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Introduction

This handbook provides information for external examiners for all taught programmes at the University of Leicester and has been produced to assist you in your role as external examiner for the University. It contains information about our regulations and procedures, duties of external examiners and how the University will consider your reports. It supplements other documentation which is specific to the programmes for which you are external examiner. The relevant School will send this to you.

Copies of the handbook can be obtained from the Quality Office or downloaded from:
www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/externalexamining

In addition new training materials for external examiners can be found at
<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/lii/lt/quality/external-examiners/>

All Senate regulations can be found on the University's website at
<http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/regulations/general-regulations-for-taught-programmes>

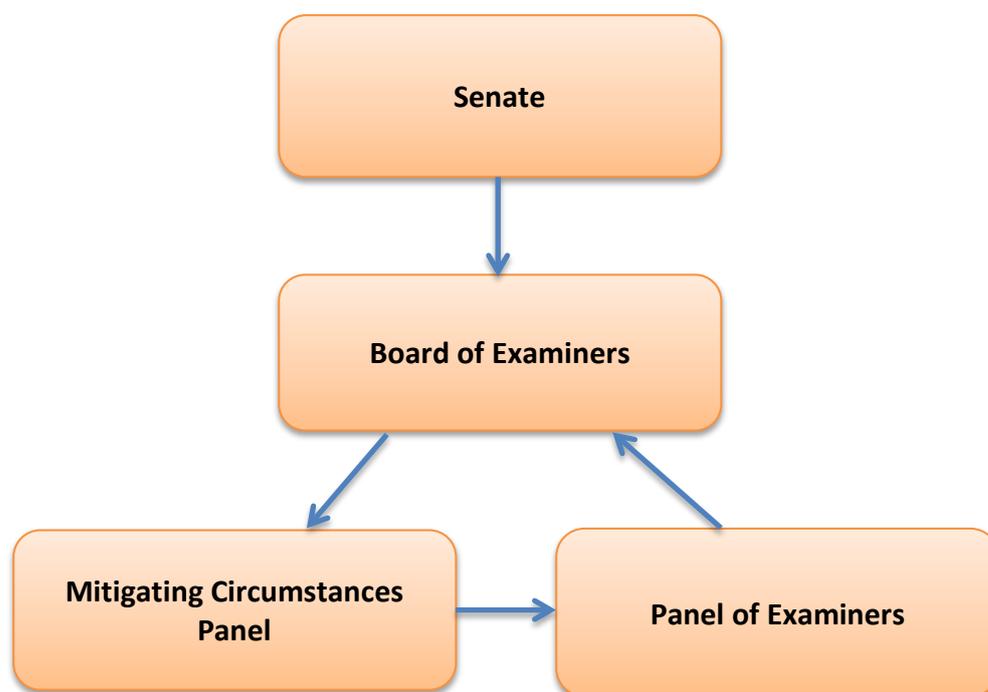
Links to Senate Regulations 5, 6, 7 and 11 can be found in Section 5 of this Handbook, as these are of particular relevance to your role as an external examiner.

The University's Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible to Senate for the assurance and enhancement of academic quality and standards. It is also responsible for formulating and monitoring the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy (Appendix 1).

If you have any queries about information contained in the handbook or about the University's regulations or procedures please contact the Quality Office. Contact details are given in Section 4

If your queries are about the programme or arrangements for examination boards please contact the relevant School.

Quality Office
November 2020

SECTION 1**UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR PANELS AND BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

1. Boards and Panels of Examiners are in place to evaluate and maintain academic standards, ensure adherence to the Regulations, consider the interests of individual students and ensure fairness across a cohort.
2. The University operates a two tier process of Panels and Boards of Examiners.
3. Mitigating Circumstances Panels are convened by Boards of Examiners to consider the cases of individual students.
4. Senate, as the University's academic authority has overriding responsibility for academic standards, including the award of degrees.
5. Boards of Examiners act under delegated authority from Senate which means that they are empowered to make awards on Senate's behalf. Once a Board of Examiners had made an award the student can be formally notified by Student Records. Awards are then conferred at the next degree congregation.
6. The University requires that a Board of Examiners is convened for each taught programme or set of cognate programmes.
7. A Panel of Examiners is convened for clusters of cognate modules and reports to the Board of Examiners.
8. Mitigating Circumstances Panels are established by Boards of Examiners to consider students' mitigating circumstances on the basis of documentary evidence. These panels operate under delegated powers from the Board of Examiners, making recommendations to Panels of Examiners.

