

Handbook for External Examiners for taught courses

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If you require this handbook in an alternative format, please contact Academic Registry
externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk

1 Introduction

- 1.1 You have been invited to join the University of Bath as an External Examiner because of your expertise and experience in your subject, in learning, teaching and assessment. The University is grateful to you for taking on this role.
- 1.2 This handbook is intended to help you to understand and fulfil your role as an External Examiner at the University of Bath. It sets out the University's expectations, provides further information on our procedures and signposts relevant University ordinances, regulations, codes of practice and policies, and indicates the kind of support you may expect.
- 1.3 Your departmental contacts will provide you with an induction to the course and your role. Departmental information is supported by this Handbook and resources on the [External Examining at the University of Bath SharePoint site](#).
- 1.4 Formal information on External Examining of taught courses at the University of Bath is set out in our Quality Assurance Code of Practice Statement 12 ([QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#)). Other key reference documents are listed in section 6 below.
- 1.5 The details of procedures described in this handbook may be varied under the terms of an Institutional Agreement where a course of study is delivered as a collaborative arrangement with another institution. However, where the University is the awarding body, the appointment and functions of the External Examiner remain the University's responsibility.
- 1.6 This handbook is reviewed annually and updated with changes arising from revisions to the [Quality Assurance \(QA\) Code of Practice](#), [assessment regulations](#) and other requirements e.g., from public or regulatory bodies such as the Office for Students (OfS).

2 Contacting the University

- 2.1 Administration of external examining (taught provision) processes and procedures is overseen by Academic Registry. Queries relating to the University's quality management framework, your appointment and terms of contract should be sent in the first instance to: externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk.

Queries about academic issues, examination papers, dates of meetings, etc, or payment of fees and expenses, should be addressed to your nominated contact in the Department/School/Learning Partnerships Office (LPO), (usually the Head of Department/School/LPO or the Director of Studies).

- 2.2 Your annual report (see Appendix A) should be submitted within six weeks of the completion of the examination process and sent to externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk. You should expect an acknowledgement of receipt. Further details about the report process are given in section 9 of this handbook.

The payment of fees and expenses are authorised once your report has been received.

- 2.3 Details of how to [how to reach us](#) and a [map](#) of the Claverton campus are available online.

3 Quality management at the University of Bath

- 3.1 The University of Bath was awarded its Royal Charter in 1966, but can trace its history, via the Bristol College of Science and Technology and the Merchant Venturers' Technical College, to the Bristol Trade School of 1856. We retain an emphasis upon sciences, engineering and technology, but have also developed our portfolio in humanities and social sciences, management and health.

- 3.2 The mission of the University is to deliver world-class research and teaching, educating our students to become future leaders and innovators, and benefiting the wider population through our research, enterprise and influence. We have a distinctive academic approach that emphasises the education of professional practitioners and the promotion of original inquiry, innovation and collaboration. The University is a centre of academic excellence, where high quality research and high-quality teaching are mutually sustaining, and where the context within which knowledge is sought and applied is international as much as regional and national.

- 3.3 The University comprises sixteen academic Departments grouped into three Faculties (Engineering & Design, Humanities & Social Sciences, Science); as well as the School of Management and the Learning Partnerships Office (LPO).

- 3.4 The University has a bicameral governance structure, with Council as its governing body, and Senate as the supreme academic decision-making body. The principal institutional committees in relation to learning and teaching and quality management are the Education, Quality and Standards Committee and the Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee. Within Faculties and the School, the Board of Studies is responsible to Senate for all matters relating to the organisation of education, teaching and research, including all examination matters. Faculty-level Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees are responsible to the respective Boards of Studies for the detailed scrutiny of the academic standards and quality of the Faculty/School undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision.

- 3.5 The University is committed to bringing together quality assurance and quality enhancement in its mechanisms for the management of the quality of its courses. As an institution with mature quality assurance mechanisms and a well-established reputation for the quality of its

student experience, the University's focus is upon putting into place quality management structures that not only uphold academic standards, but also emphasise the process of self-evaluative reflection that supports ongoing enhancement and development.

- 3.6 The University's principles and responsibilities for assurance of academic quality and standards are outlined in the [Assuring Academic Quality and Standards Policy](#).

