



Guidance for External Examiners
(Revised August 2025)

Thank you for agreeing to serve as external examiner with us for this academic session, we are most grateful to you. This guide will inform you about the reporting process at the end of each year of your appointment.

In 2007 University College Birmingham was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers and has continued to grow its portfolio of programmes since then. UCB also offer programmes under the Accreditation Agreement with the University of Warwick. The external examining process for both sets of awards has been developed to ensure as much parity as possible.

The University places great value on external examiners and the expertise you bring to this role. The views of all external examiners are important to the University's quality assurance processes and the reports we obtain from you receive careful consideration at School and University level.

This guidance document supplements the University's Code of Practice on External Examining and should assist you to carry out your duties effectively. It includes contact details, information on how the external examiner system is managed at University College Birmingham and provides links to relevant sections of University legislation.

We hope you will find your time as an external examiner a rewarding one and look forward to your contribution to the maintenance of our academic standards.

Best Wishes,

Helen Poole, Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital)

Contact Details

The external examiner system is managed by the HE Quality Department

Tel: 0121 604 1000 ext 2427

Email: HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk

Web: <https://www.ucb.ac.uk/>

Using this document

This guidance is designed to supplement the University Code of Practice on External Examining. Where a section refers to a part of the Code of Practice the relevant clause is listed in brackets. The term 'School' is used throughout this document with reference to your role and responsibilities, but it is acknowledged that your main point of contact will be the HE Quality Department. In several sections the guidance advises you to contact us should any queries arise during your appointment. Please use the contact details on page 2 for this purpose.

1. Your Appointment (2.1 – 2.13)

Upon completion of the nomination form all proposed External Examiners are required to provide a clear scanned colour copy of their right to work documentation detailed in Appendix A of this guide. Once your nomination has been approved by the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital) on behalf of University College Birmingham you should receive an External Examiner Appointment Letter.

This will include details regarding:

- The academic sessions you have been appointed for
- The School you will be working with
- The programme(s) you have been assigned to;
- The fee for each report.

Please check that all this information is correct and contact us if you have any queries. With the letter you will receive a reply form, asking you to confirm that you accept the appointment as external examiner on the terms stated. The University appoints its external examiners to a normal period of service of four years. In some cases, external examiner appointments are extended into a fifth year, but this is considered exceptional, and a case must be made by the HE-Quality Department to the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital).

2. Contact Details

It is important that we can contact our external examiners throughout the year. Therefore, we ask that you keep us informed of any changes to your contact details (address, phone numbers, and email address) including changes to your place of employment. Please note we use email as our first and preferred method of communication with external examiners and a prompt response is much appreciated. The central email address for all communications is HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk.

3. Induction (3.1 - 3.7)

When your appointment has been confirmed the relevant School is notified, and from this point on the University would expect a designated contact from the HE Quality Department to work with you in ensuring you have all the information needed to fulfil your role as an external examiner. This should include;

- Programme handbooks (to include programme and module specifications)
- Student handbooks
- Key dates for the year (e.g. Board of Examiners meetings)
- Guidance on marking and moderation practices
- A copy of the previous external examiner's report and actions arising as a result.

Following your appointment staff from the HE-Quality Department will contact you regarding the online induction. The first part of the induction will be a discussion about the role and responsibilities of an External Examiner and to show you around our VLE, especially your Training Areas where draft documents and moderation sheets will be shared with you, and how to locate the marked student work for each module. During this session your right to work documents will be checked and validated for our records. The second part of the induction will be with the teaching team and they will be able to answer any questions you may have regarding the programme(s).

Newly appointed external examiners will also be invited by the HE-Quality Department to visit the University during February/March, this is opportunity to view our facilities, meet with the teaching team and to have a confidential meeting with students from your programme(s) and to familiarise yourself with the programme(s) you have been asked to examine. If you feel you have not received sufficient information from the School or have not been made aware of key dates well in advance please contact us.

