

BPP University – University Policies and Procedures

External Examination Policy



Scope	Staff/Students/External Parties
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Approving Authority	Education and Standards Committee
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Document Owner	Office for University Academic Quality
Purpose	Outlines the University's Policy and Procedure in relation to the External Examination of assessments and awards.

Regulatory Mapping

BPP University General Academic Regulations
Section E: Examinations, Assessment & Academic Practice

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University Policies and Procedures
External Examination Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.2. This policy outlines the University's policies and procedures in relation to external examination.
- 1.3. This document should be read in conjunction with the University's General Academic Regulations (GARs), Part E.

2. Procedures for the Nomination, Appointment and Induction of External Examiners and for Responding to External Examiners' Reports

a) Nomination of External Examiners

Role of the Award Lead

- 2.1. The Award Lead, as appropriate, with the prior approval of the Dean of School, shall recommend nominees in conformity with the External Examining regulations, agree the nomination with the nominee, complete the nomination form and return it to the Office for University Academic Quality for presentation to the Education and Standards

Committee. If unsuccessful, the nomination will be returned to the originating officer for revision or a new nomination, as appropriate.

Role of the Office for University Academic Quality

- 2.2. The Office for University Academic Quality will maintain a register of the appointment of external examiners to all programmes. The Office for University Academic Quality will inform the Award Lead, as appropriate, during each Term of the nominations needed for the forthcoming year and make available nomination forms.
- 2.3. On receipt of the completed nomination forms, the Office for University Academic Quality will:
 - a) check that the form is complete and that all the criteria are met. Where necessary the form will be returned to the academic officer(s) making the recommendation;
 - b) prepare the nomination for consideration by the Education and Standards Committee for subsequent recommendation to the Academic Council;
 - c) inform the Award Lead, as appropriate, of the decision of the Academic Council and record the appointments;
 - d) update the register of existing external examiners for programmes. The register will enable the Office for University Academic Quality to identify and draw to the attention of officers any potential breaches in the criteria for the appointment of external examiners. It will also be used to check the receipt of reports and the need for new appointments;
 - e) issue the letter of appointment, copying the relevant Award Lead.

Role of Education and Standards Committee

- 2.4. Nomination forms and external examiner CVs will be scrutinised by the Education and Standards Committee in order to make recommendations to the Academic Council.

Role of the Academic Council

- 2.5. The Academic Council will consider each recommended nomination on its individual merit and in the context of the register of appointments and will approve the appointment, or advise otherwise.
- 2.6. The appointments of external examiners should be phased so that there is an appropriate balance on each individual programme or programme group, as appropriate, between newly appointed and continuing external examiners.
- 2.7. The nomination of external examiners with little or no prior experience of external examining is acceptable, provided that appropriate arrangements are made for

induction by the relevant programme leader or Head of Programmes and appropriate support provided. This is particularly important in the case of external examiners who are drawn from practice or who are appointed by professional or statutory bodies.

b) Introductory Information for External Examiners

2.8. In addition to the appointment letter setting out contractual arrangements, the Office for University Academic Quality will send each external examiner the [External Examiner Handbook](#) containing:

- a) the regulations on external examining and these procedures relating to external examining;
- b) the relevant academic regulations;
- c) the Equality and Diversity Policy;
- d) relevant forms.

2.9. The following materials shall be sent to an external examiner by the relevant Award Lead:

- a) the definitive programme document for the relevant programme(s);
- b) a list of the modules to be examined;
- c) relevant module descriptors;
- d) programme and relevant module assessment regulations;
- e) assessment criteria;
- f) reading lists for the programme(s) and relevant modules;
- g) a copy of the most recent annual monitoring report for the relevant programme(s);
- h) details of the person to act as primary contact with the external examiner;
- i) dates of meetings of the board(s) of examiners and suggested date of first visit or induction.

c) Induction of New External Examiners

2.10 In addition to receiving the materials indicated above, new external examiners will also be invited to an induction/first visit meeting. At this meeting they will be guided through the materials provided, be given a tour of the centre where the meeting is arranged, have the opportunity to meet relevant module leaders and plan future visits. The timetable within which the component parts of their duties should be carried out, e.g. the approval of assessment instruments and the scrutiny of course work assignments and

examination scripts, and the likely workload, will be described and any problems addressed.

2.11 External examiners from practice should be given the opportunity to discuss any additional support they might require and to be guided through the assessment criteria.

2.12 New external examiners will receive copies of the previous year's external examiner(s)' report(s) for the relevant programme(s) and module(s).

d) Responding to External Examiners' Reports

Receipt and Distribution.

2.13. On receipt of an external examiner's report, the Vice-Chancellor will:

- a) send an acknowledgement to the external examiner;
- b) send a copy of the report to the Office for University Academic Quality for consideration and further distribution.

2.14. The Office for University Academic Quality will be responsible for:

- a) monitoring that all expected reports are received and will take appropriate action on missing reports;
- b) distributing reports to the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy, the relevant Dean of School, Award Leads and module leaders, as appropriate, University Central Administration and, where applicable, the relevant professional or statutory body.

2.15. The Dean of Academic Quality & Policy will be responsible for responses on institution-wide issues.

2.20. Award Leads, as appropriate, will be responsible for:

- a) distributing the report to module leaders and relevant members of the programme team;
- b) arranging how the report will be formally considered.

2.21. The annual summary of the external examiners' reports will be shared with the student representatives on the University's committees. The summary of all external examiner reports will be made available to students on the Hub/VLE, and full reports can be made available to students upon request, with the exception of any confidential reports submitted directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

2.22. The Dean of Academic Quality & Policy will be responsible for responding to student requests and enquiries in relation to external examiner reports.

Identification and Progression of Issues

- 2.23. All external examiners' reports are considered by the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy upon receipt and each report will additionally be considered by the relevant Award Leads and by the Dean of School. The Award Lead, having consulted with the Dean of School, will identify:
- a) those matters which they are to address, where appropriate acting after consulting the programme team;
 - b) those matters which they are to take action upon in accordance with the advice of the Dean of School; and,
 - c) those issues which are to be referred back to the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy because they involve matters outside the control of the programme team and relevant school.
- 2.24. The Award Lead is responsible for identifying which matters raised by the external examiner are capable of being, or require to be, resolved quickly and in advance of the start of a new academic year. Such matters will be addressed by the relevant officers and, where necessary, the action arising approved by the Vice-Chancellor and/or the Chair of the Academic Council, as appropriate.
- 2.25. External examiners shall receive a copy of the Annual Programme Monitoring Report which should demonstrate how their comments are being addressed.
- 2.26. The Award Lead, as appropriate, will discuss issues raised in the external examiners' reports with relevant module leaders and members of the programme team and prepare an action plan which addresses each issue. Where no action is proposed a clear reason must be given for that proposal. The external examiner's report and the proposed action plan will be considered at a formal meeting of the programme team, copied to the Office for University Academic Quality, along with relevant minutes from the programme team/ School Education and Standards Board meetings, and included in the annual programme monitoring report.
- 2.27. The external examiners' reports and the programme team's action plan will be considered by the Education and Standards Committee at the earliest opportunity. The Office for University Academic Quality, on behalf of the Education and Standards Committee, will submit a summary report to the Academic Council on salient issues and those matters raising questions relevant to academic policy and standards.
- 2.28. The Education and Standards Committee, after taking advice or instructions from the Academic Council, where appropriate, may amend or vary the action plans submitted by a programme team.

- 2.29. The relevant Award Lead is responsible for ensuring that the agreed action plan is implemented and for writing to the external examiner, copied to the Office for University Academic Quality, to inform them of the action that has been taken or is intended.
- 2.30. The Office for University Academic Quality will monitor the responses and will write on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to those external examiners who raised University-wide matters to inform them of the action taken and the outcome of relevant deliberations.
- 2.31. The Award Lead must, in the following year's annual programme monitoring report, confirm action and report what was ongoing or to be implemented, and provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of action already taken.

3. Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners to BPP University Awards

a) Authority

- 3.1. The appointment of appropriately qualified and experienced external examiners is important in underpinning the quality and standing of BPP University's awards. The specific area of responsibility that an external examiner is to undertake must be defined before the selection can commence. The area of responsibility of the individual external examiner should be cross-referenced with those of the other external examiners to ensure that appropriate coverage is provided.
- 3.2. An external examiner may be appointed to more than one programme where the syllabus and curriculum is the same or similar and providing the external examiner is covering the same or similar module(s) in each of the programmes.
- 3.3. External examiners must have the qualifications and experience that will enable them to act as specified in the Regulations by reporting on:
 - a) whether the standards set are appropriate for BPP University's awards or components of awards;
 - b) the standards of student performance in programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine;
 - c) the extent to which the University's assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within the University regulations, policies and procedures;
 - d) whether the assessment instruments enable students to demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes for the module and for the programme;

- e) the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in other UK higher education institutions.

3.4. The functions that an external examiner is required to carry out are:

- a) be in a position to make informed, independent and impartial judgments on the academic standards set, the measurement of student achievement, and the rigour and fairness of the assessment process;
- b) be prepared to advise on any proposed changes to the assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently registered on the course;
- c) scrutinise and approve all summative assessment instruments including coursework assessments, takeaway assignments, seen and unseen examination papers;
- d) evaluate those students achieving a result status on a module in the highest and fail grade bands along with a representative sample from each grade boundary sufficient to endorse that the assessment process has been carried out in accordance with the published regulations, policies and procedures and that the standards applied are appropriate to the award. External examiners shall be consulted about the method for sampling students' work for external scrutiny, defining the range for borderline marks and determining what is a representative sample covering the full range of marking bands. External examiners shall have access to all student work submitted for assessment counting towards an award. The regulations governing the endorsement of the assessment outcomes and procedures for resolving disagreement are set out in the regulations for examination boards.
- e) immediately report to the chairperson of the examining board concerned, any candidate that they consider to have engaged in academic misconduct;
- f) be a full member of, and attend the final meeting of, the relevant examination board or boards. To participate in the work of the boards, including *viva voce* examinations (where appropriate) and the consideration of the aggregation of marks in determining final results classifications on the award;
- g) to participate as required in the review of decisions about individual students' awards.
- h) submit an annual report to the Vice-Chancellor at the end of each year of the appointment.

- 3.5. A person nominated for appointment as external examiner must be able to undertake the duties associated with those functions and evidence of this ability must be provided in the nomination documentation.
- 3.6. Each programme, or group of programmes that share the same syllabus and curriculum, must have at least two external examiners. Additional external examiners should be added where the breadth of the programme syllabus, or assessment framework, or number of students require it. Collectively, the external examiners must:
- a) have the breadth of expertise required to cover the programme outcomes and assessment instruments;
 - b) achieve an appropriate balance between the diversity of experience and seniority available within the range of those qualified to act as external examiners (Heads of Programme, Subject Leaders, Professors, Programme Leaders and Module Leaders);
 - c) reflect the diversity of perspectives contained in the constituency of HE provision (i.e. new universities, Russell Group, practice etc.);
 - d) have an appropriate range of cultural and gender diversity.

b) Individual Criteria

- 3.7. Consistent with the GARs, Part E, the nomination of an external examiner must include evidence of:
- a) appropriate academic qualifications and experience in the discipline area of the programme(s) of study and/or;
 - b) appropriate professional qualifications and experience in the field covered by the programme(s) of study;
 - c) appropriate standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the academic/professional community for their opinion to carry weight;
 - d) comparable, current experience of examining and assessing in the field of study, at the same level and of any distinctive elements (such as Master's level dissertations) to indicate competence;
 - e) knowledge and understanding of UK higher education benchmarks for the assurance and enhancement of the quality of academic standards;
 - f) current experience and competence in curriculum design and in areas relating to the enhancement of the student experience;

g) fluency in English.

3.8. External examiners must be able to fulfil the functions set out in Paragraphs 4 and 5 above and relevant evidence is expected to be provided in support of the nomination.

3.9. External examiners must be able to commit the time to carry out their duties at BPP University.

c) Training

3.10. Where a person is nominated for whom this would be their first appointment as an external examiner, Award Leads should highlight the fact and confirm what training, additional to that in the standard induction, will be provided and what other support will be made available to the external examiner, e.g. mentoring.

d) Barriers to Appointment

3.11. The following restrictions apply to the selection of external examiners:

a) external examiners must not have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or a student involved with the programme of study;

b) external examiners should not hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examinerships concurrently;

c) among the team of external examiners on a programme or programme group there must not be more than one examiner from the same institution;

d) there must be no reciprocal examining between the University and the external examiner's own institution;

e) an external examiner may in specific circumstances and with the express approval of the Academic Council, be re-appointed for one further year, but no extension for more than one year and no immediate re-appointment is permissible;

f) an external examiner must not be succeeded within one year by another examiner from the same institution;

g) no external examiner may, within the previous five years have been a member of staff or Academic Council, or a student or been an external examiner on a cognate programme in the University; nor may an examiner be a near relative of a member of staff of the University;

- h) no external examiner may be associated with a programme through student placements, through sponsorship of a student or through being in a position to influence significantly the employment of students on the programme;
- i) an external examiner should not be engaged 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.

e) *Process of Nomination*

- 3.12. The Award Lead, with the prior approval of the Dean of the School, shall recommend nominees in conformity with the criteria stated here, agree the nomination with the nominee, complete the nomination form and return it to the Office for University Academic Quality for presentation to the Education and Standards Committee. If unsuccessful, the nomination will be returned to the originating officer for revision or new nomination as appropriate. If endorsed by the Education and Standards Committee the nomination will be presented to the Academic Council for approval.
- 3.13. Where an external examiner nomination is successful, the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy is responsible for writing formally to the external examiner, confirming the terms of their appointment.
- 3.14. The Award Lead is responsible for setting up an induction programme and such other training or support that is deemed necessary.
- 3.15. The Office for University Academic Quality shall maintain a register of the appointment of external examiners to all programmes. They will inform the Award Leads during the year of the nominations needed for the forthcoming year and send them a nomination form.
- 3.16. For awards validated by a professional or statutory body and where the process of nomination and appointment of external examiners to those awards is conducted by the professional or statutory body, BPP University shall conform to the requirements of the statutory or professional body.
- 3.17. Appointments shall be reported to the Education and Standards Committee and the Academic Council.

f) *Early Termination of Appointments*

- 3.18. Where an external examiner fails to meet the duties set out above and where the officers of the University are unable to resolve the matter, the University reserves the

right to terminate the appointment of the external examiner, as provided in the GARs, Part E.

- 3.19. Where appropriate, the University would utilise the annual renewal of external examiner appointments as a mechanism to review external examiner performance/ conduct.
- 3.20. In the first instance, every endeavour will be made to informally resolve non-compliance on the part of an external examiner with the duties set out above.
- 3.21. Where the external examiner's performance and/or conduct continue unsatisfactory, the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy shall issue a warning, advising on appropriate remedial action to be taken.
- 3.22. If matters are not resolved following an initial warning, the Vice-Chancellor shall have the power to inform the external examiner of the termination of their contract.
- 3.23. In exceptional circumstances, where there is a serious concern as to the integrity of the University's academic standards arising from the conduct of an external examiner, the Vice-Chancellor reserves the right to terminate an external examiner's appointment with immediate effect and without warning.
- 3.24. Bringing well-founded concerns about academic standards to the attention of the School, the Dean of Academic Quality & Policy, the Vice-Chancellor or the Quality Assurance Agency would not constitute grounds for the early termination of an external examiner's appointment.

Policy Revision History

Version Number	Description	Author	Reviewed by	Date
1.0	Movement of Policy to stand-alone section for ease of referencing	Director of Academic Governance & Proctor	Dean of Academic Quality & Policy	July 2024