For further information see:

- [About the University of Bath](#)
- [The University of Bath Strategy 2021 to 2026](#)

4 Overview of your responsibilities as an External Examiner

National Expectations

- 4.1 The University of Bath fully subscribes to the principle and practice of taking account of external expertise in the management of quality and standards. The role of external expertise in assuring quality and standards in higher education is recognised in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (published in 2024) and associated [External Examining Principles](#), published in 2022.
- 4.2 The University attaches great importance to peer review from External Examiners as a key means of ensuring that:
- the academic standards of University awards and their component parts are set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that the standards of student performance are properly judged against this;
 - the final assessment process accurately measures student achievement against intended learning outcomes, and is rigorous, fair and fairly operated, and in line with University Regulations and policies;
 - the University is able to compare the standard of its awards with those of other higher education institutions;
 - the University's provision is continuously enhanced to reflect developments in the sector, institution and discipline.
- 4.3 The responsibilities of individual External Examiners relate to their role to act as independent and impartial advisers providing informed comment on the academic standards set, and student achievement in relation to those standards.
- 4.4 The University will not make an award without participation in the examining process by at least one Examiner external to the University, who is a full member of the relevant Board of Examiners for Courses.
- 4.5 In keeping with the University's alignment of quality assurance and quality enhancement, the role of External Examiners is not confined to consideration of examination results and attendance at examination boards. External Examiners are encouraged to comment and advise on the content, balance and structure of courses and units, the development of courses/units and on assessment strategies and processes. Your feedback to us, as someone working in the discipline area, is valued and will be used to inform the academic Department's process of reflection on its performance.
- 4.6 External Examiners are expected to record their professional opinion, feeding back to the academic department their views on academic standards, aspects of good practice, learning and teaching, course structure and content.

For further information see:

[Ordinance 15 Examiners and Examinations](#)
[QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#)

5 Your appointment as an External Examiner

- 5.1 At least one External Examiner will be appointed for each course of study, or group of closely related courses of study. Most of the University's External Examiners are appointed to a course and, often collectively with other External Examiners on the course, will provide advice on the course as a whole. In a small number of instances External Examiners are appointed to a specific unit or units. Unit External Examiners will be expected to provide feedback on the units to which they have been appointed but will not be required to participate in activities that relate to the course as a whole such as attending the Board of Examiners for Courses (unless they wish to do so). (See [QA12](#) paragraph 3.8).

Criteria for appointment

- 5.2 You have been appointed to an external examining role having been nominated by the Department/School/LPO and approved by the relevant Board of Studies on behalf of Senate. In coming to a view, the Board of Studies will have discharged its responsibility to ensure that:
- any individual recommended as an External Examiner has an appropriate level of academic, and where appropriate, professional knowledge, seniority and experience;
 - where the nominee is new to external examining, or is from outside the UK Higher Education sector, sufficient induction and briefing has been put in place to enable the nominee to fulfil their role;
 - the nominee has no existing, or prior, connection with the University that would call into question their ability to exercise objective, impartial and independent judgements.
- 5.3 You will be/have been asked to provide the designated information on academic background, knowledge and experience, at which point you are expected to have declared any relevant interests. It is important that if your circumstances change materially and you no longer meet these criteria, you inform the University immediately.

Personal data

- 5.4 All personal data supplied by you for the purpose of your appointment and subsequently concerning your appointment will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be held securely and for no longer than is necessary. The University will use your personal data for purposes connected with your appointment, for example communication about and payment of fees and expenses, and for any other legitimate reasons. The University will not disclose your contact details or any other personal details to third parties (i.e., outside the University) without your consent unless required to do so under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 5.5 Students are informed of the name and institution of External Examiners linked to their course(s) in the Course Handbook. They are advised that it is inappropriate to make direct contact with you, in particular regarding their individual performance in assessments, and advised of the appropriate channels for raising any questions. If you should receive any direct contact of this nature from students, please do not respond but refer the matter to Academic Registry who will guide the student to the appropriate route for their query or comment. The University attaches great value to the informed student voice in its approach to quality management and there are mechanisms in place by which students can engage formally with the process through which the institution considers and responds to External Examiners.

Your period of office

- 5.6 Your initial offer of appointment will usually be for three years, with the possibility of extension for a further year. External Examiners are appointed for no longer than four consecutive years. Upon expiry of this period, External Examiners for taught courses may not be reappointed to the same or any other course of the University until a period of five years has elapsed.
- 5.7 Following your appointment, Academic Registry will issue a letter of appointment to you setting out the period of tenure and the course(s)/units(s) for which you will be responsible.