4. Claiming Fees and Expenses (2.7, 7.10)

Fees for the session are determined by the HE-Quality Department and should be confirmed with yourself on appointment. The fee will be paid upon receipt of a satisfactory programme report(s) and you have submitted your fees claim form. Payment of fees will be withheld until the report(s) are deemed to be of a satisfactory standard. The claim form and report template(s) will be sent to you via email by the HE-Quality Department before the visit and/or exam board and your reports should be submitted upon completion to HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk and your claim form to Qualityclaims@ucb.ac.uk, you are advised to encrypt this email to safeguard your personal details, any encryption codes should be sent to HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk so we can access your claim form. Any travel or subsistence fees claimed will need to be supported with scanned receipts submitted at the same time as the claim form.

5. Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision)

The Code of Practice on External Examining is central to the University's External Examiner System. All newly appointed external examiners receive a copy of the Code of Practice and are notified if any substantial changes are made to the Code for a new academic session. The Code is designed to map on to the Quality Assurance Agency's revised guidance on External Examining (Chapter B7 of the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education). It is suggested that on appointment you familiarise yourself with both the University's Code of Practice and the QAA guidance.

6. Draft Assessments (5.2)

The University expects the HE-Quality Department to provide external examiners with all draft assessments, and accompanying model answers / marking criteria, for comment and approval. You will be granted access to all draft assessments 2 weeks before the teaching sessions commence, one week to review and return comments and one week for us to make any amendments based on your comments. In return the Deputy Deans of Quality Assurance and Enhancement should reply to you indicating how your comments have been considered, with a full explanation if any of your suggestions have not been acted upon.

7. Role in Marking/Moderation procedures

a) Approach (5.1)

One of the main roles of the external examiner is to scrutinise the marking and moderation procedures of the University, to ensure high academic standards, which are comparable with other universities in the sector. We do not ask our external examiners to determine marks for individual students but to consider, and provide feedback on, the consistency and accuracy of marking across a cohort. This is achieved through reviewing the marking within each module, and between modules of the same level.

b) Work samples (5.5 - 5.7)

The University expects external examiners to be provided with samples of marked student work. This is mostly conducted electronically and as such a username and password will be issued at the beginning of each academic year by the HE-Quality Department to access our VLE

1. Coursework assessments – a sample will be provided on the moderation sheet with links to the grades page for each module. As these are all electronic, you can view your own sample or remain with those detailed on the moderation sheet.

2. Practical Exam assessments - where applicable these are recorded and shared with each external examiner via the Panopto Recordings tab on each module page, and a link will be provided on the moderation sheet. Any that are not recorded, you will be able to access electronic copies of slides/notes and lecturer feedback.
3. Written Exam assessments – A moderated sample of all paper-based exam booklets will be scanned and uploaded to your Training Area on the VLE for you to view for each relevant module. Should this be an electronic exam a link to the work will be included on the moderation sheet. In some instances, multiple choice exams are marked electronically by the EVA system, for these an EVA report will be provided detailing the spread of grades for each question answered.

In all cases you should have been made aware of the timescales involved, for you to set aside sufficient time to scrutinise the work samples in question. In most cases the moderation sample will be no more than 10 students. The HE-Quality Department should inform you of your role with respect to work samples but, as a rule, the following list gives an idea of what you should be looking at:

1. The work sample should be from across the full mark range
2. There should be a clear indication of how a mark has been arrived at
3. There should be evidence of the moderation process (e.g. markers' comments)
4. Markers' comments should map on to the relevant marking criteria and reflect the mark awarded.

c) Resolving Disagreements (5.8, 5.9)

There may, on occasion, be instances where you disagree with some of the marks awarded by the internal markers within a mark sample. If this occurs then you can request that the School undertakes an additional level of moderation or re-marking, by making the HE-Quality Department know of your disagreement in the first instance., The Deputy Dean of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will ensure that any remarking will be applied to all students within the same grade band not just those within the moderated sample.

The University does not permit external examiners to alter the mark of an individual student's work from the sample, as this would be inequitable for those whose work has not received the additional scrutiny you provide. The University would expect disagreements between internal markers to have been resolved before the work is seen by an external examiner (e.g. through the use of additional internal markers).

