



ACADEMIC QUALITY POLICY & PRACTICE 2024 V1.6

Section 10: External Examiners

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10. EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

10.1 Introduction

GCU adheres to the [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#) expectations and the national criteria for the appointment of External Examiners. External Examiners are appointed to provide the University with impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on standards and student achievement in relation to these standards. The role of the External Examiner is outlined in appendix 3 of the [process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners](#).

10.2 Appointment of External Examiners

The procedures for the appointment of External Examiners are outlined in the [process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners](#). The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for the administration and management of this process. Senate appoints External Examiners via the External Examiners' Approval Panel, chaired by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, on the basis of nominations from Schools.

Each award bearing degree programme will normally have two External Examiners which. In exceptional cases a School may wish to appoint only a single External Examiner in the case of smaller programmes, or more than two External Examiners in the case of larger programmes or suites of programmes. Where the appointment of a single External Examiner is made, consideration should be given to potential risk of the External Examiner being unable to fulfil their duties for any reason. Whilst External Examiners will most commonly be appointed to Programmes with an allocation of modules within the programme, External Examiners may also be appointed only to modules within their specialism. All modules at all levels will have an associated External Examiner.

A proportion of External Examiners will be appointed from industry, business, and the professions because of their unique expertise. The University, through the External Examiners' Approval Panel, ensures a balance of professional and academic expertise and experience within the External Examining team on each programme.

Where External Examiners are appointed without previous external examining experience or having no experience within the last five years, the programme team should identify another External Examiner to provide mentoring to support the new Examiner in the first year of their tenure.

All Programme Boards will adhere to the [process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners](#) and associated timelines.

10.3 Period of Tenure

External Examiner appointments will normally be for a period of four years. However, in some instances, an exceptional extension of one year may be granted at the discretion of the External Examiners' Approval Panel.

Also, in exceptional circumstances an External Examiner may be re-appointed but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

10.4 Resignation of External Examiners

The resignation of any External Examiner prior to the completion of their approved term of office must be reported to the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement in all instances. If the resignation is over a matter of principle, the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will follow the procedure in the [process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners](#).

10.5 Termination of an External Examiner's contract

Where an external examiner has either consistently failed to fulfil the [responsibilities of the role](#) as defined in Appendix 3 of the process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners, or if the programme and/or modules to which the External has been assigned have been withdrawn from the University's portfolio the contract can be terminated prematurely. The procedure for this is outlined in the [process and criteria for the appointment, resignation and termination of External Examiners](#).

10.6 External Examiners' Annual Reports

In accordance with the [responsibilities of the External Examiners](#), each External Examiner is required to produce an annual report on the standards attained by students on the programme and any other matters which may seem appropriate to report.

Reports should be submitted to the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement no later than *31st July* in each year of the Examiner's appointment for Examiners with responsibility for undergraduate programmes, and *31st October* for Examiners with responsibility for postgraduate programmes¹.

10.6.1 Consideration of External Examiners Reports

All reports will be considered by the relevant Programme Board as part of the Annual Monitoring process. In their strategic report on the Annual Monitoring process, Schools will be required to confirm to the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement that:

- an adequate and timely report has been received from all External Examiner(s)
- each report has received sufficient consideration by the Programme Board, and any resultant actions have been incorporated into enhancement plans at programme and/or module level.
- good practice identified within reports has been disseminated
- an appropriate formal, written response has been made to each External Examiner by the Programme Leader and/or Dean of School, as appropriate
- the minute of the relevant Assessment Board meetings have been sent to each External Examiner

¹ Where programmes or modules do not follow the standard academic calendar alternative dates may be set

In addition, all reports will be initially scrutinised by the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and any concerns brought to the attention of the ADLTQ (for action) copied to the Dean.

The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement reserves the right to request sight of a response where:

- The issue has been raised in a previous report and does not appear to have been addressed, or
- There is a concern that accumulation of issues raised may potentially impact on standards although this has not been specifically highlighted by the External Examiner

If, however, the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement considers the report to be of a serious nature concerning the comparability or standards of the award one of the following will apply:

- the School formulates the response to the External Examiner and submits it to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement who will approve it in terms of sufficiency prior to the response being sent.
- The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, in conjunction with the School, will formulate a response which (s)he will send to the External Examiner on behalf of the University.

Irrespective of the option applied the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement require confirmation that the External Examiner is satisfied with the response.

In all such instances the PVC Learning and Teaching and the relevant Dean will be advised.

10.6.2 Escalation of Matters of Serious Concern

Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. When this happens, the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, in consultation with the relevant School, will provide the Examiner with a considered and timely response, outlining what action the University has taken, or intend to take as a result.

10.7 University Overview of External Examiner Reports

The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for providing the Learning Enhancement Subcommittee with an overview report on External Examiner activity, encompassing issues raised, actions undertaken, elements of good practice and recommendations for enhancement.

10.8 Availability of Reports

Reflecting the principles of engaging students in quality management processes as outlined in the [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#), reports will be made available to students,

with the sole exception of any confidential report which will be made directly and separately to the Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

It is understood that reports will be redacted where

- the individual Examiner has identified and named an individual
- the individual Examiner has included something to cause harm or bring the institution into disrepute