



**Academic Quality Framework**

**Section 11: External Examining**

**2023-2024**

## Academic Quality Framework

### Section 11: External Examining

**This Section should be of particular interest to Course Leaders and External Examiners, and all those involved in the assessment and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students at the UCO and at Collaborative Partners.**

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Dates produced and approved (include committee)</b>	<b>Reason for production/revision</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Proposed next review date and approval required</b>
V1.0	March 2014 Academic Council	To define the procedures for the management of academic quality and standards in teaching and learning at the UCO.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality Academic Registrar	Master Version: J:\0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Intranet	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
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V8.0	<p>June 2022 PRAG Chair TQSC</p> <p>Jul 2022 Academic Council (of AQF11-03)</p>	<p>Administrative amendments to update staff role titles and responsibilities, and to reflect current practice regarding training of External Examiners, and reporting requirements and timelines.</p> <p>Major Amendment to AQF11-03 EE Annual Report Form to remove duplication, clarify terminology and addition of learning resource section.</p>	Head of Quality & Partnerships	<p>Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website</p>	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V9.0	<p>Jun 2023 TQSC</p>	<p>Admin &amp; Minor Amendments to reflect current practice, staff changes, to clarify process, reflect the roles and responsibilities of Collaborative Partners and updates to Appendices to align with these amendments.</p>	Head of Quality & Partnerships	<p>Master Version: SharePoint – Quality Team Published Version: Website</p>	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
<b>Equality Impact</b>					
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)					
Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)					X
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)					
<p><b>If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this document, please email your comments to:</b>  <a href="mailto:quality@uco.ac.uk">quality@uco.ac.uk</a></p>					

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

- 11.1.1 External examining and moderation play a fundamental role in assuring academic standards by providing an external perspective on student performance and on the conduct of the assessment process at the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) and the UCO's Collaborative Partners delivering courses that lead to a UCO award.
- 11.1.2 The UCO appoints External Examiners for all taught courses through which credit is achieved and qualifications that lead to an award of the UCO.
- 11.1.3 External Examiners provide one of the principal means by which the UCO ensures it maintains nationally comparable standards regarding assessment processes and practices within autonomous higher education institutions.
- 11.1.4 External Examiners may be appointed to report on assessment processes, academic standards and quality at course or unit level, or both.
- 11.1.5 The main purposes of external examining are:
- a) To verify that academic standards are appropriate for the award and its component parts by reference to published national subject benchmarks, the QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ)<sup>1</sup>, institutional programme specifications and other relevant information.
  - b) To help institutions to assure and maintain academic standards.
  - c) To help institutions to ensure that the assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the intended learning outcomes of the course.
  - d) To verify that institutions' assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line with their policies and regulations.
- 11.1.6 The following regulations have been developed to align with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Expectations and Practices regarding Assessment<sup>2</sup> and External Expertise<sup>3</sup>.

## 11.2 PRINCIPLES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING

- 11.2.1 The principles of External Examining of the UCO's awards include that:
- a) No taught degree or other academic distinction of the UCO shall be awarded without the participation in the examining process of at least one External Examiner who shall be a full member of the relevant Board of Examiners.
  - b) External Examiners are responsible to the UCO's Vice- Chancellor.
  - c) The correspondent between the UCO and an External Examiner on contractual matters will be the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships.
  - d) The correspondence between the UCO and an External Examiner on operational matters will be the UCO's Registrar (or Partner equivalent).
  - e) The number of External Examiners for any particular course shall be appropriate to cover the full range of studies / units.
  - f) Normally a maximum of 12 units of thirty credits each or equivalent may be examined throughout the External Examiners' term of office.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>

