

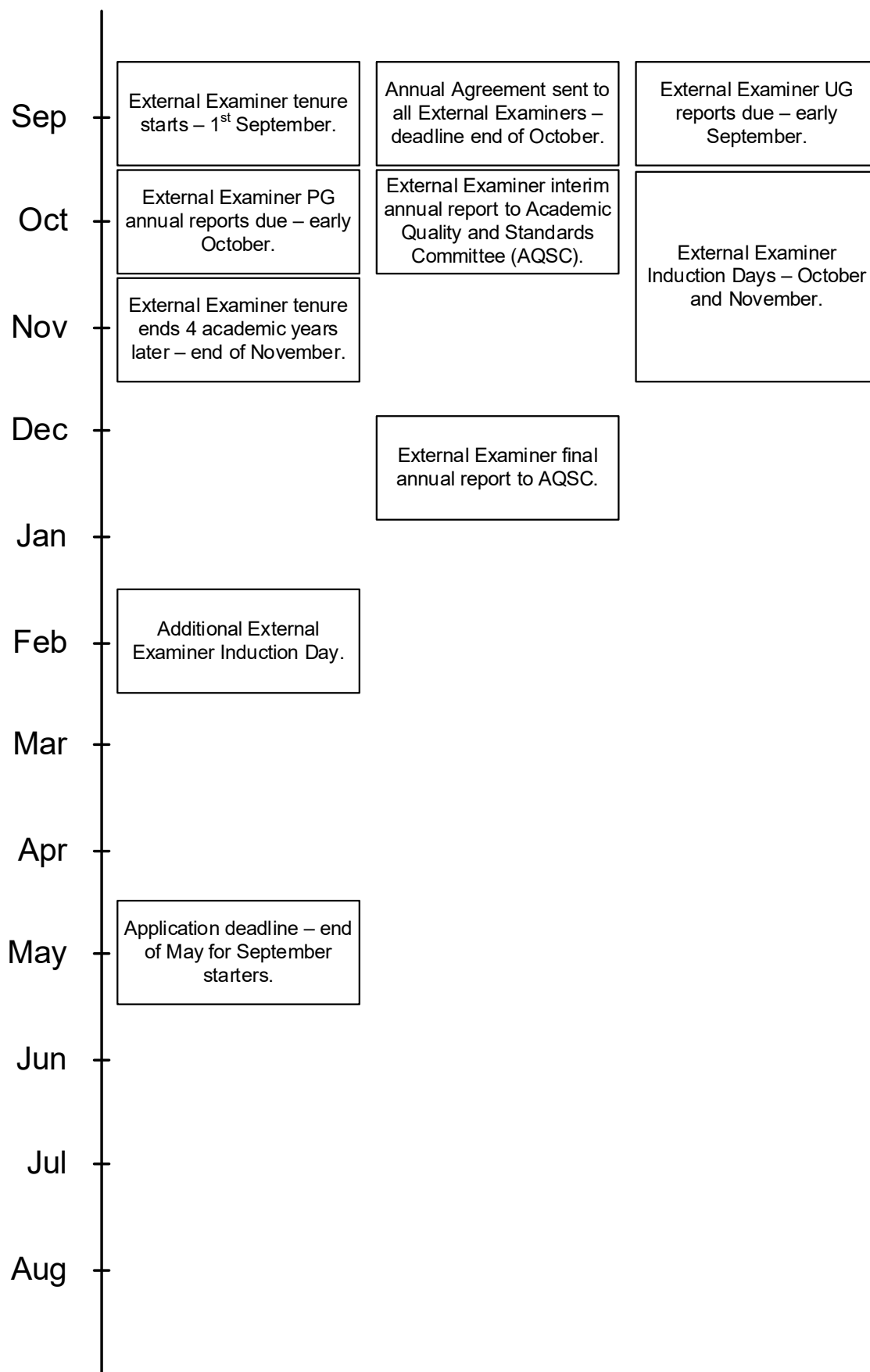
Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

