

THE NOMINATION, APPOINTMENT, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND THE CONSIDERATION OF THEIR REPORTS

(including procedures for responding to external examiner reports and their contribution to annual monitoring and quality enhancement planning and reporting)

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The Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners

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Guidance on the completion of the External Examiner's Report form can be found at:
<https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/EEE/ExternalExaminers/Documents/EEUserGuideFinal-August-2019.pdf>

The Awards Board External Examiner's Report form is located at:
<https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/EEE/ExternalExaminers/Documents/Awards-Board-External-Examiner-Report-Form.aspx>

1. The Nomination and Consideration of Proposed External Examiners

Procedures

- 1.1 All External Examiners proposed for appointment to University courses/programmes (even in those cases where the Validating Body reserves the right of final approval) will require the formal approval of Senate. Until such approval is obtained a proposed Examiner must not undertake any external examining duties for the University and the relevant Assessment Board is not authorised to assess students for the relevant award nor to recommend the conferment of the award upon a student.
- 1.2 Deans of Faculty/Heads of Schools or their nominee/Programme Leaders will be responsible for submitting proposals to the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer. In making such nominations they will be required to take account of the criteria specified in paragraph 1.6 below. Advice on the interpretation of the criteria will be provided upon request by the Standards and Enhancement Office.
- 1.3 The Education Committee's External Examiners Nominations Sub-committee will scrutinise and consider all external examiner nominations. The Sub-committee will recommend approval of new External Examiners to Senate, refer nominations back to the School, or reject them (giving reasons in both instances). Exceptionally, the Chair of the Sub-committee may take external advice on specific nominations. Chair's action may be taken in individual cases on behalf of the Sub-committee or Senate.
- 1.4 Proposals for the nomination of External Examiners for newly approved University programmes and for the nomination of replacement Examiners for those Examiners whose terms of office are due to expire, should be made as soon as possible in the academic year prior to that which contains the first examinations/assessments with which the proposed Examiner is to be involved. Ideally, this will be twelve months before the date of the first examinations /assessments with which the External Examiner will be involved. Proposal forms, which must be submitted with a complete academic CV from the nominee, should be completed in full by the School concerned according to the procedures described in: <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/EEE/ExternalExaminers/Documents/EENSC-DRAFT-TOR-19-20.pdf>

Proposal forms are available at:
<https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/EEE/ExternalExaminers/Documents/EE1-2019.doc>
- 1.5 External Examiners will normally be approved for four calendar years or four successive cohorts of students, whichever is longer. Normally, where assessments take place in the summer term, appointments will run from the October before the first assessment to the September after the last assessment. In certain exceptional circumstances (e.g. to provide

continuity during a period of course review and/or modification, or following the introduction of a related new course, or to act as mentor to a new examiner), appointments may be extended for a further 12 months upon consideration by the External Examiners Nominations Sub-committee of a completed application for extension or reallocation of duties <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/EEE/ExternalExaminers/Documents/EE2.doc> submitted via the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer. It will be the responsibility of the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer to maintain an up-to-date register of approved External Examiners and to publish this annually to Programme Leaders together with a reminder, at least twelve months before they fall due, of the expiry dates of the terms of office of External Examiners. It will then be the responsibility of Schools to propose new external examiner nominations in accordance with the timescale noted in paragraph 1.4.

Criteria for Appointment

- 1.6 In approving the appointment of External Examiners, Senate will be seeking to ensure that they are competent and impartial and that Assessment Boards maintain the overall balance and diversity necessary to ensure that students are fairly assessed. Other things being equal, Senate will look favourably upon nominees who have completed professional development activities in external examining.

Person Specification

Proposers of external examiner nominations should ensure that there is appropriate evidence of the following:

1. knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
2. competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof
3. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
4. competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures
5. sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers
6. familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed
7. fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements)

8. meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies
9. awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
10. current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the field of study concerned
11. competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Conflicts of Interest

External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that the course/programme benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.

Proposers of External Examiner nominations should however bear in mind that anyone in the following categories or circumstances would not normally be approved:

1. a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners
2. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
3. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
4. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
5. anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
6. former staff or students of the University unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the proposed external examiner have completed their programme(s)
7. a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
8. the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the outgoing examiner's home department and institution
9. the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of an institution

Terms of Office

1. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years/outputs, with an exceptional extension of one year, as described in 1.5 above.
2. An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has

- elapsed since their last appointment.
3. External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.
 4. There should be an appropriate balance of expertise in the team of External Examiners:
 - * The proposed examiner should complement the external examining team in terms of expertise and examining experience.
 - * Where appropriate, there should be an appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners.
 - * The range of academic perspectives necessary to the course/programme should be represented in the external examining team.
 - * If the course/programme is associated with or may lead to a professional award, at least one practitioner with appropriate experience should be in the team.
 - * The external examining experience in the team as a whole must be sufficient and wide-ranging.
 - * The phasing of appointments to the team should be structured to ensure continuity.

