

External Examiners at the University of Leeds

External Examiner Handbook

1. The External Examiner Handbook is an important reference resource as it outlines the expectations of the role. The External Examiner Handbook is available on the [External Examiner website page](#).

Appointment Periods

2. Appointments are normally for four academic years.
3. External examiners are appointed for each complete academic year (including all reassessment periods and the Progression and Awards Boards associated with them).
4. Progression and Awards Boards for undergraduate provision are normally held in June/July.
5. Progression and Awards Boards for taught postgraduate provision are normally held in October/November.

Appointment Remits

6. External examiners are normally appointed to programmes and may be appointed to a number of cognate programmes if appropriate.
7. External examiners should not normally expect to be asked to take sole responsibility for a programme(s) with more than 150 full-time equivalent (FTE) final year students.
8. If required, due to the specialist nature of a subject, external examiners may be appointed to specific modules that require particular expertise.

Mentorships

9. Nominees without prior experience as an external examiner for taught provision will be appointed a mentor.
10. Mentors are normally another appointed external examiner for the school. In certain circumstances, mentors may be the outgoing external examiner or someone who has been appointed to an academic leadership role within the school.
11. Mentorships are for a period of one year and mentors will receive a standard fee of £100 per annum.
12. Mentors answer any questions that mentees may have about their role in order to help support them in undertaking their responsibilities.

13. A formal set of requirements for mentorships is not currently issued by the University as questions and interactions may vary based on programme and school structures and the individual requirements of the mentee.

Amendments to Appointments

14. Remits may be amended throughout the appointment period if circumstances require.
15. Appointment periods may be extended to an exceptional fifth year if required.
16. Any amendments to appointments will only be approved following agreement with the relevant external examiner.

Resignations and Terminations

17. External examiners may resign from their position by giving 3 months' notice to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team. Following receipt of a resignation, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team will confirm if further duties will be required. Programme Teams may accept a resignation, effective immediately, if no duties require prompt completion.
18. On rare occasions, the University may find it necessary to end an appointment early. Possible reasons for this are given below.
- a. Non-attendance at the relevant School Progression and Awards Board without prior agreement.
 - b. Non-submission of reports within the specified timescales.
 - c. Non-fulfilment of duties relating to participation in assessment procedures.
 - d. Where in the University's judgement a situation arises compromising either the University's reputation or the good standing of the external examiner.
 - e. Where the University no longer requires the services of the external examiner for academic reasons.

Role of the External Examiner

19. External examiners are an essential part of the University's quality assurance processes. The role of the external examiner is to provide assurance to the University that its assessment system is fair and operated equitably, and to ensure comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions.
- a. Ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and national benchmarks.

- b. Provide assurance for the University that its assessment system is and operated equitably.
- c. Provide assurance that the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes for the programme/module
- d. Provide advice on the content, balance and structure of programmes and modules of study and on assessment processes.
- e. Provide recommendations for enhancement and comment on good practice.

Duties of the Role

20. Review Programme Design

- a. Review relevant programme specifications and module specifications
- b. Review whether the programme structure allows programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met
- c. Consider whether the programme structure, programme aims, and intended learning outcomes are coherent and appropriate for the level of study with reference to the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQs)
- d. Consider whether programme aims and intended learning outcomes meet the expectations of national subject benchmark (where relevant)

21. Review Curriculum and Assessment

- a. Review assessment and intended learning outcomes of the programme
- b. Review the range, the balance and the appropriateness of the assessment methods across the programme
- c. Review opportunities for students to demonstrate their achievement through the assessments

22. Participate in Assessment Procedures

- a. Approve relevant assessment per University policy
- b. Review a representative sample of work, marking and feedback
- c. Adjudicate between markers to determine an individual mark if required and only in exceptional circumstances
- d. Attend relevant School Progression and Awards Board
- e. Provide assurance of assessment procedures and School Progression and Awards Board procedures

Remedies and Causes for Concern

23. If an external examiner does not agree with any of the marks given to assessed work within a sample they may request additional marking of all the student work within the group, additional marking of an element of assessed work of all the students within the group, or adjustment of the mark for all the students within the group.
24. Where an external examiner has cause for concern this would normally be raised with the appropriate school contact in the first instance and an attempt made for a suitable remedy to be found. If deemed appropriate the external examiner could contact the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team directly.
25. External examiners and/or Chair of the relevant School Progression and Awards Board should immediately contact the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement if the external examiner feels unable to provide assurance of the University's standards and assessment procedures.