Section 7: External Examining

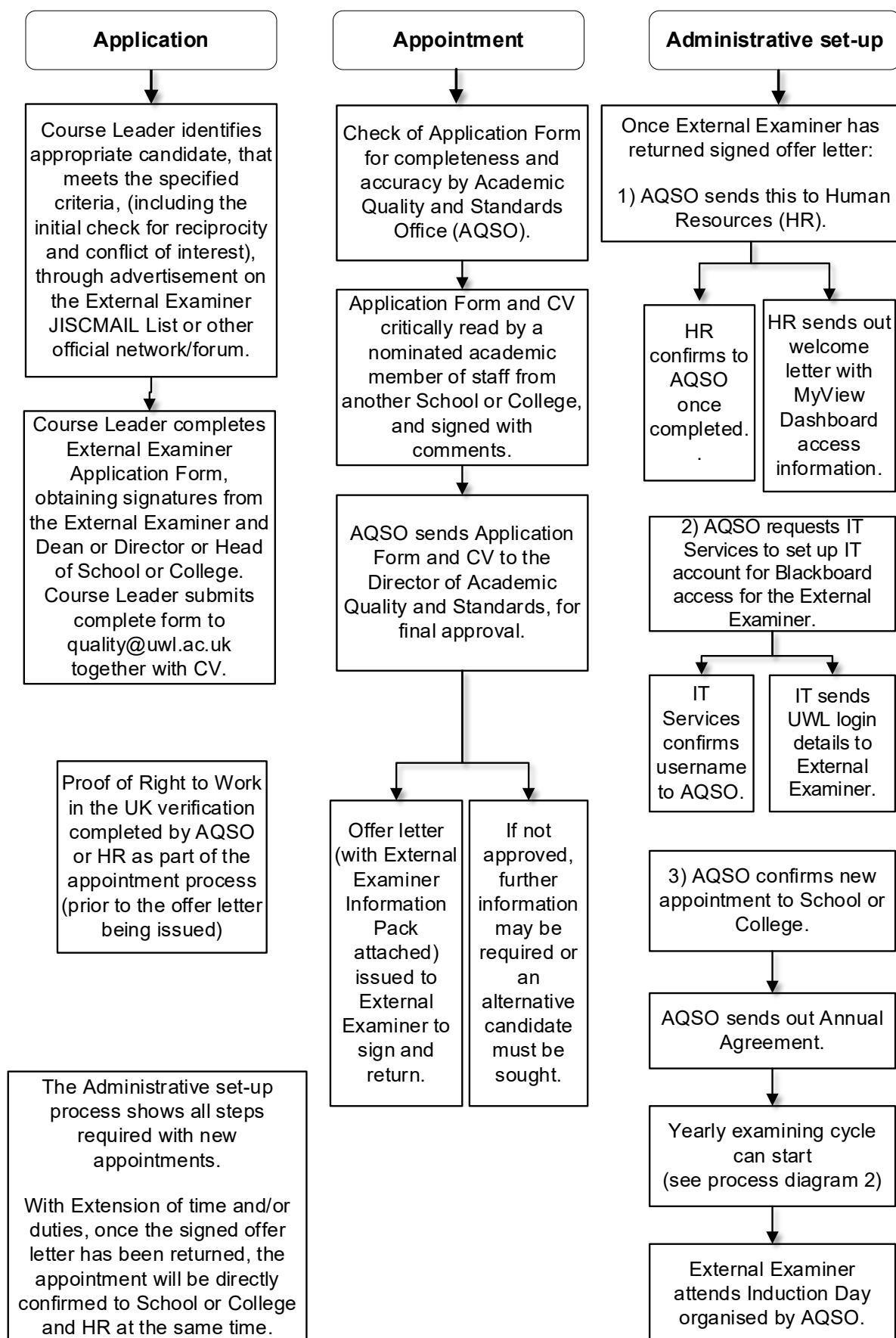
2024-25

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Purpose and Aims.....	4
1.2	Definition	4
1.3	Regulatory Framework.....	5
1.4	Responsibilities	5
1.5	Further Guidance	6
2	Overview of external examining	6
2.1	Role of the External Examiner	6
2.2	Levels requiring External Examiners.....	8
2.3	External Examiner role.....	8
2.4	Activities of the External Examiner.....	9
2.5	Period of appointment.....	10
3	External Examining processes	12
3.1	External Examining stages	12
3.2	Criteria for reliable and fair external examining.....	12
3.3	Timings	14
3.4	Termination, Resignation and Absence	14
4	Application	16
4.1	Overview	16
4.2	Identification of candidates for post.....	16
4.3	Completion of Application	16
4.4	Approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College.....	17
5	Appointment.....	18
5.1	Overview	18
5.2	University Approval	18
5.3	Confirmation of Appointment.....	19
6	Examining.....	20
6.1	Introduction and contact.....	20
6.2	Approving Assessment Tasks.....	23
6.3	Sampling Assessed Work	23
6.4	Approving Student Achievement.....	25
7	Reporting	26
7.1	Submitting the annual report	26
7.2	Responding to the Annual Report.....	28