Fees and expenses

- 5.8 Once your annual report has been received, the Department/School/LPO can proceed with the payment of your fee.
- 5.9 How you are paid will depend on whether you are appointed as an External Examiner to an undergraduate or postgraduate taught course. Under HMRC guidelines, External Examiners for UG courses are treated as University of Bath employees and paid through the payroll, with tax and NI contributions made through PAYE. External Examiners for PGT courses are treated as self-employed with no deduction of income tax/NICs and with fees being declared through a self-assessment tax return. Further details are available at [External Examiner Fees and Expenses](#).
- 5.10 For External Examiners appointed to UG courses, UK legislation requires that a satisfactory right to work check must be completed before any work commences. This does not apply to External Examiners appointed to PGT courses.
- 5.11 Reasonable expenses such as travel costs, accommodation and subsistence incurred through your role as an External Examiner will be reimbursed. Claim forms are available from [External Examiner Fees and Expenses](#). All completed expense claim forms must be submitted to your nominated departmental contact.

Discontinuation of employment

- 5.12 An appointment may be terminated with six months' notice on either side or exceptionally within an earlier period in the circumstances described in [QA12](#) sections 5.10 to 5.15. We would ask that, should you need to resign your position prior to the completion of your contract, you provide if possible, a *minimum* of six months' notice in order to maintain continuity of assessment.
- 5.14 The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of any External Examiner without notice in the circumstances described in [QA12](#) paragraph 5.12.

For further information, see:

- [Ordinance 15](#);
- [QA12](#) sections 4 and 5.

6 Preparing for your role

Induction

- 6.1 Academic Registry, via this Handbook, is providing and/or signposting the key University and national frameworks and relevant supporting documentation with which you need to be familiar.
- 6.2 In addition, the Head of Department/School/LPO will ensure that the following information is sent to you:

- the name of a departmental contact;
 - the composition and membership of the Boards of Examiners including the names and subject areas of other External Examiners;
 - the schedule for examining procedures including the proposed dates of the relevant Board of Examiners meetings;
 - the final report(s) of the outgoing External Examiner(s).
- 6.3 The Department/School/LPO will provide relevant information on the scheme of study and assessment for the course(s)/unit(s) for which you have responsibility, such as:
- the student handbook for the course;
 - the Course Specification and unit descriptions;
 - course assessment regulations;
 - the Department/School/LPO's policy on confidentiality relating to matters of commercial sensitivity, which may arise in relation to assessment of placement and work-based learning (where relevant).
- 6.4 Departmental practices should also be made clear to you. This information may include, as appropriate:
- the method and extent of sampling (which should be agreed with you – see [QA12](#) (para 7.8);
 - the way in which access will be provided to assessed parts of the course (e.g., where the final assessment involves placements or online learning).
- 6.5 The Head of Department/School/LPO is also responsible for ensuring that you receive appropriate induction and briefing material to enable you to appreciate the aims and philosophy of the provision with which you will be associated, and to contribute in an effective manner to the assessment process. In practice, responsibility for briefing and induction may be delegated, for example, to the Director of Studies.
- 6.6 If you are new to external examining or to the UK Higher Education system, you may expect additional appropriate support for the first year of your appointment. This may take the form of a mentoring arrangement with a more experienced External Examiner or additional contact with a relevant member of staff. This support may be a condition of the approval of your appointment.
- 6.7 You may also be offered the opportunity to visit the Department/School/partner organisation to familiarise yourself with the course, the institution, and its procedures, before the assessment procedure. Opportunities may also be provided for you to meet with students on the courses with which you are associated.
- 6.8 The Head of Department/School/LPO is responsible for ensuring that you are informed of any changes affecting your role and responsibilities.

Key reference documents

- 6.9 The following documents reflect the University's regulatory and policy framework, with which you are expected to act in accordance as an External Examiner.

Key reference document	Description, and how this relates to your role	Quick index of topics
Ordinance 15 Examiners and Examinations	This Ordinance establishes the requirement for External Examiners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of External Examiner
Regulation 15 Assessment of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses	Regulation 15 defines in outline the University's procedures for summative assessment, including the position taken on the use of calculators and dictionaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum period of registration

Key reference document	Description, and how this relates to your role	Quick index of topics
Assessment regulations	Assessment regulations to which Boards of Examiners considering the outcomes of compliant courses should adhere. The application of the relevant assessment regulations should be one of the subjects of the External Examiner's report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment regulations for all taught courses • Award of credit • Degree classification
QA12 External Examining (Taught Provision)	This section of the University's QA Code of Practice sets out in formal terms the University's expectations of External Examiners and the external examining process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment • Induction • Assessment • Quality enhancement • Reporting
QA35 Assessment Procedures for Taught Courses of Study	This statement in the QA Code of Practice sets out the principles and procedures relating to assessment decision-making including what is expected of External Examiners (see sections 6.7 and 7.7).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boards of Examiners • Scaling
QA3 Approval of New Courses of Study	Annex A sets out the University's academic framework, and Annex B the University's credit framework, with which all courses of study should conform unless an explicit exemption has been granted by Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee. It is part of your responsibility to ensure that these, together with national frameworks, are being upheld.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit framework • Modular framework • Qualifications framework
QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback	This section of the University's QA Code of Practice provides common definitions used in assessment, and defines University expectations for assessment, marking and feedback to students. The processes employed by Departments/ School/LPO in this regard should be open to audit by External Examiners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Marking • Moderation • Feedback to students
QA53 Examination and Assessment Offences	This section of the University's QA Code of Practice sets out the University's processes for dealing with examination and assessment offences including plagiarism. In particular, if an allegation has not been resolved before the Board of Examiners meets, then that student's performance cannot be considered. Once the allegation has been resolved, it is expected that the Department/School/LPO will consult the External Examiner on the best way to proceed. If an External Examiner, in the course of reviewing student work, suspects an examination or assessment offence has been committed, the Department/School/LPO should be informed immediately, so that the process set out in section 6 of QA53 Examination and Assessment Offences and Regulations 7 and 8 can be carried out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment offences • Plagiarism
Specific rules of IMCs are outlined in our assessment regulations or in the Individual Mitigating Circumstances and	Principles and procedures governing the consideration of individual mitigating circumstances. They identify the difference between individual and structural mitigating circumstances, indicate what are common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Mitigating Circumstances

Key reference document	Description, and how this relates to your role	Quick index of topics
Assessment document. Details of the IMC procedures that apply to specific courses are available here	individual mitigating circumstances, and set out the procedures for dealing with these. Department, School or Faculty panels are required to consider claims by students in advance of Boards of Examiners.	
Statement of Equality Objectives 2023 to 2025	The University is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all students and staff. External Examiners are expected to act in accordance with this policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities
Data Protection and Privacy Statement Summary and Freedom of Information	Data protection legislation is relevant to the storage of personal data about External Examiners; the handling of student data during the assessment process; and, together with Freedom of Information legislation, is pertinent to the handling of External Examiners' reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection • Freedom of Information

6.10 From 2022/23 the University has been transitioning to new assessment regulations. For all undergraduate courses the regulations (previously known as the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations) have been rearticulated into a new, clearer, succinct format known as the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations or UGAR. UGAR applies to all undergraduate courses except any Foundation Degree and Honours Year courses. Postgraduate taught courses are transitioning to a new set of assessment regulations (PGTAR) between 2022/23 to 2025/26. More information on which set of regulations apply to a course can be found at [Assessment Regulations](#).

6.11 Examiners are also expected to take nationally recognised frameworks into account:

- the [Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#)
- where applicable, [subject benchmark statements](#);
- where applicable, the expectations of professional accrediting bodies.

7 Your role in assessment

- 7.1 The role of the External Examiner is to verify the quality of final assessment processes and ensure that academic standards of awards are set and maintained at the appropriate level (rather than to seek to judge individual cases). Final assessments are defined in [University Regulations](#) as those assessments the results of which count in determining the award or the level of the final award (Degree, Diploma or Certificate of the University).
- 7.2 The External Examiner should be an independent and impartial adviser who provides informed comment upon the academic standards set and the students' achievement in response.
- 7.3 In support of these general principles, the External Examiner is involved in:
- assuring the quality and validity of assessments at the design stage, including the quality of assessment criteria and the setting of assessment questions;
 - assuring the quality of the marking and grading processes, including the quality of marking, moderation/double marking, scaling, etc.;
 - assuring the correct application of relevant assessment regulations;
 - assuring the fairness of the examining and examination board processes;
 - ensuring the consistent use of marking boundaries for units and helping Departments/Schools/partner organisations to calibrate their marking;
 - verifying that the standards achieved by students are appropriate to the level of study;

- confirming that the academic standards sought and achieved are comparable with other universities in the United Kingdom.