8. Board of Examiners Meetings

a) Attendance (6.1 - 6.4)

The University considers all external examiners to be full members of the relevant Board of Examiners (BoE) meetings. On appointment, the HE Quality Department should inform you of the dates of the BoE meetings. The University expects all external examiners to attend BoE meetings as part of their duties. If you are unable to attend a BoE meeting this should be communicated and agreed well in advance by submitting a Non-attendance Form, to the HE-Quality Department and so an alternative mechanism can be put in place to obtain your agreement on the results and decisions made.

b) Endorsement of Results/Awards (6.5 - 6.6)

A key role for the external examiner at the BoE meeting is their endorsement of the results and awards made, and you should be requested to sign a mark/award list or similar to evidence your endorsement. If an external examiner does not endorse a decision taken at the BoE meeting this will be recorded and referred to the Academic Board. In such cases the School will subsequently inform the external examiner of the final decision of the Academic Board meeting.

9. Reporting procedures

a) Submitting your report (7.1 - 7.10)

The University requires all external examiners to submit a satisfactory annual report using the template provided. This is in line with the QAA's guidance and the University's template has been developed to map to QAA requirements. External Examiners will be sent the templates by the HE-Quality Department. We ask that all report forms are completed electronically and sent via e-mail to HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk as this assists us in the storage and communication of the reports. Given that the reports are the heart of quality assurance it is very important they are robust and strongly evidence based. Short and sketchy reports are unhelpful as there will be a lack of evidence to support claims for high quality and standards, and in programmes where there are issues to be addressed, these will be allowed to continue to the detriment of students. Please also bear in mind that reports will be shared with student representatives and more generally with students on the programme on request. The wording of reports must be carefully chosen in the light of the multiple audiences: staff, students, UCB senior staff, and relevant external bodies. There should be no identifiable reference to individual members of staff or students made in the report, either by use of name or student ID number, to ensure appropriate confidentiality is maintained.

Where programmes have a non-standard start date the deadline for the report is agreed with the HE-Quality Department on appointment. If an external examiner wishes to submit any further comments (e.g. following the supplementary examination period for UG programmes) they are free to do so, again using the report template. The deadlines are set to allow the University time to consider the issues arising out of external examiners' reports, and Schools' responses, and determine if any further action is required. The deadlines are intended to give external examiners sufficient time to make their reports while allowing the reports to be considered in good time for any necessary follow-up action to be taken early in the following academic session. If we have not received your report by the specified deadline the HE Quality Department will contact you by e-mail. We would be grateful if you could notify us of any problems or circumstances which may prevent you from submitting your report by the deadlines stated. Please note, if you have been appointed to programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level we do require two separate report forms to be completed for the academic session. All external examiner reports are reviewed by either the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital) or nominee. The University reserves the right to request additional information from an external examiner if it is felt there is insufficient detail in

the original report. Therefore, we ask that all sections of the report are completed as fully as possible. Payment of fees will be withheld until the report is deemed to be of a satisfactory standard.

b) Responding to your report (8.1 - 8.7)

Upon receipt of your report the HE Quality Department will send you an acknowledgement email. After your report has been reviewed by Deputy Deans of Quality Assurance and Enhancement before consulting with the teaching team for a written response to be prepared and signed by the Executive Dean of School. If your report raises developmental issues, you have asked the School to consider you will receive a response to this directly from the School in due course. We ask that Schools respond to external examiner reports within 6 weeks of receipt within the School. However, this may take longer if issues area raised that the School needs to discuss at Committee-level before responding. In these cases the School may need to send you a further response letter later in the year to update you on actions arising from your comments.

If your report raises issues regarding University regulations or procedures Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital) or nominee will respond to you directly. The time it will take to respond will depend on the complexity of the issue raised but again, as with School responses, we would aim to reply to you within 6 weeks. If you feel at any time that issues raised in your report have not been considered appropriately by the School or University, please contact us. Feedback from external examiner reports is also considered by Student Services and Standards Committee and at both School and University-level. If any common issues or themes arise out of these meetings information will be communicated to all external examiners, detailing the University's response to the issue and any subsequent changes to legislation or processes.