Boards of Examiners

A Board of Examiners is the body responsible for overseeing each student's academic performance on the relevant programmes and for making decisions on progression and award based on assessment results.

A Board ensures that students are treated consistently and fairly and appropriate academic standards are maintained.

Heads of School are responsible for deciding how Boards of Examiners are organised for their School and for the programmes for which a Board is responsible. For example, Boards of Examiners may encompass more than one level of a programme or more than one programme. Alternatively, separate meetings may be held to consider award and progression decisions.

Role of Boards

The role of a Board of Examiners is to:

- confirm the recommended module outcomes from one or more Panels of Examiners;
- consider the academic performance of individual students;
- agree awards and classifications, in accordance with regulations;
- consider borderline cases (see Senate Regulation 5.33 for further guidance);
- agree progression decisions, including recommendations for re-assessment or termination of studies;
- ensure the appropriateness of marking practices for the modules for which it has responsibility;
- make recommendations on prizes;
- consider comments from external examiners.

Membership

Chair – a senior member of the academic staff of the School

Two members of each Panel of Examiners, one of whom is normally the Chair of the Panel

Other members of the academic staff, as required to ensure that informed progression and award decisions can be made

External Examiner(s), where awards are being made (external examiners are not expected to attend progression Boards).

A Secretary (a member of the School's administrative staff), appointed by the Head of School

For Boards which are making awards an Academic Registrar's Representative is also required to attend.

Principles on the Conduct of Business

- Boards of Examiners must meet at the end of assessment cycles to ensure that award decisions are made at the appropriate time to allow students to graduate or to receive progression decisions in sufficient time to allow reassessment, where required;
- At least 75% of membership must attend Boards of Examiners, and must include the Chair;
- Except in exceptional circumstances members of the Board are expected to stay for the duration of meetings to ensure consistency of decision making;
- Board meetings will follow a standard agenda;
- Boards will be provided with a standard data set from SITS by Student Records;
- Boards will confirm the recommended module outcomes from one or more Panel of Examiners;
- Boards will consider and confirm award decisions;
- Boards will consider and confirm progression decisions;
- Boards will receive and consider comments from external examiners;
- The Board of Examiners Report is the primary record of the Board's decisions and authority and should be signed as an accurate record by the Chair at the end of each meeting;
- In cases where a decision is deferred the Board will require the Chair to take action on its behalf at a later date.

Mitigating Circumstances Panels

Boards of Examiners establish Mitigating Circumstances Panels to consider individual student cases.

Mitigating Circumstances Panels determine whether sufficient grounds for mitigation have been established and make recommendations on the appropriate course of action to Panels of Examiners. Neither Panels nor Boards of Examiners consider the mitigating circumstances of individual students.

Panels of Examiners accept the recommendations of Mitigating Circumstances Panels and determine the outcome for the module which the regulations state as follows:

- Provide a student with the opportunity to take the affected assessment(s) as if for the first time i.e. a sit or submit, allowing them to be given the full marks achieved for the examination or assessment so no cap is imposed (unless the assessment affected was already a re-sit or re-submission in which case a further re-sit or re-submission with a capped mark is permitted);
- Waive late submission penalties;
- Determine that there is sufficient evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes from other pieces of assessment for the module(s) for an overall mark to be derived;
- Note the accepted mitigation for the module(s) and recommend that the Board of Examiners takes this into account when considering borderline cases at the point of award and classification.

Key Roles at Boards of Examiners

Chair

The Chair of a Board of Examiners is a senior member of academic staff, this may be the head of school or another member of staff approved to undertake this role.

If there is a vote at a meeting the Chair will only vote if there is a tie in which case he/she will have the casting vote.

The role of the Chair at meetings of Boards of Examiners is to:

- ensure that proceedings are properly conducted and managed in an efficient manner using the prescribed documentation and members are appropriately briefed;
- ensure that students are treated equitably and in accordance with programme regulations and University regulations for progression and award, guiding the Board to clear recommendations and decisions;
- ensure that where external examiners are present they are invited to comment on the proceedings and arrangements for the Board, on the academic standards of the programme and any other issues which they consider relevant;
- be responsible for taking any action on behalf of the Board where empowered to do so after the meeting;
- sign the Board Report as an accurate record of the meeting;
- approve the minutes.

Secretary

The Secretary to a Board of Examiners is a member of the administrative staff of the relevant school(s) with appropriate experience and an understanding of both the programme and Senate Regulations. She/he will usually make arrangements for meetings. The Secretary's role also includes working with the Chair to ensure that meetings run smoothly and ensuring that Boards have all the necessary documentation, and minutes are produced in a timely fashion.

Academic Registrar's Representative

An Academic Registrar's Representative is a member of professional services staff of the University who attends each meeting of a Board of Examiners where awards are made to students. Their role is to advise the Board on Senate Regulations and their interpretation, taking into account any variations approved for a particular programme, and any broader regulatory matters. They are also required to intervene if they believe a Board is making a decision which is not in accordance with regulations.

Documentation for Panels and Boards of Examiners

Panels and Boards of Examiners will have the following documentation:

- An agenda;
- A standard dataset from SITS (the student records system).

In addition, the Secretary should ensure that the following are available for consultation:

- Programme Specification(s);
- Senate Regulation 5 governing undergraduate programmes of study or Senate Regulation 6 governing taught postgraduate programmes of study;
- Senate Regulation 7 governing the assessment of taught programmes of study;
- An extract from Senate Regulation 11 (student discipline) on plagiarism penalties.

SECTION 2

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 2.1 The University recognises that External Examiners play a major role in ensuring the academic standards and awards of the University. Regulations relating to the appointment and duties of external examiners are stated in Senate Regulation 7. A summary of the key responsibilities is given below.

External examining

- 2.2 External examiners are appointed to provide impartial and independent advice and informed comment on the University's standards and student achievement in relation to those standards.
- 2.3 External Examiners are appointed for a period of four years in most cases and are required to give a period of 3 months' notice if they wish to resign for any reason during their period of service.
- 2.4 For each award-bearing programme, including for the award of credit, the University appoints at least one external examiner, including for awards made with or through a partner institution. An external examiner may be appointed for several related programmes.
- 2.5 The University appoints sufficient examiners for a particular programme to cover the full range and complexity of the syllabus and the size of the student cohort.
- 2.6 For awards resulting from study both on campus and by distance learning, the University will ensure that external examining arrangements enable the Board of Examiners to make judgements about the comparability of standards across both cohorts.

Role and responsibilities

- 2.7 In accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education you will be asked by the University to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:
- the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards for its awards in accordance with the framework for higher education qualifications and relevant subject benchmark statements;
 - the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations;
 - the academic standards and the achievement of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.
- 2.8 As an external examiner you will also:
- be asked to identify areas of good practice or opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

- report on standards at both the module and award level
- have the opportunity to consider samples of students' assessed work, together with marks agreed by the internal markers. You should receive sufficient material from the School to form a view as to whether the internal marking has properly assessed student performance against appropriate standards. You should normally receive 10% of the pieces of assessment with a sample across the range of student achievement but may request that this is varied, particularly if the number of students registered on a programme is such that you would be unable to form a judgement from a 10% sample.
- be consulted about access to non-written assessment and attendance at any live assessment events and may be required to access student performance during assessed school experience, clinical or other work-placement, irrespective of location.
- be an equal member of a Board of Examiners and participate in the transaction of the Board's business.

2.9 As an external examiner you will not be involved in the assessment or examination of the work of individual students and will not be the final arbiter for the award of marks/grades either within a module or for the final award. You will be invited to comment on the standard of marking against the written criteria but may not seek, or be invited, to raise or lower the marks assigned to individual students. You may, however, ask for marks to be revisited by the internal markers against the written criteria across a full cohort if you consider that there is sufficient evidence to support under- or over-marking, or if you have concerns about the robustness of marking.

