (This rate is in line with current rates paid to University employees. Buckinghamshire New University reviews its rates and decides whether there should be a change for mileage reimbursement, Mileage allowances paid can increase or decrease at any time).
 - Car parking charges
 - Lunch including other refreshment breaks will be paid to a maximum of £10 per day.
 - Evening meal up to £30. Alcoholic beverages will not be reimbursed.
 - Postage
- 127 Rail and air tickets as well as accommodation (up to £100 per night) must be booked through Student and Course Administration. The university may not be able to reimburse travel and accommodation booked independently. Please note it is

expected that the return journey will be from and to the same destination unless otherwise authorised by School prior to the visit.

- 128 If an External Examiner has been appointed from overseas and is required to attend the University, travel expenses will be paid from the point of entry into the UK.
- 129 If an External Examiner residing in the United Kingdom is required to visit an Institution outside of the United Kingdom all reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Miscellany

Staff Development

- 130 Buckinghamshire New University recognises the importance of the External Examiner role and is committed to supporting its own staff in developing this role.
- 131 Where a Buckinghamshire New University academic is appointed as an External Examiner to another institution, and has no previous experience of the role, the School will ensure that the academic is supported and mentored throughout the first year of their appointment by a suitable member of staff who has experience of external examining.

Data Protection

- 132 Buckinghamshire New University's *Data Protection Policy* adopts the seven principles which govern the way in which it processes data, and is accessible via the University's [data protection webpages](#). As employees of the University, External Examiners will be expected to work within its principles.
- 133 All personal data supplied by External Examiners for the purpose of their appointment, and subsequent employment as an External Examiner by Buckinghamshire New University will be held securely and confidentially and for no longer than necessary in accordance with the policy. The policy also sets out how external examiners can access any personal data held by the University that relates to them.
- 134 Information about External Examiner nominees who are unsuccessful will not be held for longer than necessary.

Copyright Issues

- 135 The copyright of any annual report submitted by an External Examiner remains with Buckinghamshire New University. The University can publish any report and reserves the right to use quotations from the annual reports within other University documents.
- 136 External Examiners will have the right to be identified as the author of their annual reports, but normally Buckinghamshire New University would only indicate which institution / company the author is associated with.
- 137 For further information please see formal document *Intellectual Property - Policy and Procedures*.

Appendix 1: External Examiner Approval Panel

Reports to	Senate
Standing Committees	None
Non-Standing Committees	None
Minutes	Not published
Executive summary required	Yes
Frequency of meetings	Every Six Weeks (may be held virtually)
Updated/reviewed	May 2018

Membership:

Chair	Pro-Vice Chancellor or Deputy Vice Chancellor (or a nominee from the ex-officio membership of Senate)
Secretary	Registry Officer (Governance and Quality)
Minute Secretary	Registry Officer (Governance and Quality)
Ex-officio Members	Principal / Senior Registry Officer: Governance and Quality (being the lead officer responsible for administration of the external examiner process)
Other Members	Two teaching representatives drawn from the School representative membership of Senate
Co-opted Members	None

Terms of Reference:

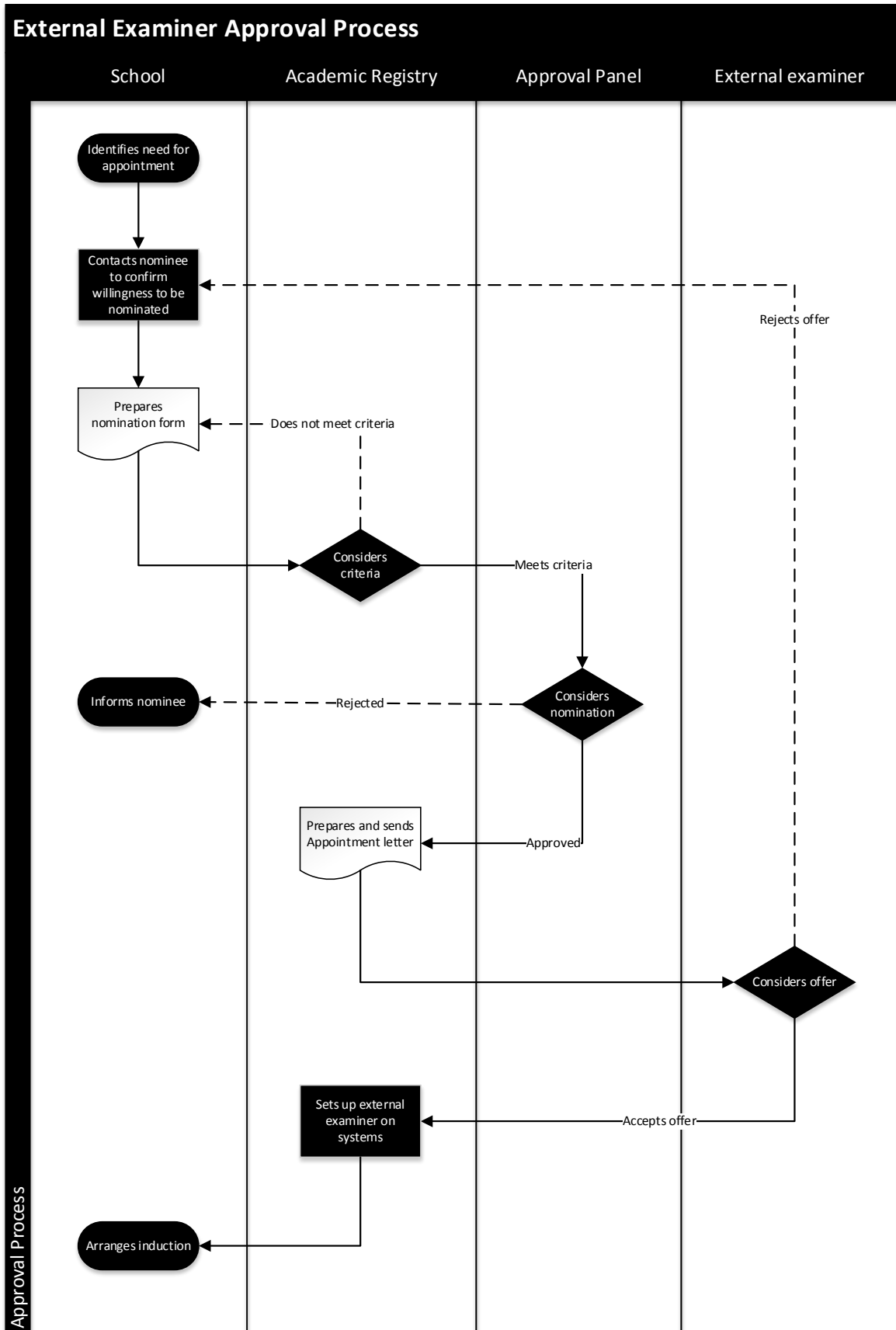
- a. To consider and approve, on behalf of Senate, nominations, extensions and changes to remit for external examiner appointments to the University's taught portfolio:
 - ensuring that appointments adhere to University and UK sector criteria;
 - reviewing potential conflicts of interest; and,
 - agreeing mentoring and / or other support arrangements as appropriate.
- b. To approve, on behalf of Senate, external examiner appointments for termination
- c. To advise Senate, through the Education Committee, of any quality assurance matters concerning external examiners that may arise

- d. To retain oversight of the external examiner appointment process, including the monitoring of vacancies across the University, the effectiveness of the appointment process and maintenance of documentation to support it
- e. To present a summary report on all approval decisions to Senate for formal endorsement
- f. To take responsibility for other tasks relating to external examiners as delegated by the Education Committee

Notes:

- 1 Meetings may be held virtually to facilitate the work of the panel

Appendix 2: External Examiner Nomination Process



Appendix 3: Abbreviations and Glossary

Abbreviation	Explanation
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
FOI	Freedom of Information
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	Higher Education Institution
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency