

## **SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY**

### **External Examiners: Role and Responsibilities**

It is recognised that External Examiners play a critical role in assuring the academic standards of the University's awards. Appointments to the role of External Examiner are made at course level, in accordance with the principles, process and appointment criteria stated in the University's Quality Framework. The role of External Examiners, in assuring and maintaining the standards of University awards, is aligned with the expectations and core practices set out in the revised UK Quality Code (UKSCQA/QAA, March 2018).

#### **Purpose of the External Examiner Role**

- To confirm that threshold standards are set and maintained for the University's awards in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), any applicable subject benchmark statements and/or other relevant external reference points including professional, statutory and/or regulatory body requirements for accredited courses
- To confirm that academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable to those in other higher education institutions of which the Examiner has experience
- To confirm that assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly and are conducted in accordance with University Regulations and associated policies
- To provide impartial, independent advice and informed comment on the University's standards and on students' achievements.

#### **External Examiners' Main Responsibilities are to:**

- Verify methods of summative assessment in line with the University policy for the Verification of Assessment, Standardisation and Moderation of Marking<sup>1</sup>, confirming these are of an appropriate standard for the task, level and nature of the relevant course and/or modules
- Consider samples of students' assessed work in line with the requirements of the relevant University policy (see above)
- Confirm that assessments have been set and marked in accordance with the relevant criteria and that fair, consistent and appropriate feedback has been given to students.
- Consider and approve recommendations for the overall scaling of marks, where required, in line with the relevant University policy (see above)
- Attend the main meeting of the relevant Assessment Board at which recommendations are made for the award of degrees, diplomas or certificates. Where an External Examiner cannot attend a Board in person, they are responsible for notifying the relevant Department and agreeing alternative arrangements to enable their participation (via Skype, video conference link, etc). Such arrangements must be agreed in advance with the Chair of the Board and the relevant servicing officer. Arrangements for an External Examiner's engagement with subsequent referral/resit boards should also be agreed at the main meeting of the Assessment Board, noting that engagement via correspondence will be considered sufficient
- Assist the Assessment Board in making impartial decisions about students' performance, progression and the conferment of awards, based on their marks. This

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<sup>1</sup> See policy for [Verification of Assessment, Standardisation and Moderation of Marking](#). This policy is currently under review; any subsequent changes to the policy will be reflected in a further update to the External Examiner Role Descriptor, if required.

includes providing independent assurance that the University's Regulations are applied consistently and fairly

- Submit an annual written report within four weeks of the main Assessment Board, using the University's standard External Examiner Annual Report template
- Consider and advise on the comparability of standards where courses and modules are delivered at more than one location, including those delivered in collaboration with University-approved partner organisations
- Raise issues of serious concern regarding academic standards are not being maintained by making a separate, confidential report to the Vice Chancellor and Head of Academic Quality and Standards, where an External Examiner is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken
- Meet with a representative group of students at least once preferably during term time in each year of the External Examiner's tenure (either in person or via virtual meetings using Skype or similar technology)
- Engage in constructive dialogue with relevant University contacts to provide advice and guidance on the curriculum and on modifications to existing provision that will enhance the student learning experience
- Through the External Examiner's annual written report and through ongoing dialogue, engage with annual review processes to identify and comment on areas of good practice and/or opportunities to enhance the quality of the student learning experience
- Report on all or any of the above matters, either verbally at the relevant Assessment Board and/or in the annual written report, as appropriate.

**External Examiners will not be expected to:**

- Participate in the marking process as any kind of 'second' or 'third' markers
- Resolve internal disputes where the marking team are unable to agree on a mark for an individual piece of work
- Amend the marks of individual students
- Consider cases of extenuating circumstances
- Take part in any course approval or review activity for courses to which they are allocated as an External Examiner

**Term of Office and Termination of Appointment**

External Examiners' tenure normally lasts for four years. An exceptional extension to an existing appointment may be requested, for a further limited period, subject to a new External Examiner appointment being made. External Examiner appointments may be terminated at any time if, for whatever reason, the appointee is unable to fulfil their role and responsibilities or where there is a failure to meet specific obligations in accordance with the terms of their contract or in circumstances where a conflict of interest arises that cannot be resolved.

AQS/Revised March 2018

Approved by UTQC 10/4/18