These principles are drawn from QA12 External Examining (Taught Provision), section 7.

- 7.4 You are therefore expected to:
- comment by the deadline specified on draft examination papers or other proposed forms of assessment referred to you;
 - review the work of students;
 - provide input, where necessary, to meetings of the Board of Examiners (see below paras 7.13 to 7.15);
 - attend the final Board of Examiners for Courses where awards are considered, participating as a full member by contributing to decisions/recommendations being made.

Moderating the setting of assignments and examination papers

- 7.5 The first responsibility that you are likely to undertake will be the reviewing of and commenting upon examination questions and other assignments. The University expects that all summative examination papers and summative assessment tasks which make a significant¹ contribution to a final award of the University should be externally moderated following the internal moderation procedure. Other supporting materials, such as model solutions and/or marking criteria, will be provided where appropriate to the discipline.
- 7.6 The University expects that each piece of assessment that contributes to a final award should have clear marking criteria or model answers appropriate to the discipline. You are therefore asked to comment upon the quality of assessment criteria as well as to review examination questions and assignments.
- 7.7 As you will appreciate, the preparation of examination papers is a significant and time-critical task. We therefore encourage you to work closely with your nominated contact to ensure that examination papers are prepared, not only to the highest standard, but also in a timely fashion.
- 7.8 Procedures for moderation are open to audit by External Examiners who may advise on the appropriateness of the mechanisms for moderating the summative assessments set.

See:

- [QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#), section 7
- [QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback](#)

Reviewing student work

- 7.9 An External Examiner has the right to see all degree examination scripts and any assignments contributing to the assessment of the final award (where the University's retention policy allows). In cases where it is agreed that only a selection of scripts shall be inspected, the principles for such selection must be agreed in advance and must normally include those around classification borderlines (on the understanding that borderline candidates should be considered collectively rather than as individual cases). Where a selection has been agreed, External Examiners may wish to see a representative sample from the top, middle and bottom of the range, and all failures. The guiding principle is that External Examiners should have seen sufficient assessments to assure themselves that internal marking and the resultant classification of awards are of an appropriate and consistent standard.

¹ defined as all work contributing 7% or more towards degree classification

- 7.10 As External Examiner, you will be asked to review and comment upon student work that has already been assessed internally. This may be sent to you in advance of the Board of Examiners' meeting. Alternatively, if arrangements have been made for this, you may undertake the review while visiting the University, before the Board of Examiners' meeting.
- 7.11 When looking at student work, you are expected to determine whether the academic standards are comparable, in your professional opinion, with national frameworks, and with any similar courses in your own institution or other institutions for which you are an External Examiner.
- 7.12 You are expected to respect the confidentiality of the materials you review. Any personal data must be held securely, and details of examination scripts or project/dissertation work must not be disclosed to a third party without prior permission. All student work must be returned to the Department/School/partner organisation upon completion of the assessment process. Examination scripts themselves may not be disclosed following a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018, but students do have right of access to any comments or notes recorded on the script. Do not therefore record any comments on an examination script that you would not be happy for a student to see. For more information, see the University's [Data Protection and Privacy Statement summary](#).