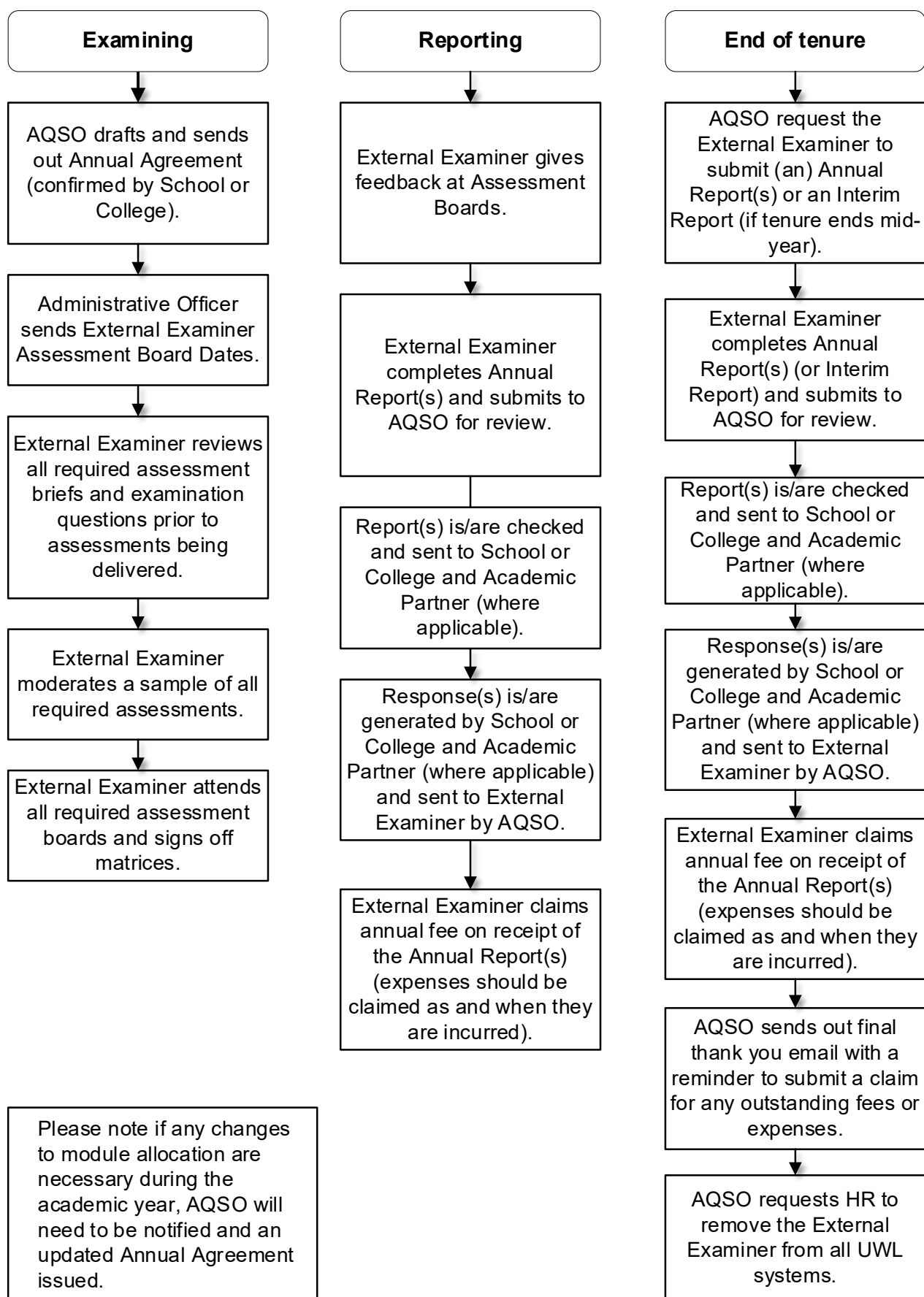
External Examining timeline



External Examining process diagram 1



External Examining process diagram 2



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Aims

1.1.1 This section describes:

- (a) How a new External Examiner is appointed by the University.
- (b) The duties and responsibilities of the External Examiner.

1.1.2 The aim of the External Examining process is to ensure that the University meets the obligations and expectations of its staff, students and regulators by:

- (a) Ensuring external experts contribute to the setting and maintaining of academic standards and alignment with the relevant national qualifications framework, Characteristics Statements, Subject Benchmark Statements, and any other requirements, such as those from Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- (b) Engaging external expertise – individually and collectively – to encourage robust dialogue between expert peers, students and wider stakeholders on improving the educational experience within the University and its academic partners.

1.2 Definition

1.2.1 External Examiner is an impartial and independent expert responsible for ensuring the standards of the University's awards and the reliability of student achievement in relation to those standards. External Examiners have 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. External Examiners must not contribute to delivery through teaching or any other direct capacity.

1.2.2 External Examiners for Apprenticeship courses:

1.2.2.1 For apprenticeship courses the External Examiner role provides independence and impartiality for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and requires use of assessment experience with robust industry knowledge to, where appropriate, form judgements on the conduct of the End Point Assessment (EPA).

1.2.2.2 Where stipulated in the EPA assessment plan, there may be a requirement to appoint an External Examiner to oversee the full apprenticeship course (normally for integrated apprenticeships) covering both the academic learning and end point assessment activity or there may be the need to appoint an EPA External Assessor to specifically oversee the end point assessment delivery and activity.

1.2.2.3 The following roles for External Examiners will apply for apprenticeship courses:

- **External Examiner Apprenticeship (EPA):** For an integrated apprenticeship course where an External Examiner has been appointed to cover both the on-course delivery and EPA.

- **External Examiner Apprenticeship:** For integrated and non-integrated apprenticeship courses where an External Examiner has been appointed to cover the on-course delivery only.
- **End Point Assessment (EPA) External Assessor:** For either integrated or non-integrated apprenticeship courses where the on-course External Examiner is not responsible for the oversight of EPA.

1.2.2.4 End Point Assessment (EPA) External Examiners for apprenticeship courses will be appointed on a needs-assessed basis or where the assessment plan requires the appointment of a specific role. Responsibilities and duties will be determined by the Apprenticeship Standard assessment plan.

1.3 Regulatory Framework

1.3.1 To meet its responsibilities, UWL's Quality and Standards Framework must comply with the OfS Conditions B of registration, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered (including through an academic partnership). The University also seeks to meet the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education. This is detailed further in Section 1 (Quality and Standards Framework).

Apprenticeship courses:

1.3.2 External Quality Assurance (EQA) monitors the EPA that apprentices undertake at the end of their apprenticeship, to ensure that it is fair, consistent and robust across different apprenticeship standards and between different assessment organisations.

1.3.3 All EQA for a standard will be regulated by either:

- (a) The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).
- (b) The Office for Students (OfS) for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships.
- (c) The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).

1.3.4 There are some exceptions to this, these apprenticeships are referred to as Out-of-Scope. Currently no provision within the University falls under this.

1.3.5 The EQA Framework developed by IfATE sets out how apprenticeship EPAs must be externally quality assured. It sets out what good practice in EPA looks like, and what EQA providers should look out for to be confident this has happened. The framework clarifies requirements in ensuring consistency with how assessments are delivered.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1 The Academic Board has the responsibility and authority to set, maintain and assure academic standards.

- 1.4.2 The Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) is responsible for organising and managing the approval process for External Examiners and ensuring that robust action is taken in response to their reports.
- 1.4.3 The Academic Quality Lead in each School or College is responsible for ensuring that colleagues within their Schools or Colleges observe the procedures and requirements, and have effective communication mechanisms with their External Examiners.
- 1.4.4 The Course Leader – identified for each course by the relevant School or College – is responsible for ensuring robust, transparent and scrupulous use of the External Examiner for the assurance of standards and the development of the quality of the learning experience on the course.
- 1.4.5 The Apprenticeships Quality Team is responsible for working with the Course Leader where an External Examiner for an apprenticeship course needs to be appointed.

1.5 Further Guidance

- 1.5.1 For further guidance colleagues should make early contact with the AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2077.
- 1.5.2 Where an academic partnership is involved, the lead School or College should ensure they contact both the AQSO, and the Global Partnerships Office (GPO) at uwl.gpo@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2553 at the earliest opportunity.

2 OVERVIEW OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING

2.1 Role of the External Examiner

- 2.1.1 An External Examiner at the University is an independent reviewer of assessments and student work with the aim of contributing to the moderation of standards and providing the University with (a) report(s) on the standards achieved, the comparability of standards with other known Higher Education Institutions and the extent to which the course meets the national expectations in the subject discipline.
- 2.1.2 The final outcomes of external examining are:
 - (a) Approval of results as in line with sector-recognised standards.
 - (b) Agreement that results have been reliably arrived at through the student's own work.
 - (c) Recommendations for enhancing the academic provision and the student experience.
- 2.1.3 The role can be divided into three main categories:
 - (a) Examiner

External Examiners act as an examiner of “output” and the standards achieved by those outputs. For example: review of assessments designed by the School or College and review of the student achievement in the work submitted. External Examiners will be expected to provide a view upon how effective and appropriate the assessments are in measuring the intended outcomes of the course together with approving the results as in line with sector recognised standards. External Examiners can withhold their approval of results where they do not believe they are in line with sector-recognised standards or students have not been provided with opportunities – which are reasonably comparable with those in other Higher Education Institutions – to achieve standards beyond the threshold level.

This approval of results will usually entail the endorsement of the decisions made by Progression and/or Award Boards that External Examiners attend, normally through signature of the relevant papers that contain the student profiles and through confirmation in the External Examiner’s annual report.

(b) Processes

External Examiners act as an auditor on the reliability, appropriateness and effectiveness of a School or College’s implementation of University processes for assuring the standards of the University’s awards. In this capacity External Examiners might for example provide commentary upon the deliberations of the Award and Progression Board, upon School or College implementation of University policies, upon the University’s regulatory framework or perhaps the School or College’s management of the moderation process. These commentaries may include, for example, the impact of extenuation on the decision-making processes of a Board of Examiners (but not individual cases), the application and consistency of the University’s regulations governing the conferment of awards, or the consistency with which “borderline” grades are treated and subsequent awards conferred. This is not exhaustive but indicative of the regulatory areas the University would ask External Examiners to bear in mind as part of the External Examiners’ role.

(c) Curricula

External Examiners may be consulted by Schools or Colleges on changes that affect the student experience and the development of the curriculum. Where there is a major amendment to the course structure or more particularly to the overall assessment regimes for the courses which the External Examiner examines, the External Examiner must approve the amendment.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 2.1.4 In line with the requirements of an Apprenticeship Standard, EPA External Assessors may be appointed solely for the purpose of confirming that the requirements for effective EPA delivery have been met and that the apprentice has successfully completed the EPA. Those appointed to these roles will be known as EPA External Assessors. Their duties will be distinct from that of other External Examiners and full details on their appointment criteria, remit, workload, fees and

reporting requirements will be provided by the School or College and the Apprenticeships Quality Team.

2.2 Levels requiring External Examiners

2.2.1 An External Examiner must be appointed to examine all taught components of higher education awards from **Level 5 to Level 7**.

2.2.2 **Level 3** taught components must be examined where:

- (a) It is the first year the new or reapproved course is running, regardless of whether modules are new or existing. A reapproved course is defined as a course which has been through a reapproval event or where provision has been amended via the major amendment process;
- (b) It is the first year that the module is running.

