



Regent's University London

Guide for External Examiners

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1. Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to undertake the role of being an external examiner here at Regent's University London. External examiners are critical in assuring the quality and standards of Regent's University London validated programmes. This guide outlines the rights and responsibilities of external examiners, as well as the reporting requirements for Regent's University London.

This guide is designed to be read in conjunction with the appropriate programme handbooks and the relevant sections of the Academic Regulations.

This guide is intended for use by external examiners who are examining Regent's University London validated programmes. For programmes validated by other institutions external examiners should refer to the appropriate handbook (please contact the Registry for further details at QualityOffice@regents.ac.uk).

This guide is mapped against Chapter B7 (External Examining) of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx>).

2. The responsibilities of Regent's University London

The University is responsible for:

- appointing external examiners;
- providing external examiners with a briefing and induction session;
- managing the assessment boards;
- ensuring that external examiners' reports are received, formally considered, and, where necessary, appropriate action is taken;
- ensuring that a response to external examiners' reports are made in a timely manner, detailing all actions that have been taken in response to any concerns or issues raised.

3. Appointment of an external examiner

External examiners are appointed using strict criteria which are detailed in the Academic Regulations.

Nominations are submitted to the Head of School / Department / Institute or nominee (i.e. programme director) and then to the Associate Dean / Director for approval at Faculty / Institute-level. Once approval has been given at Faculty / Institute-level the form will be passed to the Registry for scrutiny and subsequent approval at University level by the Registrar or nominee from the Quality Office, on behalf of the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (SQAEC).

Once your nomination has been approved on behalf of the University, you will be sent an external examiner appointment pack. The pack contains a formal contract letter, bank details form, an expenses claim form and guidance, the relevant programme handbook(s) and the Regent's University London Academic Regulations.

The contract letter will include:

- Start and end date of your appointment;
- The programme / modules you have been appointed to;
- Your fee and payment details.

When you receive the contract we would be grateful if you could check that all the information is correct, and if so, please sign and return the contract letter to the Human Resources Department at Regent's University London, as requested in the appointment letter. This is important so as to confirm your appointment and enable fees to be paid to you in due course. If you have any queries regarding your contract letter, please contact the Registry.

Please keep us informed of any changes to your details.

4. Duration of appointment

The duration of your appointment will normally be for four years, however this may be extended for up to twelve months in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear

rationale. A new external examiner will ideally start just before you are due to complete your term. A handover meeting will be encouraged where possible.

In line with the QAA requirements included in Chapter B7 of the Quality Code, you should only have a maximum of two taught external examiner appointments at any one time.

5. Briefing, induction and support

At the beginning of your appointment you will be briefed by the relevant Heads of Programmes to ensure that you:

- understand and are fully equipped for your role;
- are familiar with the programme(s) and modules for which you have been appointed;
- understand external examining, assessment and award processes and associated administrative procedures at Regent's University London;
- have a knowledge and understanding of our assessment regulations;
- are introduced to relevant staff within the programme(s) and University to enable effective working relationships.

6. First time external examiners

All external examiners appointed by Regent's who do not have previous experience of external examining will be appointed a mentor to provide advice or assistance so you can feel supported in your role. The mentor will be an experienced external examiner but may be from a different subject area.

7. Role, responsibility and rights of external examiners

Your role as an external examiner is to ensure that:

- the examination and assessment procedures are operated fairly;
- the assessment methods adopted are appropriate;
- the assessment is an effective test of the students' skills and knowledge;
- academic standards are comparable with other institutions.

You will be asked to confirm the judgements made by the various boards and assessment teams in your annual report and in the verbal/written report that you provide to the subject board. It is important to note that due to the nature of your role you are unable to change marks for individual students.

You are expected to attend subject board meetings and should not assume that a board can be held without your presence. Where unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance, please inform the University so that a decision can be made regarding the possibility for

other approved external examiners to act on your behalf or, failing this, the postponement of the board.

In exceptional circumstances if you are unable to attend a subject board meeting we ask that you submit a written report, confirming that you have been fully engaged in the assessment and external examining process, in advance of the subject board. This allows your comments to be minuted.

In order to effectively carry out your duties, you must:

- be able to judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment;
- be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers undertaking comparable programmes of higher education in the UK and in light of subject benchmarks and qualification descriptors where provided;
- approve the form and content of proposed examination papers, coursework, and any other assessments that count towards the award in such a way as to enable you to judge whether students have fulfilled the learning aims and outcomes of the programme and reached the required standard. This should include alternative assessments and adjustments made for students with declared disabilities or impairments, in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the programme syllabus and regulations;
- be consulted and agree to any proposed changes to modules and/or programme(s) for which you are responsible;
- have access to all assessed work, and see samples of students' work from each category of award and failures, in order to ensure that the assessment criteria have been interpreted correctly and that there is a parity of assessment across the cohort;
- have the right to moderate the marks awarded by the internal examiners where this does not bias the overall assessment or cause unfairness to individual candidates;
- have the right to meet students and, where appropriate, conduct a *viva voce* examination of any candidate;
- ensure that assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved programme regulations and the Academic Regulations;
- attend the meetings of the subject board at which module assessment results are confirmed to ensure that the decisions have been reached in accordance with the University's requirements and normal practice in UK higher education;
- participate as required in the review of any appealed decisions about individual students' awards;
- report back to the institution on student performance and academic standards as well as on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them;
- report to the University on any matter of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of the University's award.

8. External examiners' reports

External examiners' reports are a key indicator for Regent's University London to gain confidence in the quality and standards of Regent's awards, and they play a vital role in the quality assurance processes of the University. Your report should cover the conduct of the assessments over the academic year and the standards being set and achieved by the University.