Participation in Boards of Examiners' meetings

- 7.13 External Examiners are members of Boards of Examiners for Units and Boards of Examiners for Courses. They are involved in agreeing marks contributing towards final awards and the determination of final degree classifications.
- 7.14 External Examiners are not expected to attend meetings of Board of Examiners for Units (BEUs) but they may attend if they wish to do so. You may be contacted if an unusual situation arises (for instance a unit is scaled) and your advice is needed. A decision to scale a unit should not normally be made without your input.
- 7.15 External Examiners are required to attend the main meetings of the Boards of Examiners for Courses (BECs) where awards are considered. The University will not make an award without participation in the examining process by at least one Examiner external to the University. External Examiners are not expected to attend BECs considering the progression of students only (where awards will not be considered) unless the course is new (and therefore there is not a BEC meeting to consider finalists). Neither are they expected to attend BECs considering awards following supplementary assessment, on the basis that they will have had an opportunity to judge academic standards on the course(s) earlier in the cycle. Decisions regarding exit awards may be made without an External Examiner present. However, you must have had the opportunity to comment on assessed work associated with the exit award for an award to be made.
- 7.16 The Department/School/LPO will contact you in advance in order to establish a date for the Board of Examiners' meeting at which your attendance is required. If, in an emergency, you are not able to attend a meeting, please contact your nominated contact immediately in order that an alternative arrangement can be made.
- 7.17 Your nominated contact will brief you further on the operation of the Board of Examiners. The formal procedures for Boards of Examiners are set out in full in [QA35 Assessment Procedures for Taught Courses of Study](#).
- 7.18 A Board of Examiners makes collective decisions with all members being full and equal, and no one member having primacy. External Examiners may be called upon to advise but it is the Board of Examiners as a body that must reach a collective decision.

- 7.19 The focus of your role and that of the Board of Examiners should generally be upon overall standards and upon the fair application of relevant regulations and processes, rather than upon consideration of individual student cases.
- 7.20 These meetings are, by their nature, formal in tone, but this should not prevent you from commenting on the quality of awards or on the examination process as you see fit.
- 7.21 At the final BEC meeting External Examiners will be invited to make a brief verbal report on the quality and standards of the course and the assessment processes, commenting on the University's adherence to the points of principle set out in para 7.3. External Examiners will also be expected to comment on the development of the course and highlight opportunities for enhancement. Where there is more than one External Examiner, the BEC provides an opportunity for the External Examiners to meet and exchange views on the course. Collectively External Examiners should be able to provide an overview of the course as a whole (see [QA12](#) paragraph 3.5). This may mean taking into consideration the views of External Examiners on units taught outside the course.
- 7.22 Unless you specify otherwise, it will be assumed that you support the decisions of the BEC which will then be recommended to the Board of Studies which makes awards on behalf of Senate.
- 7.23 Minutes of Boards of Examiners meetings constitute personal data. You should therefore respect the confidentiality of Boards of Examiners meetings and be aware that the minutes of meetings may be made available to a student making a subject access request under the Data Protection Act.
- 7.24 If after thorough and careful discussion, an External Examiner should feel unable to participate in the collective decision of the Board of Examiners or to endorse the conduct of the assessment process, the Secretary to the Board will make a full report to the Board of Studies in the Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Boards of Studies have responsibility for consideration of the recommendations of Boards of Examiners for Courses and approve decisions on progression and the making of awards, under authority from Senate.

See [QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#), section 7
[QA35 Assessment Procedures for Taught Courses of Study](#), paras 6.2, 6.7, 7.2 and 7.7

8 Quality enhancement

- 8.1 As indicated above, the University values your expertise in contributing to the ongoing enhancement of the quality of the University's provision through commenting and advising on the content, balance and structure of courses and units, the development of courses/units and on assessment strategies and processes.
- 8.2 Your involvement may take a variety of forms:
- your visits are an opportunity for the Department/School/partner organisation to discuss with you the structure of the course(s) of study and the curriculum, and to share ideas in light of your expertise in the discipline/experience of similar courses in peer institutions
 - your reports are used to inform the process of Annual Monitoring of units and courses, contributing to the action plan of developments and enhancements to the course(s) planned for the year ahead
 - your reports and comments also form part of the evidence base for periodic review of the course(s): Degree Scheme Review, or equivalent. Periodic review is an opportunity

for the Department/School to step back from the day-to-day development and delivery of a course, drawing upon input from academic peers, professional bodies, employers and students, in order to revisit the aims and intended learning outcomes of the course, examine the existing quality of provision and identify opportunities for ongoing improvement. Your External Examiner reports will form part of the evidence base for periodic review, and the Department/School may also invite you to contribute further comments as part of the review process.

- when proposing amendments to courses of study affecting the nature and pattern of assessment, Departments/Schools/the LPO will invite your comments on the proposal. The aim of this is to seek your advice on the potential impact of a proposed change upon academic standards, but also, through peer review, to ensure that proposals take account of best possible practice.