## 11.3 THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 11.3.1 External Examiners are members of, and attend, Boards of Examiners and are expected to:
- a) Ensure that the standards of UCO awards are consistent with those elsewhere in the sector, and that the UCO and Partner institutions are examining the qualities typically found in students across the sector at any specific stage of their course.
  - b) Moderate the standard of work carried out by students to consistent standards to ensure that grades awarded are similar to those that would apply in other comparable higher education institutions and are in line with current best practice in the discipline concerned.
  - c) Witness (by attendance at Boards of Examiners) the fair and consistent application of the UCO's regulations for dealing with students' assessments, progression from one stage to another and the determination of students' awards.
  - d) Endorse the outcomes of the assessments they have been appointed to scrutinise.
  - e) Comment and give advice on course design, pedagogy, and assessment processes.
  - f) Produce a written report which will include a commentary and judgements on the validity, reliability and integrity of the assessment process and the standards of student attainment.
- 11.3.2 Depending on the requirements of a particular subject or course, External Examiners may be called upon to undertake the observation of clinical practice, practical examinations, or viva voce examinations.
- 11.3.3 External Examiners have the right to comment on any matter at the Board of Examiners, although the ultimate responsibility for making recommendations as to the award of degrees rests with the relevant Board of Examiners as a whole.
- 11.3.4 The Board of Examiners is not ultimately required to defer to the judgement of External Examiners in taking decisions but, where the Board of Examiners chooses to disregard the views of an External Examiner, the reasons for the Board's decision shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and reported to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.

## 11.4 SELECTION & APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

### a) CRITERIA FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENT – PERSON SPECIFICATION

- 11.4.1 External Examiners from outside the higher education system, for example from industry or other professions, may be appointed where appropriate; however, each course should normally have at least one External Examiner with experience in a higher education institution that is familiar with the standards required for comparable courses.
- 11.4.2 External Examiners shall be appointed according to the following criteria:
- a) Their knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality, including their range and scope of experience and understanding of quality and standards in other higher education institutions.
  - b) Their competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, including their experience of teaching and examining students following courses which lead to the level of award for which they are being considered as External Examiners.

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- c) Their relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience as appropriate; experience and qualifications which should be at least at the same level as the course they are examining, and preferably above that level.
- d) Their competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures.
- e) Their sufficient standing, credibility, and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers, i.e., their recognition within the relevant discipline and / or profession as appropriate.
- f) Their familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed.
- g) Their fluency in English, and where courses are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that External Examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements).
- h) Their meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory, or regulatory bodies.
- i) Their awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
- j) Their competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
- k) Their present post and their expertise in the relevant subject area, including current evidence of scholarship / research / consultancy related to the awards to be externally examined.
- l) Their independence from the UCO and its Collaborative Partners.

**b) CRITERIA FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENT – CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

11.4.3 External Examiners **shall not** normally be appointed as an External Examiner if they:

- a) Are or have been within the last five years a member of staff, a governor, an External Examiner or a student of the UCO or one of its partners, delivery organisations or support providers.
- b) Are or have been within the last five years been closely associated with any member of the Course Team.
- c) Have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course of study.
- d) Are required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course of study.
- e) Are, or knows they will be, in a position to significantly influence the future of students on the course of study, i.e., knows of a conflict of interest.
- f) Are 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 course(s) or units in question.
- g) Are a former staff member or a student of the UCO or the relevant Partner unless a period of five years has elapsed, and all students taught by or with the proposed External Examiner have completed their course(s).



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- h) Are involved in a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate courses at another higher education provider.
- i) Are from the same department and institution as the retiring External Examiner.
- j) Are from the same department or higher education provider as an existing External Examiner.
- k) Are from a department in an institution where a member of the UCO or relevant Partner is serving as an External Examiner.
- l) Are from an institution which has been the source of External Examiners for the same or a closely related programme in the recent past (normally five years).
- m) Are from the same place of employment as an existing External Examiner who is already on the relevant Board of Examiners.

11.4.4 In addition, an External Examiner **should not** normally be appointed if they:

- a) Already hold two other external examiner appointments for taught courses / units at any point in time.
- b) Concurrently act as a consultant to the relevant Course Team on course design, or act as members of a panel established to review the course they examine.
- c) Are personally associated with the sponsorship of students on the course.
- d) Are in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the course.
- e) Are likely to be involved with placements of students on the course or with their training in the External Examiner's organisation.

**c) PROCESS FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENT**

11.4.5 External Examiner appointments are approved under arrangements determined by the Academic Council.

11.4.6 The Academic Council is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) Criteria for the identification, nomination and appointment of candidates are understood and accessible to all staff initiating appointments.
- b) Nominations are assessed effectively and rigorously.
- c) Any potential intellectual property difficulties, such as might arise from the need for commercial confidentiality, are resolved prior to appointment.

11.4.7 The Course Leader in consultation with Unit Leaders (or their equivalents) identifies and contacts a suitable candidate to be appointed as an External Examiner who, after agreeing to the nomination, provides the Course Leader with their curriculum vitae (CV).

11.4.8 The Course Leader in consultation with Unit Leaders (or their equivalents) as appropriate completes an External Examiner Nomination Form (AQF11-01) supplying the prospective External Examiner's details of teaching, research and examination experience, present and former appointments, and associations (if any) with the UCO or relevant Partner, its staff and details of the course and / or units for which the nominated External Examiner will be responsible.

11.4.9 In cases where it is proposed that the appointment of an existing External Examiner be extended or their duties reallocated, the Course Leader in consultation with Unit Leaders as appropriate completes an External Examiner Extension of Duties Form (AQF11-02).



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- 11.4.10 External Examiner Nomination Forms and CVs are considered by the Teaching Quality & Standards Committee (TQSC) in line with the criteria for External Examiner Appointment listed above and then recommends the nominations to the Academic Council for final approval.
- 11.4.11 It is the responsibility of the TQSC and Academic Council to ensure that in cases where proposed External Examiners do not fully meet the Criteria for External Examiner Appointment outlined above:
- a) That these cases are carefully considered and approved and that arrangements for providing oversight of the provision are robust.
  - b) That where there is a legitimate case for making an appointment that does not fulfil all the criteria, appropriate training is provided and / or that they are not the sole examiner for the award and are part of an External Examiner Team where their expertise is complemented by that of others who do satisfy the criteria.
- 11.4.12 Exceptions to appointing an External Examiner who does not fulfil all the appointment criteria may include:
- a) Nominations drawn from business, industry or the professions who may possess considerable professional experience but not the formal qualifications anticipated, the academic background, or sufficient experience of assessment.
  - b) Nominations required for disciplines which are very small and specialist where the pool of potential external examiners is therefore restricted.
- 11.4.13 Once approved by the Academic Council the External Examiner candidate shall be contacted by the UCO's Quality Team to confirm the appointment and, in liaison with the UCO's HR Department, arrange for a formal contract of services to be signed stating the agreed fee which will be paid on completion of the necessary duties, including timely submission to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor of a detailed External Examiner Annual Report (AQF11-03).
- 11.4.14 A response to each External Examiner Annual Report will be provided to the External Examiner acknowledging their recommendations and comments. Responses are produced by the relevant Course Leader using the External Examiner Annual Report Response Form (AQF11-04).
- 11.4.15 A record of all External Examiner appointments is held by the UCO's Quality Team.
- 11.4.16 The UCO's HR Department also retains a record of all UCO academic staff that hold External Examiner appointments at other institutions.
- 11.4.17 Newly appointed External Examiners will receive relevant briefing material and be invited to participate in an External Examiner's Induction / Training Session to support them in their role by the Head of Quality & Partnerships and the relevant Course Leader.

## **11.5 TERM OF OFFICE / TENURE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 11.5.1 External Examiner appointments are normally of four years' duration but may exceptionally be extended subject to formal approval for a further period of one year to ensure continuity if there is a strong rationale for extension.
- 11.5.2 Normally, External Examiner appointments will run from the beginning of an academic session of the course to which they are contracted to examine, and the normal term of office will be one which allows the External Examiner to be involved in the assessment of four successive cohorts of students (i.e., 4 years).

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- 11.5.3 New External Examiners should take up their appointments on or before the retirement of their predecessors.
- 11.5.4 External Examiners should remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in case of any subsequent reviews of decisions.
- 11.5.5 An External Examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- 11.5.6 External Examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught courses / units at any point in time.

## 11.6 TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

- 11.6.1 An External Examiner's appointment may be terminated by either party (the External Examiner or the UCO), normally subject to 3 months' notice, at any time.
- 11.6.2 An External Examiner whose performance or conduct is not satisfactory may be warned or advised (in the first instance) of remedial action that should be taken, or have their contract terminated prematurely.
- 11.6.3 The decision to terminate the contract may be based on one or more of several factors, including:
  - a) Changes to the curriculum/deletion of courses.
  - b) Failure to carry out duties in accordance with the contract, including failure to attend Boards of Examiner meetings where attendance is required, failure to submit reports, provision of incomplete reports, and failure to communicate effectively with the UCO or Partner institution.
  - c) Conflict of interest through changed circumstances.
  - d) Evidence that the information contained in the External Examiner's nomination form was inaccurate.
  - e) Evidence that the External Examiners' judgement / reporting is insufficiently thorough, critical, or objective.
- 11.6.4 Should a conflict of interest arise during an External Examiner's term of office, External Examiners should notify the UCO immediately and resign from the role by writing to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.
- 11.6.5 Should the grounds for premature termination of the contract be due to the alleged non-fulfilment of duties on the part of the External Examiner, the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships (or other appropriate senior manager) shall carry out an investigation to ensure that any decision to terminate the contract is based on sound evidence.
- 11.6.6 The outcome of the investigation shall be considered by the UCO's Vice-Chancellor who will make the final decision regarding the termination of the contract.
- 11.6.7 Should either party wish to terminate an External Examiner's contract, they shall do so in writing, normally giving three months' notice. External Examiners should address their letter informing the UCO of their intent to terminate their contract to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor outlining the reason/s why and submit this to [Quality@uco.ac.uk](mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk).

## **11.7 BRIEFING & TRAINING OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

11.7.1 The UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships will ensure that once appointed, each External Examiner is provided with the following relevant to the course and / or units for which the External Examiner is contracted to examine.

- a) A link to the UCO's Academic Quality Framework (which includes the UCO's Academic Regulations) or the Partner's approved variance to UCO Academic Regulations as appropriate.
- b) Previous External Examiner reports (normally for the last 3 years) including a copy of the report made by the retiring External Examiner at the end of their term of office.
- c) The External Examiner's Handbook (AQF11-05).
- d) Relevant Course and Unit Information Forms.
- e) Relevant Course Handbooks.
- f) Documentation relating to specific professional issues (such as fitness to practise) or subject disciplines, including reference to any guidance or advice produced by sector bodies or subject communities.
- g) The relevant Board of Examiners Terms of Reference.
- h) The assessment schedule for the course (including dates when scripts will be available for moderation), related grading schemes, model answers etc. as appropriate.
- i) Dates of meetings of the Board(s) of Examiners.
- j) The last Course Annual Monitoring Report and Course Periodic Review Report as appropriate.
- k) Professional body requirements as appropriate.
- l) External Examiner Induction and Training Materials.

11.7.2 All new External Examiners are invited to an induction / training session which is normally provided by the Head of Quality & Partnerships and the relevant Course and / or Unit Leader as soon as possible after appointment to introduce them to the UCO and the Partner institution as appropriate, the External Examiner role and the course they are contracted to examine. The training session may be held virtually or in person.

11.7.3 Where a new External Examiner has no previous experience of the role, they will, where practicable, be assigned to an External Examiner Team and allocated a mentor. The mentor will typically be an experienced External Examiner from the same team to provide support and guidance. Where it is not practicable to assign the new External Examiner to an External Examiner Team, for example due to the size or nature of the provision, they will normally be allocated a mentor from another field of study.

11.7.4 The Quality Team shall act as a point of contact for all External Examiners during their term of office to answer questions and provide appropriate documentation.

## **11.8 PARTICIPATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS IN ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

11.8.1 External Examiners are normally expected to undertake the following duties:

- a) To attend an External Examiner's Induction / Training Session.
- b) To participate in the approved Scrutiny Process.

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- c) To confirm the academic standards of a final award, i.e., at final award level (normally Level 6 and Level 7), and in so doing endorse the level and standards of its component parts as appropriate to the structure of that award.
- d) To be given the opportunity to comment on the approved assessment methods, procedures and regulations which directly affect students on the course / unit.
- e) To consider a sample of graded scripts from each unit for which the External Examiner is contracted to examine to confirm that the scripts have been graded in accordance with the criteria stated, to the proper standard, fairly and accurately. The sample will not normally include work at Level 4 and Level 5 but may be included for the purposes of good practice or where this is the awarding level. The sample should:
  - a. Typically represent 20% of the cohort with a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 35.
  - b. A minimum of 2 from each pass grade band.
  - c. All 'A' Grades or Grades of 70-100%.
  - d. All Fail Grades.
  - e. All Borderline Pass Grades ('D-' Grades or Grades of 40-49%).
- f) To moderate the grades awarded by internal examiners and to adjust the overall range of grades, if warranted, but not to alter individual grades.
- g) Exceptionally, to conduct a viva voce examination of any student, where this is judged necessary.
- h) To ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with UCO or approved Partner academic and course regulations.
- i) To attend all final meeting(s) of the Board of Examiners at which decisions on progression and awards are made and to ensure that the decisions accord with the UCO's or approved Partner regulations and normal practice in higher education.
- j) To ensure that decisions regarding the award of grades / marks / awards are collectively made by relevant Boards of Examiners only.
- k) To participate in reviews of decisions about individual students' awards taken during their period of office.
- l) To report to the UCO on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them.
- m) To report in writing immediately to the Vice-Chancellor of the UCO on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of the award.
- n) To submit an annual report, normally by the 31st July each year for undergraduate courses and by the 30th September for postgraduate courses (for courses that do not operate on an annual basis or on a normal academic year these dates may be modified to accommodate the nature of the provision).
- o) To submit a written confidential report to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor, separate from the annual report, where it is necessary, for example to name a member of staff.
- p) Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a course or courses and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the UCO's Vice-

Chancellor, to inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body or to pursue an appropriate avenue for raising the concern<sup>4</sup>.

## **11.9 RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS REGARDING MARKS AWARDED**

- 11.9.1 If an External Examiner disagrees with the marks awarded by internal markers within a mark sample, they may request that the relevant Course Team undertakes an additional level of moderation or re-marking. However, this must apply to all students who have completed the assessment in question, not just those within the work sample.
- 11.9.2 The UCO does not allow External Examiners to change the mark of an individual student's work from the sample.
- 11.9.3 Disagreements between internal markers are expected to have been resolved before the marked work is provided to an External Examiner (e.g., using additional internal markers). However, in exceptional circumstances where a mark has not been agreed internally the views of the External Examiner can be considered when agreeing the final mark.
- 11.9.4 Should the Course Team decide not to take any action recommended by the External Examiner, the Course Team shall inform the External Examiner accordingly explaining why.

## **11.10 EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTING PROCESS**

### **a) EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORTS (EEARs)**

- 11.10.1 External Examiners are required to provide an annual report to the UCO using the UCO's External Examiner Annual Report Form (AQF11-03) which specifies the areas on which the UCO welcomes comments and includes a checklist that External Examiners are required to complete to enable the UCO to determine that they have based their report on sufficient evidence.
- 11.10.2 External Examiners' Annual Reports (EEARs) provide important evidence about academic standards and quality regarding the provision, and prevailing at the UCO and Partner institutions and are used by Course Teams as part of the basis for their annual monitoring.
- 11.10.3 At the end of their appointment External Examiners will be required to provide a summative report of the period of the appointment.
- 11.10.4 EEARs should be submitted to the Quality Team on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor electronically from the preferred email identified in External Examiners' contracts after which payment of the External Examiner's fee will be made.
- 11.10.5 EEARs may be amended in consultation with the External Examiner where individuals are identified or in very exceptional cases where the content may cause harm to the UCO or bring it into disrepute.
- 11.10.6 Should External Examiner's need to report any confidential matter / concern to the UCO, they should do so by providing a separate report / writing directly to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.
- 11.10.7 EEARs will then be disseminated by the UCO's Quality Team to the relevant Course and Unit Leader(s), the UCO's Vice-Chancellor, the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships, and relevant Collaborative Partner staff as appropriate.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint>

**b) RESPONDING TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS**

- 11.10.8 As noted above, the role of External Examiners is fundamental for assuring academic standards and quality by providing an external perspective on student performance, and the conduct of assessment processes in addition to providing comments on and recommendations for developing and enhancing these.
- 11.10.9 It is the responsibility of the Course Leader in consultation with Unit Leaders to carefully consider EEARs, to review External Examiner comments and recommendations and to formulate appropriate action plans in response.
- 11.10.10 Responses to External Examiner reports are produced using the UCO's External Examiner Annual Report Response Form (AQF11-04). This form records actions planned / taken in response to the recommendations of the External Examiner in addition to acknowledging areas of good practice identified by the External Examiner and how these can be disseminated and adopted more widely across the course or institution.
- 11.10.11 It is the responsibility of the Course Leader and Unit Leaders to complete the External Examiner Annual Report Response Form, to ensure that each of the External Examiner's recommendations / areas of good practice are responded to appropriately and that responsibility is allocated to each action in addition to a reasonable deadline.
- 11.10.12 It is also the responsibility of Course and Unit Leaders to incorporate actions identified within External Examiner Annual Report Response Forms into Course Enhancement Plans (see AQF Section 5: Evaluation, Reporting & Monitoring).
- 11.10.13 Course Annual Monitoring reports are reviewed by Course Teams in the presence of Student Representatives as part of the UCO's Annual Monitoring and Reporting requirements and processes (see AQF Section 5: Annual Monitoring & Reporting).
- 11.10.14 External Examiners' reports and responses are considered at relevant Course Team meetings in the presence of Student Representatives. They are also considered at relevant UCO committees where Student Representatives are present, including the Academic Council. They are also shared with Student Representative to share with their year groups for comment.
- 11.10.15 External Examiners' Annual Reports are reviewed centrally at the UCO by the Head of Quality & Partnerships who prepares a summary report reflecting on all EEARs and responses received for consideration by the UCO's Teaching Quality and Standards Committee (TQSC) and the Academic Council at which students are represented. Any institutional issues requiring attention are identified and appropriate action proposed. Good practice identified by External Examiners is highlighted and disseminated for wider consideration and adoption as appropriate.
- 11.10.16 External Examiner reports and responses to those reports are made available in full to students through the UCO's Virtual Learning Environment (or partner equivalent).
- 11.10.17 Before formal responses are sent to External Examiners they should be reviewed and approved by the TQSC (for courses delivered by the UCO) or the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC) (for courses delivered by Partner institutions that lead to a UCO award). Where committee consideration is not possible due to unforeseen circumstances, formal responses may be approved by the respective Chairs of these committees.
- 11.10.18 The deadline for providing External Examiners with a written response to their report is normally the 30th November or within 3 months of the submission date of the EEAR.



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- 11.10.19 The Quality Team is responsible for sending approved External Examiner responses to External Examiners.

**c) MONITORING ACTION PLANS GENERATED IN RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS**

- 11.10.20 It is important to regularly monitor action plans generated by Course Teams in response to External Examiner reports to verify that appropriate action is being taken in a timely manner to assure the enhancement of academic standards and quality relating to assessment processes at the UCO.
- 11.10.21 Course Teams are expected to continuously monitor Course Enhancement Plans to ensure that the resources required and deadlines for actions are on track to be reasonably achieved. Course Teams are also expected to reflect on the progress of Course Enhancement Plans at the conclusion of each academic year as part of Evaluation, Reporting & Monitoring activity (see AQF Section 5). Course Enhancement Plans are considered by the TQSC (for courses delivered by the UCO) and the CPSC (for courses delivered by Partner institutions that lead to a UCO award) mid-way through the academic year to oversee and assure that progress is being made.

**d) PUBLICATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS & RESPONSES TO STUDENTS**

- 11.10.22 EEARs and Course Teams' responses to these are published in full to students through the UCO's Virtual Learning Environment (or partner equivalent) for their information in addition to a brief overview of External Examining .

**11.11 THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER TEAM**

- 11.11.1 The External Examiner team should complement each other in terms of expertise and experience appropriate to the course assessed.
- 11.11.2 There should also be an appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners within the External Examining team, which should reflect the range of academic / vocational perspectives required for the course.
- 11.11.3 The phasing of appointments to the team should be structured to ensure continuity.

**11.12 SUPPORT FOR NEW EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 11.12.1 In circumstances where an appointee is new to the role of external examining, they must be supported in their role by an experienced External Examiner within the team covering the same broad curriculum or, where this is not practicable, by an experienced External Examiner in another field of study.
- 11.12.2 An induction / training session for all newly appointed External Examiners is arranged by the UCO providing an opportunity to brief new External Examiners about their role.
- 11.12.3 All External Examiners have access to the UCO's Virtual Learning Environment where they can find resources to assist with their role.
- 11.12.4 External Examiners receive information and support from the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships, Quality Team and Registrar (or Partner equivalent) through the induction process and thereafter for the duration of their tenure.



## **11.13 PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 11.13.1 If an External Examiner has cause to complain about any matter relating to their contract, payment, or the conduct of a UCO or Partner employee, the complaint should be addressed to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor in a letter separate from the External Examiner's Annual Report.
- 11.13.2 As a general principle, an attempt should be made to resolve the complaint through dialogue before entering a formal phase.
- 11.13.3 The UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships will normally investigate any formal complaint raised by an External Examiner and report the outcome of the investigation to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.
- 11.13.4 If the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships cannot resolve the complaint to the External Examiner's satisfaction, then case notes will be sent to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor who will act to resolve the complaint.
- 11.13.5 If the complaint involves the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships, it will normally be investigated by the UCO's Registrar.

## **11.14 EXTERNAL EXAMINING RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER**

- 11.14.1 The responsibilities of the External Examiner are:
- a) To exercise the right to see all examination scripts and samples of coursework, theses, projects etc.
  - b) To attend all final Boards of Examiner meetings except in exceptional circumstances.
  - c) To endorse the outcome of the assessment process by signing the final results lists.
  - d) To offer comments and advice as appropriate.
  - e) To submit a written report annually to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor using the External Examiner Annual Report Form (AQF11-03).
  - f) To exercise the right to submit a written confidential report to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor, separate from the annual report, where it is necessary, for example to name a member of staff.
  - g) To refer any direct contact from students to the UCO or relevant Partner institution immediately by contacting the Registrar (or Partner equivalent).

### **B) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UCO'S VICE-CHANCELLOR**

- 11.14.2 The responsibilities of the UCO's Vice-Chancellor are:
- a) To oversee receipt of External Examiner Annual Reports.
  - b) To receive and act upon matters of serious concern raised by External Examiners.

### **C) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UCO'S TQSC**

- 11.14.3 The responsibilities of the UCO's TQSC are:

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- a) To ensure that External Examiner nominations are considered and approved by the Academic Council.
- b) To ensure that new External Examiners' receive an induction / training session and further training as and when requested or identified.
- c) To ensure that the decisions of the Academic Council are executed, and the External Examiners are provided with the detail of their duties.
- d) To ensure appropriate action is taken in response to comments of the External Examiner(s).
- e) To ensure that synoptic summaries of External Examiners' comments are prepared for consideration by the Academic Council (in the presence of student representatives).

**B) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UCO'S HEAD OF QUALITY & PARTNERSHIPS**

11.14.4 The responsibilities of the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships are:

- a) To produce and maintain External Examiner contracts of appointment.
- b) To maintain a register of External Examiners and regularly review this to ensure that External Examiner details and tenures are kept up to date.
- c) To be the correspondent between the UCO and an External Examiner on contractual matters.
- d) To organise the UCO's External Examiner induction / training session with Course Leaders.
- e) To produce and keep up to date the online External Examiner resources area on the UCO's VLE and to provide access to this to all External Examiners annually.
- f) To send a new External Examiner a copy of the report of the retiring External Examiner.
- g) To arrange for payment of External Examiner expenses and examining fees.
- h) To receive External Examiner Annual Reports on behalf of the UCO's Vice-Chancellor and forward these to relevant staff for responses.
- i) To prepare a synoptic summary of External Examiner Annual Reports for consideration by the TQSC and Academic Council (in the presence of student representatives).
- j) To investigate any formal complaint raised by an External Examiner and report the outcome of the investigation to the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.

**C) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UCO'S REGISTRAR (OR PARTNER EQUIVALENT)**

11.14.5 The responsibilities of the UCO's Registrar (or Partner Equivalent) are:

- a) To be the primary contact for External Examiners appointed to courses that lead to an award of the UCO to enable them to fulfil their duties.
- b) To provide External Examiners appointed to courses that lead to an award of the UCO with up-to-date information about the course and associated course regulations, together with a schedule of assessments and of the main dates when examiners are expected to consider students' work, draft assessment tasks and copies of all examination papers together with details of assessment criteria.
- c) To manage the Scrutiny Process for courses that lead to an award of the UCO.

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- d) To provide External Examiners appointed to courses that lead to an award of the UCO with samples of students' work, graded and annotated by internal examiners as appropriate, together with full results sheets which demonstrate how the sample of scripts relates to the population from which they have been selected.
- e) To provide for Boards of Examiners of courses that lead to an award of the UCO statistical material on the performance of the students under consideration in consultation with Unit Leaders.
- f) To provide External Examiners appointed to courses that lead to an award of the UCO the internal examiners' agreed results for each student in every unit and the profile of results for each student under consideration.

**c) RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURSE LEADERS (OR PARTNER EQUIVALENTS)**

11.14.6 The responsibilities of the Course Leaders (or Partner equivalents) are:

- a) To complete and provide the required nomination form for the appointment of a prospective External Examiner for the UCO's TQSC and Academic Council to consider and approve.
- b) To participate in the UCO's External Examiner induction / training session together with the Head of Quality & Partnerships.
- c) To provide a written response to the External Examiner's Annual Report using the External Examiner Report Response Form (AQF11-04) in consultation with Unit Leaders and other relevant staff.
- d) To ensure that External Examiners' Annual Reports are considered by Course Teams (which may be in the presence of Student Representatives).
- e) To forward the response to the External Examiner's Annual Report to the UCO's Quality Team by the agreed submission date.
- f) To review and consider External Examiner Annual Reports with Unit Leaders when completing Course Annual Monitoring Reports and to ensure that these are considered by all stakeholders prior to their submission.
- g) To ensure that Course Enhancement Plans are considered on an ongoing basis to monitor and update progress on action plans resulting from External Examiner recommendations.
- h) To ensure that a meeting between students and External Examiners takes place as appropriate and as requested.

**D) RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIT LEADERS (OR PARTNER EQUIVALENTS)**

11.14.7 The responsibilities of the Unit Leaders (or Partner equivalents) are:

- a) To contribute to the formal response to External Examiner Annual Reports.
- b) To review and consider External Examiner Annual Reports and responses when completing evaluation, reporting and monitoring activity as and to contribute to formulating action plans in response to External Examiner recommendations as appropriate in liaison with Course Leaders.
- c) To contribute to monitoring and updating Course Enhancement Plans to monitor their progress.

**AQF11 APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix Reference Number</b>	<b>Appendix Title</b>
AQF11-01	External Examiner Nomination Form
AQF11-02	External Examiner Reallocation & Extension of Duties Form
AQF11-03	External Examiner Annual Report Form
AQF11-04	External Examiner Annual Report Response Form
AQF11-05	External Examiners' Handbook