2.2.3 **Level 4** taught components must be examined where:

- (a) The award is an enrollable award (not an exit award) e.g., Cert HE, Dip HE or Foundation Degree;
- (b) It is the first year that the new or reapproved course is running, regardless of whether modules are new or existing. A reapproved course is defined as a course which has been through a reapproval event or where provision has been amended via the major amendment process;
- (c) It is the first year that the module is running;
- (d) It is a requirement set by a PSRB;
- (e) Any other subject specific requirement.

2.2.4 Where the requirements detailed in 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 do not apply, it would not be expected that an External Examiner is appointed to cover Levels 3 and 4.

2.3 External Examiner role

2.3.1 External Examiners will:

- (a) Be consulted on, and approve the form and content of, proposed coursework and examinations and other assessments and reassessments that count towards the modules for which they are responsible;
- (b) Have access to all, or if agreed, a sample of summatively assessed work on the modules they are responsible for;
- (c) Moderate the marks awarded by internal markers;
- (d) Consider all available information relating to modules they are responsible for, and to raise any issues at the Module Assessment Board;

- (e) Be consulted on and approve the recommendations for award and progression for all students on awards for which they are responsible;
- (f) Participate as required in any review of decisions about individual students' outcomes taken during their term of appointment at Award Boards or Joint Assessment Boards;
- (g) Occasionally, advise on proposed amendments to modules and courses;
- (h) Where appropriate, have the opportunity to meet with students

Apprenticeship courses:

- 2.3.2 All apprenticeships require an EPA to test both academic learning and workplace competence. The requirements for EPA, as described in EPA plans will depend on the delivery method and in turn will determine the role of the External Examiner as set out below.
- 2.3.3 An integrated apprenticeship means that the University is responsible for both the academic content, assessment, and EPA. Therefore, EPA plans may reference External Examiners, as the EPA is conducted as an integrated part of the qualification. The External Examiner will be involved in the oversight of the EPA where the EPA also forms part of the degree. In these cases, the specific requirements for external examining are set out in the EPA plan and must be adhered to in the assessment process.
- 2.3.4 A non-integrated apprenticeship means that the University is responsible for the academic content and assessment, while an external organisation provides the EPA. Appointed External Examiners will not play a direct role in the EPA process but will have oversight in the academic award of the apprenticeship. The External Examiner will not play a direct role in the EPA process. They will however, be involved in the awarding of the degree.
- 2.3.5 EPA External Assessors may be appointed solely for the purpose of confirming that the EPA delivery requirements have been met and that the apprentice has successfully completed the EPA. Please refer to section 2.1.4 above for further details.

2.4 Activities of the External Examiner

- 2.4.1 During an academic year, External Examiners must:
- (a) Review and comment upon all first sitting and resit of assessment briefs and examination questions for the modules or courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.
 - (b) For specific courses or modules, visit students in practice once per academic year, as specified and agreed between the School or College and External Examiner.
 - (c) Where appropriate, visit academic partner institutions.

- (d) Where appropriate, engage in Apprenticeship EPA activities as stated in the EPA Plan.
- (e) Review and comment upon academic standards and student performance in line with sector-recognised standards on courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.
- (f) Engage in a minimum of normally two Assessment Boards per academic year, which may include Module Assessment Boards, Award Boards, Joint Assessment Boards and Student Progress Boards.
- (g) Submit (an) impartial and independent report(s) on the standards of the modules and courses for which the External Examiner is responsible.

2.4.2 External Examiners have no special role in marking or adjudicating individual scripts and student work, and External Examiners are not expected to act as a third marker for any assessment where there is disagreement over a mark between internal markers. The role of the internal markers is to award an appropriate mark based on the submitted work of a student.

2.4.3 External Examiners' role in this respect is to review the standard of the marking across the cohort and advise upon its general appropriateness to the work submitted. External Examiners can recommend adjustments to cohort marks where there is evidence of under- or over-marking across grades. External Examiners must not act as an individual third marker for any given student work.