Awards Board External Examiner

Appointment

1. At least one Awards Board External Examiner must be appointed for each Awards Board to which there is allocated more than one module and/or programme external examiner.¹
2. It shall be the responsibility of the Head of the appropriate organisational unit in the University (Faculty, School, Centre, Division, Institute, etc), or their declared nominee for the purpose, to ensure that at least one Awards Board External Examiner is nominated for each of the Awards Boards falling within their jurisdiction.
3. There may be circumstances in which there is more than one such appointment to a particular Board, e.g. in the case of a Board which is responsible for unusually disparate, large and/or complex provision, particularly where collaborative delivery is involved.
4. In addition to the responsibilities described below, an Awards Board External Examiner will (if, as will usually be the case, they also have module/programme

¹ In circumstances agreed with the Standards & Enhancement Office, the title 'Awards Board External Examiner' may be replaced with the title 'Senior External Examiner' but the person specification and responsibilities will be the same.

examining duties) enjoy all of the other rights and responsibilities attributed to external examiners and declared elsewhere in this document (but see 7 below).

Person specification

The normal criteria for the approval of an External Examiner will apply to the nomination of an individual who is to act as an Awards Board External Examiner.

5. In addition, the nominee will normally possess prior experience of external examining (typically at least one completed appointment of an appropriate kind) and/or other relevant qualities, sufficient to provide the University with the confidence that they will be able to execute their responsibilities and command the necessary esteem amongst their internal and external examiner peers.
6. Awards Board External Examiners will normally be expected to hold module and/or programme external examining duties in addition to their Awards Board External Examiner duties, although this requirement may be waived in particular circumstances, subject to the approval of the External Examiner Nominations Sub-committee, e.g. if there were no existing module/programme external examiner sufficiently experienced to take on the role.

1.7 Appointment of Mentors for External Examiners new to external examining

The University's criteria for appointment of External Examiners allow for examiners to be drawn from a wide variety of institutional, professional/industrial contexts and from PSRBs so that, where appropriate, there is an appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners. In approving the appointment of External Examiners, Senate will be seeking to ensure that they are competent to undertake their duties and have enough recent external examining or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area.

The Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code, External Expertise Chapter indicates that where an inexperienced External Examiner is appointed institutions may wish to consider appointing an experienced External Examiner as a mentor to provide advice and guidance.

Appointment of Inexperienced External Examiners

Inexperienced external examiners, other than those who have completed appropriate professional development activities in external examining, will normally have an experienced external examiner appointed as their mentor for a period of 12 months. The mentor will typically be the Awards Board External Examiner for the subject area. If this is not possible an appropriate mentor should be identified from a different subject area.

Guidance on the nomination of mentors is given below.

Nomination of mentors

When nominating inexperienced External Examiners, Schools should give due consideration to the identification of satisfactory mentoring arrangements, including the nomination of an appropriate mentor.

Where possible, an inexperienced External Examiner should be appointed to a team of experienced examiners within a subject area, with a suitable mentor, normally the Awards Board External Examiner, being identified within the team. If this is not possible an appropriate mentor should be identified from a different subject area.

A mentor should:

- currently be an external examiner at the University;
- have produced satisfactory External Examiner reports (one or more) for the University;
- have recent experience of working in Higher Education in the UK.

Experienced External Examiners who have agreed to be mentors should be nominated through completion of the form EE2 which, following signature by the proposed mentor, should be submitted via the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer to the External Examiners Nomination Sub- Committee for consideration.

Duties of mentors

While the precise details of what will be covered during the mentoring period may differ depending on individual circumstances the provision of advice and guidance is the general role of the mentor. The list of key topics given below should not be regarded as exhaustive but discussions may centre around:

- the role of external examiners
- assessment board processes
- the approaches to moderation
- requirements for annual reporting and approaches to this
- sharing of previous reports/drafts for current academic year
- current issues in HE and/or in the subject area which may be relevant
- common scenarios.

There is no requirement for face-to-face meetings of the mentor and the mentee, other than at the time of visits to the University for the assessment board(s) and it is envisaged that most contact will be via e mail, telephone etc.

A fee of £50 is payable on completion of the mentoring duties and should be claimed on the External Examiners' claim form.

2. Notification of Approval and Conditions of Appointment

- 2.1 Once external examiner nominations have been formally approved by Senate, the Standards and Enhancement Office will be responsible for notifying individual Examiners of their periods of approval and their terms

of appointment. Heads of Schools, Academic Co-ordinators (Standards, Enhancement & Learner Experience), Programme Leaders, the Academic Administration Manager and the Human Resources Department will be notified simultaneously of the appointment so that working relationships can be established quickly and smoothly. Programme Teams will be reminded of their responsibilities in dealing with External Examiners, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

- 2.2 Each External Examiner will be issued with a letter of appointment, specifying the University's requirements and expectations and providing information on matters relating to fees, expenses and administrative arrangements. In order to comply with UK Visas and Immigration legislation Senate-approved external examiners must return a signed Acceptance of Appointment form together with a photocopy of their evidence of legal entitlement to live and work in the UK (eg passport). **BEFORE** the newly appointed external examiner undertakes any external examining duties they must attend an induction event at which their original identification document will be verified by a member of the Standards & Enhancement Office. Guidance on the format of reports and good practice in terms of relationships with Programme Teams and with the University will be provided in accordance with Section 3 of this document.
- 2.3 In the case of undergraduate and postgraduate modular programmes the relevant assessment regulations, constitution and terms of reference of examination boards, roles of external examiners and operation of assessment boards will be sent to new examiners on appointment by the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer.
- 2.4 The letter of appointment and conditions of appointment will embody the following:

1. Communication between External Examiners and the University

- i) External Examiners will be expected to report formally to the University's Senate via the Vice Chancellor, c/o the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer. External Examiner reports are to be completed using the on-line Qualtrack reporting system.
- ii) All fees and expenses claims should be sent to eereports@bolton.ac.uk and will be dealt with by the Standards and Enhancement Office.

2. Fees and Expenses

The standard annual fee and any supplements to be paid in respect of any additional duties or significant extra workload will be as agreed between the Examiner and the relevant Schools and are detailed in the letter of appointment. All claims and correspondence concerning fees and expenses should be addressed to eereports@bolton.ac.uk

- i) Hotel and overnight accommodation and subsistence expenses in connection with external examining business will be paid for by the relevant School. The Programme Leader or nominee will make the necessary practical arrangements.
- ii) Car travel expenses will be paid by the relevant School on the basis of a mileage allowance in accordance with the current rates. Rail travel (standard class rail fare) and other travel expenses will be met on an individual basis as itemised on the claim form.

3. Fulfilment of Conditions of Appointment

All External Examiners will be expected to agree with programme teams an appropriate set of practices for monitoring the standards of student achievement on the Programme for which they are responsible. The practices established between programme teams and External Examiners will be subject to the guidelines laid down in sections 3 and 4 of this document. These practices should include the sampling of student work, attendance at assessment boards and the production of a report for the University on the performance of students and the overall standard of the Programme.

An External Examiner may report directly and confidentially to the Chair of Senate on any matter of serious concern arising from assessments. As a last resort, and where the concern is systemic and not a one-off case of ineffective practice, the external examinee can raise the matter externally with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

If, in the judgement of the Head of School or nominee, it is felt that an External Examiner is failing to discharge her/his duties properly, has demonstrated inappropriate behaviour or a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then the Head of School or nominee (having first discussed the matter with the Programme Team and the External Examiner) may request that Senate terminate the appointment of an External Examiner before the approved period of office has expired. Such a decision would be taken only in the most exceptional circumstances and would not be related to the academic judgements made by an External Examiner about the standards of assessment on a course/programme.

4. EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) (2018)

External Examiners' Personal Information

Introduction

On 25 May 2018 the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force; it is supplemented by the UK Data Protection Act 2018

(DPA). To adhere with the legislation, this statement describes the personal information we collect from external examiners and how we use this information; it also outlines internal and external examiners' and other staff obligations in respect of students' personal information.

External examiner information held centrally

The University collects the following personal information from external examiners:

- i) Name and contact information (eg work (or home) address, email address, telephone number);
- ii) Qualifications and experience to enable us to determine suitability to act as an external examiner;
- iii) Passport/visa information to enable us to undertake the required UKVI checks (held only by the University's HR Department);
- iv) Bank and NI details (held only by the University's Standards and Enhancement Office and Finance Department).

This information is stored securely and used for the following purposes in relation to an individual's employment as an external examiner with the University of Bolton:

- v) To manage the process of nomination and appointment as an external examiner;
 - vi) To provide the necessary information to enable the external examiner to fulfil their responsibilities;
 - vii) To ensure appropriate payment of fee and expenses claims;
 - viii) To ensure that the University maintains a complete institutional record of nominations and appointments.
1. This information is held for the period of the external examiner's appointment with the University of Bolton and is retained thereafter in accordance with our Records Retention Schedule² after an external examiner's appointment ends (*currently for one year after cessation of appointment*). However, in order to help discharge our responsibilities in respect of avoiding repeat appointments and other potential conflicts of interest, we retain the following information for at least five years

² https://www.bolton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Records-Retention-Schedule_April-2018.pdf

following cessation of appointment: Name; Institution; Dates of Appointment.