10. Working with Students

a) Programme Information (9.1, 9.4 - 9.5)

In line with the QAA's guidance the University is required to include the name, position and

home institution of external examiners in programme information which is made available to students. In most cases this will be the programme handbook, but in some instances Schools may put this information on the University Student Portal, which is password protected. All students registered on taught programmes will receive a guidance document to promote the role of external examiners. In this document the University will explain the 'do's and don'ts' of their interactions with external examiners, including an explicit instruction not to contact you directly under any circumstances. Please let us know if you are approached at any point during your appointment either by a student or by a third party on behalf of a student.

b) Meeting with Students (9.2, 9.3)

The University does encourage external examiners to meet with representative groups of students to discuss their experiences of the programme, so you can provide useful feedback to the School within your report. HE Quality, in conjunction with your School should offer you this opportunity on an annual basis but please feel free to request such a meeting if one is not offered to you. Schools should inform students of the purpose of these meetings, and the limitations (e.g. not being able to discuss individual assessment outcomes).

c) Student Access to Reports (9.6 - 9.9)

External Examiners reports are made available in full to students upon request. In addition, our Guild Officers and Student representatives are present at School and University-level Student Services and Standards meetings where discussion of the issues raised by external examiners takes place.

11. Resignation / Termination of Appointment

a) Resignation (2.14)

During your 4-year tenure there may come a point where you feel, because of a change in your own circumstances, you are unable to continue your duties as external examiner. If this should

occur the University would be grateful if you would notify us in writing, giving, where possible, a three-month notice period. An email resignation should be sent to the HE Quality Department via HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk outlining the reason for your resignation.

b) Termination of appointment (2.10)

The University reserves the right to terminate an external examiner's appointment at any point during their term should the external fail to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as laid out in the University Code of Practice. This may include but is not limited to; unexplained absence from Board of Examiners meetings, the non-completion of scrutiny of work samples, failure to complete a satisfactory annual report in a timely fashion. Termination of appointment is viewed as a 'last resort' and the University does actively work with its external examiners to ensure this action would be in exceptional circumstances. The University also reserves the rights to terminate any appointment that is not supported with the original right to work documents check as detailed in Point 3 – Induction.

c) Closure of Programmes (2.11)

The integrity and security of the learning process is a fundamental tenet of the UCB approach to quality. Whenever possible, where programmes are replaced or discontinued UCB will seek to maintain the 'contract' with those students by seeking to give sufficient notice that the last cohort of students are able to complete the final phase of their programme. If for strategic reasons the final cohort of students are unable to complete their current programme due to early closure, UCB will transfer those students onto another suitable and similar programme for their benefit. In circumstances where programmes are brought to a close it will be necessary to end the contract of the External Examiner for this programme. Should the External Examiner only have this one programme responsibility, their contract will end before their 4-year term is completed.

12. Causes for concern (7.7 and 11.1 - 11.3)

If at any time during your appointment you feel the need to raise confidential concerns, for example where it is necessary to identify an individual within the University, you may submit a separate confidential report (either by letter or email) to the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital) h.poole@ucb.ac.uk and HE-Quality@ucb.ac.uk. Section 11 of the Code of Practice details the steps you can take as external examiner if you feel a concern has not been fully addressed by the University.

13. Further University Information

a) Assessment Regulations

The University's assessment regulations can be found at the following web page.

<https://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/external-examiners/>

b) Codes of Practice

There are a number of other Codes of Practice which may be of use to you in your role.

<https://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/external-examiners/>

HE Quality Department

University College Birmingham

Appendix A - Eligibility to Work in the UK

Eligibility to Work in the UK

Overview

You'll need to prove your right to work in the UK to UCB before you start working for us.

How you do this depends on your nationality and what kind of permission you have to work in the UK.

If you're a British or Irish citizen

If you're a British or Irish citizen, you can prove your right to work in the UK with either of the following:

- a British passport
- an Irish passport or passport card

Your passport or passport card can be current or expired so long as the photograph is an accurate likeness to you currently.

If you're not a British or Irish citizen

If you're not a British or Irish citizen, you can prove your right to work with:

- a share code – to prove your immigration status
- your eligible immigration documents