Annual Report

26. External examiners should complete an annual report for each year of the appointment using the standard report form.
27. Reports should be submitted within six weeks of the relevant School Progression and Awards Board to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team.
28. Reports should not include identifiers (i.e. staff names, student names or dissertation titles).
29. Comments should include observations about programme design, assessment strategy and assessment procedures.

Response to Annual Report

30. The appropriate school contacts will consider and respond to annual reports.
31. Reports and responses are considered at School Taught Student Education Committees and through review activities.
32. Reports and responses are monitored by the relevant institutional Committee.

Annual Fee

33. Fees are paid following the receipt of the annual report and based on the Schedule of Payments (available on the [External Examiner website page](#)).
34. Annual fees for external examiners of programmes consists of a basic fee and per capita element.

University Regulations

35. The University's standards and assessment practices are set within the framework of the University regulations. In 2024, the University reviewed and revised its regulatory framework. The [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) replaced the Rules for Award from the academic year of 2024/25. The [Assessment Policy and Procedures](#) replaced the Code of Practice on Assessment from the academic year of 2025/26.
36. The [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) provide explanation of the principles under which schools are authorised to award on behalf of the University and the general requirements for each type of undergraduate and taught postgraduate award and the classification system.
37. The [Assessment Policy and Procedures](#) set out the principles and procedures which relate to assessment and feedback for taught programmes at the University of Leeds.
38. [Programme Specifications](#) state the minimum credit that must be studied for each award, alongside rules about which modules are compulsory and optional.
39. [Module Specifications](#) state the details of the learning outcomes, teaching and assessment for each module.

Student Cases

40. The University aims for the fair resolution of cases within the framework of the processes and procedures.
41. The Student Cases Team supports the determination and resolution of all allegations of [academic misconduct](#).
42. The Student Cases Team uses the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#) to investigate and resolve appeals against academic decisions made by the University.

Marking Policies and Procedures

43. The marking of student work adheres to the University's standards and assessment policies and procedures. It is important for external examiners to be knowledgeable of the relevant policies and procedures in order to confirm the fairness and appropriateness of the assessment and marking practices and processes.

Marking Scale

44. Faculties and schools return marks on a 0-100 scale. There is an exception for the School of Medicine in relation to Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) programme.
45. P/F modules are marked on a pass/fail basis.

Minimum Pass Mark

46. The minimum pass mark for undergraduate provision is 40.

47. The minimum pass mark for taught postgraduate provision is 50.

Double and Check Marking

48. As a minimum, all marking will be undertaken by an appointed internal first marker. After this, depending on the nature of the assessment, either a sample will be subject to check marking by a second internal marker, or an alternative process will be undertaken to verify the validity of the marking. The criteria for determining the check marking sample marking may include failed pieces; marking undertaken by multiple assessors; marking undertaken by new markers; and assessment with a substantial weighting.

49. Check marking is defined as another member of staff, in addition to the first marker, sampling or auditing the marking across the module to review overall marking standards and consistency between individual markers.

50. Double marking is defined as work being marked independently by another member of staff in addition to the first marker.

51. Double marking is not a requirement but can be used some circumstances e.g. where it is specifically required by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

Anonymous Marking

52. All summative assessment will be marked anonymously except for those situations where this is not practicable as outlined:

- a. Where the assessment takes the form of a practical demonstration performed in the presence of or otherwise viewed by examiners (such as orals, scientific practicals, lab books, clinical examinations, or performances);
- b. Where the assessment takes place over a period of time with support from a designated supervisor, tutor or supervisory team who is also assessing the work.