See [QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#) section 8.

9 Your External Examiner's report

- 9.1 You are required to provide an annual report on the course(s) and/or unit(s) for which you are appointed, including observations on academic standards, aspects of good practice, learning and teaching, course structure and content.
- 9.2 The University has a standard template for External Examiners' reports. The most recent version of the template is always available for download from the [QA12 External Examining Taught Provision](#) webpage (as [QA12](#) form 2).
- 9.3 In the report, you are asked to comment on the appropriateness of academic standards, adequacy of information, appropriateness of learning outcomes and assessment, the arrangements for the Board of Examiners and the examination process, and the quality of learning and teaching methods. There is no prescribed length for reports, however, you are asked to provide reports that are as full and detailed as possible.
- 9.4 Where a course is delivered via a number of modes or partners, this should be reflected in your report, either by the submission of separate reports, or by clear differentiation of comments on each mode or partner within the body of a single report.
- 9.5 If this is your final year as External Examiner, we would welcome your further comments upon your period of office. This report is then made available to the incoming External Examiner.
- 9.6 The External Examiner's report form is divided into two parts. In keeping with the University's commitment to the informed student voice, the University shares Part 1 of the form with student Academic Representatives via Staff Student Liaison Committees and with students directly, on request. It is expected that the majority of your comments will be provided within Part 1 of the form. You should NOT include any data relating to individual staff or students in Part 1. Part 2 is provided for instances where you find it necessary to make comments relating to an individual student or member of staff or make comments of particular sensitivity or importance (The full formal statement of the University's position is provided in [QA12 External Examining \(Taught Provision\)](#) and on the report form itself).
- 9.7 If you feel that there are any matters of serious concern arising from the process which may put the standard of the University's awards at risk, you should report this to the Vice-Chancellor.

- 9.8 Your annual report should be completed and submitted within six weeks of the completion of the examination process. We recognise that our External Examiners give important feedback on the operation of our courses, and the timely receipt of reports enables us to take early action to address issues raised and make an impact on the experience of the next cohort of students. It is therefore vital that you meet the deadline for the submission of reports.
- 9.9 Where possible, reports should be submitted electronically to: externalexaminers@bath.ac.uk. Alternatively, they can be sent by post to the Vice-Chancellor, care of: Academic Registry (External Examiners), University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY. This enables us to acknowledge receipt promptly.
- 9.10 If we do not receive a report from you, you will receive a reminder from the Head of Department/School/LPO. If a report is still not forthcoming, a further reminder will be sent to you on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.

What happens to your report?

- 9.11 You can expect consideration to be given to any concerns that you raise and can expect to have the nature of any resultant action or rationale for lack of action communicated to you.
- 9.12 Once you have submitted your report, its receipt will be acknowledged by Academic Registry, and it will be circulated to relevant staff in the Department/School/LPO and Faculty.
- 9.13 Having received your report, the Head of Department/LPO should respond to you in writing, normally within six weeks of receipt of the report. A copy of this response will be lodged with Academic Registry.
- 9.14 The Head of Department/School/LPO is responsible for ensuring that any matters of concern raised in your reports are addressed at course level, by raising specific points with the academic staff responsible for the delivery of the course of study. Where the requirements of external professional bodies are the focus of comments, the Head of Department/School/LPO is also responsible for informing those bodies of action taken in response to your report. In practice, some of these duties may be delegated to an appropriate member of staff, such as the Director of Studies.
- 9.15 Where broader issues are raised, action is taken at the appropriate level, whether this is at the level of the faculty or the institution.
- 9.16 Your report and the response to it are considered internally as part of the annual monitoring of courses; and an annual overview of issues and good practice raised by External Examiners is prepared for consideration by the Education, Quality and Standards Committee.
- 9.17 Your report may also be made available to public and professional bodies in processes of audit and accreditation.
- 9.18 If you have very serious and continuing concerns about issues related to standards and have already exhausted previous discussions with the Head of Department or the Dean but without satisfaction, you may contact the Vice-Chancellor directly and confidentially by email (vice-chancellor@bath.ac.uk) or post (address above in 9.9) with 'confidential' in the address or heading.
- 9.19 Beyond this stage you have recourse to the procedures set up by the [Office for Students for investigating concerns](#) raised about issues related to standards or you may inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

See also [QA12](#) section 9.