SECTION 3

REPORTING AND PAYMENT

Submission of Annual Reports

- 3.1 During your period of office you will be required to submit a written report to the University at the end of each assessment cycle. The University has a standard report form for this purpose (Appendix 2). The form can also be found at:
www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/externalexamining
- 3.2 You will be contacted by the Quality Office before your report is due with an electronic copy of the form and details on how to submit it.
- 3.3 The form is designed to collect the information required to confirm the standards of University awards, the appropriateness of student achievement and the integrity of the assessment process.
- 3.4 Reports should be submitted to the Quality Office by the following deadlines:
- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Undergraduate Programmes | 31 July |
| Postgraduate Programmes | 31 December |
- 3.5 If the Quality Office does not receive a report from you a reminder will be issued.

Consideration of External Examiner Reports

- 3.6 On receipt the Quality Office will check reports to ensure they are complete and will acknowledge receipt.
- 3.7 Each report will be provided to the Head of School who will prepare an appropriate response to the issues raised. A copy of this should be sent to you by the School.
- 3.8 The Quality Office will send copies of the report and school responses to the relevant Head of College and Academic Director/Dean of Education, and in case of Postgraduate Taught programmes the Graduate Dean.
- 3.9 An archive of external examiners' reports will be maintained electronically by the Quality Office and published once they have been through formal University processes.
- 3.10 Schools and the University will make full use of external examiners' reports in annual and periodic developmental review.
- 3.11 A digest of the reports of all external examiners reports will be considered annually by the Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate.

Payment of Fees and Expenses

- 3.12 Fees payable to external examiners are notified in the letter of appointment.

- 3.13 The Quality Office will send you a fees and expenses claim form prior to each examination board.
- 3.14 Your fees payments will be processed on receipt of your annual report. You can claim expenses throughout the year as appropriate and where expenses only are being claimed an expenses form should be submitted. If you contact the Quality Office a copy will be sent to you. Please ensure that you submit receipts with expenses claims so that they can be processed promptly without any deductions.
- 3.15 In order to comply with the UKVI requirements the University is now required to ask external examiners for proof that they are entitled to work in the UK. Details of this are given in appointment letters. Examiners are asked to bring one of the following documents with them when they attend their first examination board meetings so that a copy can be made and retained by the University:

If you are a UK citizen:

- Your passport **or**
- Full birth certificate issued in the UK and an official document giving your permanent National Insurance Numbers and your name, issued by a Government agency or employer

If you are from a European Economic Area:

- Your passport **or**
- National Identity Card

If you are not a UK citizen or from an EEA:

- Your passport and visa/entry clearance stamp/biometric immigration card issued by the UK Border and Immigration Agency giving permission to stay in the UK

SECTION 4

CONTACT DETAILS AND WEB ADDRESSES

Contacts

Any queries about appointment, reporting processes, payment or general queries about University regulations and procedures can be addressed to the Quality Office. The e-mail address for external examiners is: extexaminers@le.ac.uk

Web Addresses

University:

- University of Leicester website: www.le.ac.uk
- Information and forms for external examiners can be found on the Student Academic Services website: <http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/externalexamining>
- Senate Regulations:
<http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/regulations/general-regulations-for-taught-programmes>

Other Useful Web Addresses:

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education:
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>
- Advance HE: A Handbook for External Examining:
<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project-section/external-examining-handbook>

SECTION 5

SENATE REGULATIONS

1. Regulations governing undergraduate programmes of study ([Senate Regulation 5](#))

Note: [Senate Regulation 5, exceptional variation for students graduating in 2020](#), incorporating exceptional revisions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

- Students graduating in 2020 should consult this Regulation
- This Regulation should be read in conjunction with the [Undergraduate Safety Net Policy](#)

2. Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study ([Senate Regulation 6](#))

Note: [Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study, exceptional variations](#), apply to all taught postgraduate programmes regardless of mode of study (campus based, distance learning or part time) where a student was studying modules which were not complete by 16 March 2020. This also applies to modules which were commenced but not completed before 27 September 2020. This regulation should be read in conjunction with the [PGT Safety Net Policy](#).

3. Regulations governing the assessment of taught programmes ([Senate Regulation 7](#))

4. Regulations governing student discipline ([Senate Regulation 11](#))

Appendix 1:

Discovery-Led and Discovery-Enabling
Learning Strategy

Appendix 2:

External Examiner Report Form