The following is intended as a guide for areas that may be useful to consider in the compilation of your report. It is not intended as a prescriptive list.

- whether the academic standards set for its awards, or part thereof, are appropriate;
- the extent to which its assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance;
- the standards of student performance in the programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine;
- where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in other higher education providers;
- issues which should be brought to the attention of Programme Directors in the faculty / institute or wider University;
- good practice that should be noted and disseminated more widely as appropriate. You

are expected to submit your report within one month following the final subject board for that academic year. Please note that payment for the year will not be processed until your report is received. The University will provide a report template to all external examiners which must be used.

External examiners are asked to submit a signed hard copy of the report to:

Registrar
Regent's University London
Inner Circle
Regent's Park
London
NW1 4NS

In addition, an electronic copy of the report should also be sent to:

QualityOffice@regents.ac.uk.

9. Response to external examiner's reports

The purpose of external examiner reports is to enable the University to judge whether the programme / subject area is meeting its stated objectives and to make any necessary improvements, either immediately, or at the next programme review. Heads of Programmes are required to provide detailed written feedback to external examiners with regards to actions taken in response to the external examiners' reports within one month of receiving the report. Where an external examiner's report calls into question the quality of a

programme or the standard of the award, the Registry will require an immediate account from the Head of Programme of the measures being put in place in order to address and resolve these issues.

You need to have confidence that the University has given full and proper consideration to the comments and recommendations that you made. Responses from the University will include considered feedback on your comments and recommendations, together with details of any actions taken as a result, or the reasons for not taking action. The University has final responsibility for the standards of its awards and the quality of its provision. While the University has the right to reject your recommendations, such rejection must proceed only from careful consideration of the issues raised and (in the event of significant issues) would normally be made in consultation with senior staff or a senior level committee of the University, and a clear explanation must be given to you as to why your suggestion has not been taken up.

10. Raising serious concerns

If, in an exceptional case, you have serious concerns about the academic standards or quality of provision, then you should raise such concerns directly with the Vice Chancellor. As a last resort, and where the concern is systemic and not a one-off case of ineffective practice, the matter can be raised externally through the QAA. Please refer to the following webpage for further information:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/concerns-scheme-e.aspx>

11. Information requests

You should be aware that any person may request for the disclosure of the full text of a report under the Data Protection Act.

Reports are made available to students, reflecting the general principles of engaging students in quality management processes.

Reports will be redacted where an individual has been identified, or in very exceptional cases where something has been included which may cause harm to the institution or bring it into disrepute.

12. External examiner fees and expenses

You will receive an annual fee, the amount is indicated in your contract letter. The letter will provide an explanation as to how the process works. Your fee will be paid on receipt of your annual report. Claims for expenses are processed when they are received and should be made using the Regent's University London Expenses Claim Form. Original receipts of purchases and expenses need to be provided with your claim form, as due to University requirements we are unable to process expense claims without them. Please refer to the 'Guidance for external examiners on claiming expenses' for further information.

External examiners are paid through the University's payroll system by electronic transfer into their nominated bank accounts.

13. Role and responsibility of the subject board

Students' results for each validated programme of study at Regent's University London are considered by a subject board, progression board and a finalist board, all of which report directly to the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and ultimately Senate. The constitution and terms of reference of the assessment boards must be in accordance with the approved regulations as detailed in the Academic Regulations.

The subject board will verify the results of all the assessed components for each module and confirm the penalties for any academic misconduct cases. External examiners are required to attend the relevant subject board in order to confirm that the module has been assessed appropriately and that the standards of the module(s) are comparable to other UK higher education institutions.

The progression board will review the student profile and confirm the progression of students to the next progression point. Where students are unable to progress the progression board will refer the student to the Student Support Office for counselling and guidance. The progression board will also consider awarding condoned passes to students who meet all the criteria for condonement.

The finalist board considers all graduating student profiles and will confirm the classification of the award.

A progression board external examiner and a finalist board external examiner will be appointed by the University. Their role is to attend the relevant board so as to assure the University that decisions are made by the board according to University Regulations.

14. Approval of awards

Senate has delegated the authority to confer awards to the Registrar who ensures that due process has occurred.

The finalist board will produce a conferment list which will be presented to the Registrar for approval.

15. Contact with Students

Students will be made aware of the identity and current position of the external examiners appointed to their modules/programmes and awards. It is inappropriate for students to make direct contact with external examiners, in particular regarding their individual performance in assessments; other appropriate mechanisms are available to students, such as appeals and complaints, and the University will advise students accordingly. If a student contacts you directly please refer this correspondence to the Registry.

16. Termination of Appointment

If, for whatever reason, you wish to resign from your duties as an external examiner, we ask that you put this in writing to the Registrar and copy your correspondence to the appropriate Head of Programme. A minimum notice period of three months should be given, so that we can appoint a replacement external examiner before you leave.

In exceptional circumstances your appointment as an external examiner may be terminated by the University. Such reasons may include but are not limited to the following:

- New conflict of interest arising;
- Failure to fulfil your obligations at the end of any single year of appointment. For example, non-submission of reports within the timescale, lack of rigour in the report, failure to attend a subject board meeting without good reason;
- Discontinuation of the programme for which you were appointed as an external examiner.

17. Contact information

Should you have any queries regarding to your role as an external examiner please contact the Registry. The Registry oversees the University's external examiner process and will be able to deal with your query and/or forward it to the relevant person/department for a response.

Registry

Regent's University London
Inner Circle
Regent's Park
London
NW1 4NS

Email: QualityOffice@regents.ac.uk

Tel: 0207 487 7786

Regent's University London acknowledges the importance of this role and would like to thank you again for undertaking your duties as an external examiner for Regent's University London.