Sharing external examiner information

2. The University's standard practice is to advise only relevant staff of their external examiner's contact details and also to provide this information for other external examiners associated with the programme(s), unless an external examiner specifically asks us not to do so. We also transfer passport/visa information to our HR department to confirm that right to work checks have been completed.
3. External examiners' names, positions and institutions/workplaces will be made available in student programme handbooks. In the event of a student making direct contact with an external examiner (which programme handbooks say is NOT appropriate), our advice is to refer the matter to the Programme Leader.
4. In line with the advice and guidance on External Expertise in the UK Quality Code, all current University students and staff can access External Examiners' reports, which include the name and institutional or other affiliation of the External Examiner concerned. External examiners' reports are published on the University's intranet and shared with student representatives through appropriate student/staff committee structures to strengthen student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. It is important, therefore, that **INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OR MEMBERS OF STAFF MUST NOT BE IDENTIFIED IN REPORTS**. Confidential reports to the Vice Chancellor are not routinely shared with students or staff.
5. In general, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests received by the University for the disclosure of external examiner reports or the personal information of external examiners will be treated on a case-by-case basis. The decision whether to disclose will be made taking into account all relevant factors, including the external examiners' rights under data privacy laws, whether the public interest supports disclosure, and any relevant exemption from disclosure under the FOIA that may apply. The external examiner concerned will be consulted about the request but, if requested, the University has a statutory duty to consider disclosing the information. All requests will be considered by reference to any relevant guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office.
6. You should however note that, if the University receives a Freedom of Information request for an external examiner's report then the report will normally be released, subject to deleting the name and institution or other affiliation of the examiner concerned and omitting any reference to other named individuals.

5. **Safeguarding**

The University recognises that it has a duty of care in creating a safe environment for children and adults at risk for their studies or employment, and, by working with appropriate external agencies, is committed to ensure that they are safeguarded and protected from harm.

The [University's Safeguarding Policy](#) is applicable to all members of staff and students as well as visitors to the University, where appropriate. Advice and guidance for external examiners is contained in Annex C. Support and advice will be provided if/when safeguarding issues arise.

3. **Notes for Guidance on External Examiners Reports and Relationships with Programme Teams**

Rights and Responsibilities of External Examiners

1. The rights and responsibilities of Module/Programme External Examiners and Awards Board External Examiners are described in full in section 10 of the Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards.

Responsibilities of Programme Teams with respect to External Examiners

2. Programme Leaders/Heads of Schools or their nominees (as appropriate), will be required to brief External Examiners on the nature of the programme, examination and assessment arrangements and regulations together with the procedures for ensuring full involvement of the External Examiner in the examination and assessment process. It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that this briefing provides as much information as is necessary for the Examiner to function effectively, including where applicable, provision of the previous year's reports to facilitate year-on-year comparability. The Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer is to be invited to attend all such briefing meetings to provide information on institutional policies and procedures relating to the External Examiner's role and to verify that the external examiner is eligible to work in the UK. The SEO will be responsible for monitoring the arrangements for induction meetings made by Schools and for reminding them that an SEO representative must be invited to attend.

Specifically, the following matters should be covered during the initial briefing meeting:

By the Standards and Enhancement Office:

1. Rights and responsibilities of External Examiners: the meeting of academic threshold standards (including collaborative provision)
2. Confirmation of the programmes and, if applicable, partners involved
3. Identification of the mentor (if one has been appointed)

4. Outline of requirements in relation to GDPR
5. Attendance at meetings of the assessment boards, signing the lists
6. Reporting requirements, fees and expenses
7. Follow-up of reports internally
8. Feedback to External Examiner.

By the Programme Team:

1. The nature of the programme, its aims, intended learning outcomes, structure and curriculum content (including collaborative provision) Provide Programme Specification and Programme Handbook
 2. Examination and assessment requirements
 3. Internal moderation system
 4. How the External is to be fully involved in the examination and assessment process (including collaborative provision)
 5. Involvement in appeals and plagiarism cases
 6. Dates of assessment boards
 7. Dates for receiving student work
Samples of work to be received
 8. Structure and powers of the assessment board
 9. Assessment regulations for the programme
 10. Involvement in consideration of student appeals, mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct.
3. In addition, programme teams and External Examiners should agree upon the procedures to be used for sampling student work, on the extent of involvement of the External Examiner in the moderation of coursework, formal examinations and other forms of assessment, and on how the Examiner is to be involved if required in consideration of student appeals, mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct. The University's practice in respect of the handling of assessment date, including examiners' comments and marks is described in Annex B. Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that External Examiners receive work for appraisal in good time for moderation before a Board.

External Examiner Reports

4. The purpose of an External Examiner's report is to enable the University to judge whether a programme is meeting its stated objectives and to draw the attention of the programme team and the University to matters of good practice or issues which might require further attention. Reports are published to current students and staff on the University's intranet site to help disseminate findings to relevant parties. External Examiners are free to comment on any issues affecting student performance on which they see fit. **THEY SHOULD HOWEVER, NEVER MENTION INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OR STAFF BY NAME IN PUBLISHED REPORTS.** If they feel it necessary, an External Examiner may send a separate confidential report on a student or member of staff to the Chair of the Assessment Board. The University asks its External Examiners to make use of a standard, proforma online report form for their

reports. Reports should cover at least the points included on the proforma, as follows:

- (i) whether the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications, applicable subject benchmark statements and institutional programme specifications;
 - (ii) whether the University's assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
 - (iii) whether the academic standards and the achievements of students, in programmes delivered at the University or through collaborative arrangements, are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions, of which the External Examiner has experience;
 - (iv) the External Examiner's views on whether the assessments are set at the appropriate level and are in-line with the relevant learning outcomes;
 - (v) the External Examiner's views on the quality of the students' learning experience (including provision of student support and guidance as well as teaching and learning resources) is appropriate and satisfactory;
 - (vi) the levels of student achievement are appropriate and satisfactory;
 - (vii) with regards to the quality of provision and student learning experience, comments on good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessments observed;
 - (viii) with regards to the quality of provision and student learning experience, comments on opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students;
 - (ix) whether the External Examiner received a suitable response to the comments made in their previous report (where applicable);
 - (x) whether any issues specifically required by the relevant professional body (where applicable) had been addressed;
 - (xi) an overview of the External Examiner's term of office if this is their final report.
5. **Awards Board External Examiners** are also asked to report, from their particular perspective, on the following:
- (i) Judging whether the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the Framework for Higher

Education Qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements and the relevant programme specifications.

- (ii) Judging whether the standards of student performance in relevant programmes are comparable with the standards of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions with which the Examiner is familiar.
- (iii) Judging whether the University's assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and are conducted in line with University's policies and regulations.
- (iv) Judging the appropriateness of the assessments in assessing the learning outcomes of the modules, the reliability of internal marking procedures and the effectiveness of moderation processes.

In addition to:

- (v) Forming an overview of the key characteristics of relevant programmes, awards and any collaborative partner delivery centres; in particular the standards, assessment processes and/or any innovative and best practice, including any noteworthy matters for action or commendation.
- (vi) Coordinating the views of their external examiner peers on assessment matters and, where there is an agreed need, establishing common conventions and helping to coordinate their work (where this would enhance efficiency and not conflict with or duplicate existing processes).
- (vii) Commenting upon proposed changes to programme-specific examination regulations and procedures.
- (viii) Commenting upon whether any previous comments made by them had been noted and responded to.
- (ix) Commenting upon whether any issues specifically required by relevant professional bodies (where applicable) had been addressed.
- (x) Contributing as required to responses made by the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board to requests from students for reviews of the Assessment Board's decisions and to any investigations undertaken by the Assessment Board during the Examiner's period of office which relate to students' alleged or proven use of unfair means in assessment.
- (xi) Playing a part in helping to meet the University's requirement that each off-campus collaborative partnership centre is visited by at least one External Examiner (with responsibilities encompassing the relevant centre) at least once every four years.
- (xii) Contributing to the mentoring of new and inexperienced External Examiners, as required.

(xiii) Submitting an Awards Board External Examiner's report to the University each year, encompassing all of the programmes, awards and any collaborative partner delivery centres within their remit. A template report form will be supplied for this purpose. The report will reflect the responsibilities described above and will be informed, *inter alia*, by their communications with their external examiner peers, including their annual reports (which the Awards Board External Examiner shall receive via the University), their attendance at Awards Boards, and other duties carried out.

6. If this is their final report, providing an overview of their term of All Subject External Examiners' reports should be submitted on-line via the Qualtrack system so that a central record can be maintained of their receipt and any issues can be referred as appropriate. Following scrutiny of all reports by the Standards and Enhancement Office, reports will be made available to the appropriate University, School and other relevant personnel so that any action can be taken on the report's recommendations. Senate expects to receive assurance that the reports of External Examiners have been scrutinised and items which require action by members of the Programme team, Heads of Schools or the University's senior management and others are being actioned as necessary. This task will be carried out at a detailed level by School Boards (or equivalent) and associated post-holders. School Boards send their minutes to Education Committee. Urgent matters raised by External Examiners are the subject of separate correspondence amongst relevant University officers, as described below, whilst a summative report on the issues raised is produced by the Standards and Enhancement Unit for consideration by Education Committee and Senate.

4. **Consideration of External Examiners' Reports and Follow-Up Action** **(See Summary at Annex A)**

Introduction

4.1 The following statement provides details of the agreed procedures for dealing with External Examiner reports once they are received by the University and for incorporating the consideration of reports and follow-up action within the University's general academic quality assurance mechanisms.

4.2 Circulation of Reports

Reports are received in the Standards and Enhancement Unit and made available, via Qualtrack, as follows:

- Assistant Vice Chancellor (Quality)
- Dean of Faculty/Head of School
- Academic Co-ordinators (SELE) and (Student Recruitment and Retention),
- Programme Leader
- Other University post-holders, as deemed appropriate by the Standards and Enhancement Office
- Principal/Head of organisation for collaborative provision.

4.3 Identification of issues to be addressed and items of Good Practice

Reports are considered by the Programme Leader and/or the Academic Co-ordinator (SELE). Issues to be addressed and/or items of good practice, which are raised within reports, are inputted by the Programme Leader and/or the Academic Co-ordinator (SELE) as appropriate on the University's Qualtrack system, and, as necessary, feed into the annual Programme Plan.

Urgent Action/Vice Chancellor's Office Involvement

4.4 Aspects in reports which give rise to serious concern and demand immediate attention will be raised by the Academic Registrar as urgent items on the University's Qualtrack system. Such items will be the subject of a note from the Academic Registrar. The note will identify responsibility for making a response and this individual will normally write to the External Examiner concerned, giving assurances that action is being taken. Copies of this correspondence must be sent to the Academic Registrar for approval before being sent to the External Examiner, the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer and to all other post-holders in receipt of the report. University Senior Managers may also ask independently for a response to these and/or other concerns which in their view require immediate action.

4.5 **The action necessary to deal with such reports must be initiated immediately.** There may be unavoidable delays in making a full response due to the need to consult others and undertake investigative work. However, the recipient must provide a prompt indication of the action being taken as a response to the Qualtrack item. The Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer will maintain a record of the correspondence relating to 'urgent action' and will issue reminders as appropriate where responses have not been forthcoming.

4.6 University Senior Managers may discuss the issues and responses arising from such reports with relevant School post-holders and the Academic Registrar. They may require additional evidence that the issues and concerns raised by the External Examiner are being/have been satisfactorily addressed.

Routine Actions

School Management and Committees (Heads of Schools, Academic Co-ordinators (SELE), School Boards, or equivalent)

4.7 Programme Leaders will use their judgement to solicit further action in response to External Examiner reports. Any actions will also be added to the Qualtrack system.

Academic Registrar

- 4.8 The role of the Academic Registrar in monitoring issues of serious concern raised in External Examiner reports has been outlined above (see 'Urgent Action'). The Academic Registrar or nominee will also have read and routinely commented upon all External Examiner reports and will arrange for the production by the end of December each year of an Annual Overview Report on External Examiner reports for Education Committee and Senate. This report and agreed actions arising will help to inform quality assurance and enhancement planning, professional development for staff and changes to procedures and practices at Programme, School and University levels as appropriate.

Education Committee

- 4.9 Education Committee will receive and consider the minutes of School Boards or equivalent and any separate School reports on their external examiner reports, which will identify the significant and/or common enhancement issues arising within each School.
- 4.10 The Committee will receive and consider the Annual Overview Report on External Examiner Reports, which provides a more analytical account of the evidence from External Examiners' reports relevant to the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality. This report will summarise matters which have been raised in External Examiner reports, thus ensuring that appropriate synthesis occurs at University level. It will also identify appropriate enhancement activity.
- 4.11 The role of Education Committee is to contribute to discussion and agreement of action in response to the major issues raised in external examiner reports across the University, through consideration of the various School and University reports. It also takes account of a range of other inputs, both internal and external, to gain an overview of the main academic standards and quality enhancement issues which the University needs to address, placed in the context of the year's achievements.

Senate

- 4.12 Senate receives and considers the Annual Overview Report on External Examiner reports, as well as the minutes of Education Committee and School Boards. Senate will determine what action needs to be taken to reinforce and/or supplement that identified in the Annual Report and by Education Committee and School Boards.

Programme Leaders and Committees

- 4.13 Programme Leaders will be required to respond to urgent issues of concern requiring immediate attention brought to their notice by the Academic Registrar.

- 4.14 Programme Leaders will also be required to respond to any other routine issues brought to their notice by the Academic Registrar and others.
- 4.15 Any significant action points will be included in the Programme Plan which is first reviewed and discussed at a Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC). Plans are also scrutinised by the School Quality Standing Panel which reports to the School Board.
- 4.16 Programme Plans feed into the relevant School Quality Enhancement Plan. School Plans, in turn, inform the University Quality Enhancement Plan.
- 4.17 To ensure that External Examiners appreciate that their reports are treated seriously and dealt with appropriately, **Programme Leaders should correspond with their External Examiner to inform them of the action taken in response to matters raised within their report**, including clear reasons for not accepting any recommendations or suggestions. As an effective means of meeting this requirement, Programme Leaders should provide their External Examiner(s) with a copy of relevant Qualtrack action items together with a covering letter. There should also, be a continuing dialogue between Programme Teams and their External Examiner(s) about progress in relation to matters raised in reports.

Summary of Procedures for the Consideration of External Examiner Reports and Follow-up Action

1. (within 4 weeks of the Assessment Board) reports are submitted to Qualtrack and accepted by the Standards and Enhancement Office (SEO).
2. **The Academic Registrar or nominee notes any matters of serious concern and any University-wide issues** which require urgent action by identified post-holders.
3. The **Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer copies all reports on collaborative provision** to the Principal/Head of Institution for collaborative partners.
4. The **SEO inputs aspects of serious/urgent concern to the Qualtrack system, and the Academic Registrar requests that urgent action** be taken by the Subject/Programme Leader. Such requests are copied to the Assistant Vice Chancellor (Quality), Heads of Schools, Academic Co-ordinators, and Programme Leaders, as well as the Principal/Head of Institution for collaborative partners and others as appropriate.
5. **A response** indicating what action has been taken to address any matters of serious concern and what further action is intended, is **sent to the Academic Registrar for approval before being sent to the External Examiner by the identified post-holder and copied to the SEO and the other post-holders listed in 4 above**. Response may include statements made by others inside or outside the School with particular responsibilities encompassing the provision. All correspondence relating to matters of serious concern is monitored and logged in the SEO by the Standards and Enhancement Senior Officer.
6. (by mid/end October) **Programme Leaders** input routine and good practice aspects to the Qualtrack system with progress made. Any serious and routine items, which are considered “Significant Action Points” are added to the Programme Plan, alongside any other evidence and actions.
7. (by the end of November) External Examiners Reports are considered by SSLCs, alongside Programme Plans.
8. (by end of November) the SEO publishes External Examiners’ reports to the University’s intranet.
9. (by end of November) **Programme Leaders** correspond with the External Examiners informing them of the action taken in response to matters raised within their report, including clear reasons for not accepting any recommendations or suggestions.
10. (by the end of November) External Examiners Reports (alongside Programme Plans) are scrutinised by **School Quality Standing Panels** which report to the relevant School Boards. Where points raised by External Examiners are

disputed, or it is otherwise determined that action is not required, these must be discussed in the Standing Panel. Any urgent action points should also be discussed and strategies evaluated.

11. (by the end of November) **Designated post-holders produce School Quality Enhancement Plans (SQEP)** drawing on a range of inputs, including External Examiner reports and Programme Plans. SQEPs are then scrutinised by School Quality Standing Panels which report to the relevant School Boards. SQEPs inform the University Enhancement Plan.
12. (by the end of December) **Academic Registrar or nominee produces Annual Overview Report on External Examiner reports.** Annual Overview Report is considered by Education Committee (whose minutes are received by Senate) and by Senate itself. Both of these bodies will determine what action needs to be taken to reinforce and/or supplement that identified in the Annual Overview Report, also bearing in mind their continual monitoring of issues raised and actions taken and/or intended through their consideration of minutes and reports received from their sub-committees and boards and elsewhere.

Examination scripts, comments and marks: the handling of assessment data

1. Examination scripts and external and internal examiners' written comments and marks (whether on the examination scripts themselves or in another form that allows them to be held and applied to the original script) are considered to be personal data under GDPR and DPA.
2. Examination scripts themselves are however expressly exempt from the data subject (the student) access rules under DPA, which varies from GDPR here. So a DPA Subject Access Request cannot be used to obtain a copy of an individual's examination script.
3. However, the provision of examiners' comments and marks is mandatory under a Subject Access Request and is governed by time limits which vary from Subject Access Requests for other types of information. Comments (if necessary, through copy or summary 'in intelligible form'), and marks, must be supplied within five months of the date of the request or within forty days of the publication of results, whichever date is earlier.
4. The special rules in 12) to 14) above are designed to avoid right of access being used as a means to circumvent an organisation's processes for announcing examination results.
5. University policy is therefore to make available for collection by students their examination scripts and examiners' comments and marks, whether the latter appear on the scripts or separately, starting within forty days of the publication of results and for the duration specified in the University's Records Retention Schedule, i.e. *currently for one year following confirmation of marks/grades by the Assessment Board; (two years following the date an appeal or academic misconduct was logged, for assessed work subject to these procedures).*
6. All examiners therefore need to be aware that the University is obliged to make their written comments available (upon formal request) to individual students and that we will in any case make them routinely available for students to collect.
7. Examiners should ensure that all comments can be justified and that no careless remarks are made on exam scripts, in emails or other correspondence to colleagues, on mark sheets, or elsewhere. Any informal notes passed between examiners in the course of marking an examination script or piece of coursework should be disposed of securely once the final mark has been agreed and there is genuinely no need for the notes to be retained.
8. Any assessment materials sent to external examiners should clearly indicate both the origin of the material (University of Bolton, partner identity, programme, module, assessment, sampling parameters) and the name and address to which the material should be returned.