Assessment Committees

53. School Progression and Awards Boards are responsible for considering and determining on behalf of the Senate the final outcomes of all candidates for programmes of study parented by the school. An external examiner from each relevant programme should attend School Progression and Awards Boards.

54. School Assessment Boards are responsible for considering and determining on behalf of the Senate the results of all assessments for individual candidates for all modules for

which the school has a responsibility. External examiners do not attend School Assessment Boards.

55. School Special Circumstances Committees are responsible for assessing all applications for mitigating circumstances and making recommendations to School Progression and Awards Boards on any adjustment that should be made to accommodate those circumstances. External examiners do not attend School Special Circumstances Committees.

University Special Cases Committee

56. School Progression and Awards Boards can only exercise power within the context of the University's rules and regulations. If following these procedures may lead to a perverse or unfair judgement, the school may make an application to the University Special Cases Committee to make exceptions to the University's rules and regulations.
57. In exceptional circumstances, the University Special Cases Committee may consider and ratify the recommendations of School Progression and Awards Boards in those circumstances when the operation or constitution has been compromised (e.g. non-quorate).

Reassessment

58. The University has agreed procedures within the framework of the University regulations if a student needs to re-attempt an assessment.
59. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are permitted two attempts to pass a module (the first attempt and one reassessment attempt).
60. Reassessment marks are capped. The maximum mark on reassessment for undergraduate modules is 40. The maximum mark on reassessment for taught postgraduate is 50. First attempt resits awarded due to mitigating circumstances are uncapped.
61. School Progression and Awards Boards may determine that the final attempt is dependent upon the candidate repeating the module with teaching.

Special Circumstances Discretion

62. School Special Circumstances Committees can forward recommendations for special circumstances discretion due to serious medical or personal problems.
63. Special circumstances discretion can include additional opportunities for reassessment as a first or extra attempt, or by making alternative assessment arrangements.

64. Module marks may be impacted by agreed assessment arrangements but must not be changed directly.

Eligibility for Progression and Award

65. The University has agreed procedures within the framework of the University regulations for student's eligibility for progression.

- a. Achieved sufficient credits at the required level
- b. Passed all modules indicated as pass for progression/award for the relevant year/award
- c. Met any other requirements set out in the programme specification
- d. Awarded at least 100 credits in the previous programme year for undergraduate programmes

66. The University has agreed procedures within the framework of the University regulations for a student's eligibility for award.

- a. Met the requirements set out in the programme specification
- b. Achieved a classification average which is equal to or greater than the prescribed minimum
- c. Achieved a pass for the module(s) designated as comprising the Final Year Project of the programme (only for Bachelor's degree with Classified Honours and Integrated Degrees of Master and Bachelor)

Degree Classification

67. In 2022, the University approved a revised approach to classification to ensure alignment with the [sector principles for effective degree algorithm design](#). In general, the revised approach will be applied to candidates who commenced their studies from 2022/23 with the first academic year of application being 2024/25. The University will award students under the old and new rules for award until all candidates who commenced their studies under the old rules complete their programmes. The revised degree classification algorithm is as follows.

- a. Use of 0.0 to 100.0 classification scale (instead of 0.00 to 10.00 classification scale)
- b. Use of thresholds at 40.0, 50.0, 60.0 and 70.0 (instead of thresholds at 4.00, 4.95, 5.90 and 6.85)
- c. Use of 0.5 automatic uplift (instead of .05 discretionary uplift)

- d. Use of a 1:2 weighting for FHEQ levels 5 and 6 (instead of better of 1:1 or 1:2 weighting for FHEQ levels 5 and 6)
- e. No discounting for FHEQ levels 5 and 6 (no change to the previous approach)

Contact Us

68. Please do contact the [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team](#) if you have any questions or need any support.