

Higher Education External Examiner – A Guide to Writing Annual Reports

The Context of External Examiner Reports

As an External Examiner, your role is to provide an independent evaluation of the quality of academic and assessment standards for a specific programme(s) at University College Birmingham.

Your role provides an opportunity to act as a critical friend, offering constructive insights into our provision by identifying areas of good practice and opportunities for enhancement. Your written report should provide evaluative feedback to the teaching team and institution on academic standards, student achievement, and the effectiveness of assessment processes leading to programme awards.

As your report is a central component of our quality assurance processes, it is essential that it is comprehensive, robust and evidence based. Concise or superficial reports may hinder our ability to substantiate claims of quality standards. In addition, where concerns are identified, insufficient detail may hinder timely intervention, which may negatively impact student outcomes and their overall learning experience.

Please also be mindful that your report will be shared with academic staff, senior colleagues, relevant external bodies and students. Accordingly, the language used should be carefully considered to ensure it is appropriate for a diverse audience, with no identifiable reference to individual members of staff or students, either by using a name or student ID number, to ensure appropriate confidentiality is maintained.

The Components of External Examiner Reports

The QAA Quality Code on External Expertise (<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-external-expertise.pdf>) outlines the key indicators that define the core content expected in External Examiner reports. All reports should:

- Evaluate the comparability of academic standards across modules within a course and, where relevant, across courses in different institutions. *[Note: If this is your first external examiner role, we would advise that you make comparisons to the standards and practices in your own institution]*
- Assess the alignment of outcomes, how coherent the programme is and whether it achieves the standards appropriate to the programme;
- Review the fairness, transparency and rigour of the assessment processes, including how consistently they have been applied across modules and cohorts.
- Provide informed commentary on student performance, achievement and the overall quality of the programme.
- Provide suggestions for enhancements from your experiences elsewhere.

In addition to the above, your report will also require your observations of the following responsibilities:

- Review of draft assessment briefs and examination papers - As part of our Pre-launch Moderation process, you will receive assessment and examination papers prior to the start of each semester for your review and feedback. We welcome your feedback on their appropriateness to the learning outcomes and sector, as well as their currency, clarity, inclusivity and academic rigour.
- Outcomes from student meetings, academic staff discussions, and examination boards

Should you wish to make a comment on individual modules or practice specific assessments, please ensure that you clearly reference the module by its full title and/or module code.

Please note that if a report is submitted with insufficient detail and does not meet our expected standards, we reserve the right to request revisions to ensure a more comprehensive submission. Payment of fees will be withheld until a report of sufficient quality has been received.

Continued submission of inadequate reports or failure to fulfil your role may result in the termination of your contract.

We hope that you will enjoy your time at UCB as an External Examiner.

HE Quality Department