9. The principles and procedures described above should also be adhered to for marked coursework (which is routinely made available to students), as is applicable and practicable.
10. External and internal examiners are also advised that assessment board minutes may include the personal data of individual students and are therefore accessible to students on request.

Safeguarding Guidelines

The University's commitment to Safeguarding

The University recognises that it has a duty of care in creating a safe environment for children and adults at risk for their studies or employment, and, by working with appropriate external agencies, is committed to ensure that they are safeguarded and protected from harm.

The [University's Safeguarding Policy](#) is applicable to all members of staff and students as well as visitors to the University, where appropriate. Support and advice will be provided if/when safeguarding issues arise.

Which students does safeguarding apply to?

- Anyone under the age of 18.
- Adults at Risk (formerly Vulnerable Adults). This includes any person aged 18 years or over, who has care or support needs and who as a result is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect. This may for example be because of their age, learning or physical disability, mental or physical ill health.

Your responsibility

Your responsibility is to:

- Recognise - Be vigilant – watch, listen and think about what you have been told. Reflect on the impact of any behaviour or any risks that could affect the safety and wellbeing of a child or adult at risk.
- Respond - Remove any immediate risk of harm and make sure the individual is safe. Let the person know you are concerned for them and that you need to speak to someone about this if you can do so.
- Record - Record carefully what you hear and do and send us any notes that you take in case they might be needed at a later stage.
- Report - If you're worried about someone you think might be suffering from abuse, unless you think there is anyone in immediate danger then you need to share your concern with the Designated Safeguarding Champion in the relevant department. A full list of Designated Safeguarding Champions is available in Appendix 3 of the Safeguarding Policy.

Recognising

As an External Examiner you are unlikely to witness or pick up a cause for concern during your brief interaction with students. However, rarely, you may become concerned about a student where, for example:

- A student or member of staff or other person intentionally or unintentionally discloses something which may be a cause for concern.
- You may read something or witness behaviour which leads you to be concerned for the welfare of a child or an adult at risk.

You might wish to take a moment to think about the sorts of issues that might be raised.

Responding

If you're told something or see something that concerns you:

- Don't make any judgement about what may or may not have happened.
- If appropriate, listen carefully and clarify what you've heard.
- Do not try and investigate.
- Contact the Designated Safeguarding Champion for the relevant department and inform them what you've heard or seen.

If you're ever concerned for someone's immediate physical safety: Dial 999 immediately. Please also notify Security that you have requested emergency services by calling 01204 903700.

- Report the matter to the Safeguarding Officer for the relevant department (the University's Policy has a report form for this purpose in an Appendix).

Recording and reporting

If you have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult and/or the actions of adults whilst working on behalf of the University of Bolton you should:

- Write down your concerns as soon as possible while you can still remember the details or complete the 'Reporting A Concern' form in Appendix 5 of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Contact the Designated Safeguarding Champion in the relevant department at the earliest opportunity to discuss your concerns. Email the report or 'Reporting A Concern' form to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Champion in the relevant department.
- The Designated Safeguarding Champion may contact you for further information and will refer to other agencies if necessary.

Looking after yourself

- If you've been given information which has upset or distressed you, call the Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer to discuss your concerns. They'll be able to direct you to sources of support if you need it.
- If you're with a child or an adult at risk, try to make sure there's another student or employee present to make them feel safe.
- You should be aware of your personal safety at all times and inform a responsible adult where you'll be and when you're likely to return.
- If at any point you feel unsafe in a particular situation, leave as soon as possible and make contact with an appropriate officer from the relevant institution(s).

Summary

- Once you have reported a concern, the Safeguarding Officer will be responsible, with others, for investigating and resolving your concern.

- They'll decide if the matter needs to be referred on, e.g. to the relevant child protection agency, adult protection team or the police. This will depend on the nature of the concern.
- You may be contacted for more information but it is unlikely we'll be able to provide you with updates or tell you of the outcome of the matter.

Remember: You have done the right thing by recognising, responding, recording and reporting your concern.