Apprenticeship courses:

2.4.4 The University needs to ensure that External Examiners are appropriately briefed as to the specific nature of their role for apprenticeships that involve higher education. For apprenticeship courses this will need to include:

- (a) Specifying whether the apprenticeship involves integrated or separate EPA;
- (b) The relationship between apprenticeship duties and Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) and course/modules learning outcomes, hence the way the EPA is conducted may have implications for their role.
- (c) The assessment format or specific requirements for delivery of the EPA as specified in the Apprenticeship Standard's Assessment Plan.
- (d) Depending on the nature of the EPA and whether the higher or degree apprenticeship is integrated or non-integrated in nature the External Examiner may be required to observe and comment upon EPA practice, materials and marking and standardisation activities. The University will adhere to requirements of each EPA plan.

2.5 Period of appointment

2.5.1 An External Examiner will be appointed for a period of four academic years and three months beginning on the 1 September following appointment and ending on

the 30 November. There may be some variation to this for courses with non-standard start and end dates.

2.5.2 An External Examiner's appointment may be extended, by a maximum of one academic year, in exceptional circumstances, including:

- (a) Where an appointment has not been able to be made;
- (b) An External Examiner has resigned requiring an earlier start date;
- (c) Due to the closure of a course there is need to keep continuity of external examining arrangements.

An External Examiner may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since the completion of their last appointment.

3 EXTERNAL EXAMINING PROCESSES

3.1 External Examining stages

3.1.1 External examining comprises the following four stages:

#	Stages	Authorising Body	Responsibility
1	Application	Dean or Director or Head of School or College	Course Leader
2	Appointment	Director of Academic Quality and Standards	AQSO
3	Examining	Chair of the relevant Assessment Board	Course Leader
4	Reporting	Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)	AQSO

3.2 Criteria for reliable and fair external examining

3.2.1 In approving an External Examiner, the authorising body and responsible officers should certify that the approved External Examiner:

- (a) Is sufficiently and suitably qualified – usually to at least the level above the award to be examined¹ – to undertake the duties proposed;
- (b) Is sufficiently independent of the University (including academic partners) and its staff to offer robust and rigorous assurance of its academic standards;
- (c) Is able to offer sufficient time and expertise to assure and enhance the learning experience of students on the course;
- (d) Has current appropriate expertise – academically, and where relevant professionally – in the core disciplines of the course or module to be examined in order to provide judgement on academic standards;
- (e) Has 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;
- (f) Has experience of teaching and assessing in UK higher education at the levels to be externally examined;

¹ For subject areas where it is not standard practice for the majority of academic staff to have doctoral qualifications and therefore the pool of External Examiners is limited, this requirement may be waived provided there is evidence of substantive academic engagement in the subject at the level of the award and significant experience within the industry.

- (g) Is fluent in English, and any other language in which the course to be examined is taught or assessed; and
 - (h) Meets the criteria set by the relevant PSRBs, where necessary.
- 3.2.2 In addition, prior to confirming the appointment, the Director of Human Resources (or nominee) must certify that the proposed External Examiner has the right to work in the UK.
- 3.2.3 To ensure that criteria 3.2.1 (b) is met the appointed External Examiner should have no direct interest or ties to the University (including academic partners) or its staff, courses or students, including:
- (a) Being a member or advisor to the University Board of Governors.
 - (b) Being in a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student on the course. For example, both being members of the same committee or board of a PSRB, or undertaking a recent or current collaborative research project.
 - (c) Being an internal marker, staff member at an academic partner or occasional staff member on a course at the University.
 - (d) Being closely associated with the sponsorship, placements or other training being provided to students on the course.
 - (e) Being in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course either as an employer or in some other capacity.
 - (f) Required to assess current or recent previous colleagues who are recruited as students to the course.
 - (g) Being from the same Higher Education Institution, or other place of employment as any other External Examiner, or staff member on the Assessment Board.
 - (h) Replacing another External Examiner from the same institution unless the External Examiner has not completed the term of office.
 - (i) Being a current or recent staff member or student from the University or an academic partner institution. This may be considered but only after a period of five years has elapsed since their departure.
- 3.2.4 There should be no reciprocal examining arrangements between the University and the External Examiner's employing organisation (within the same subject or course), save in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards.
- 3.2.5 The appointed External Examiner should hold no more than two External Examiner appointments at any one time, including their appointment with the University. However, there are circumstances where this requirement can be waived at the discretion of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. These circumstances

may include for example emergency cover or a proven shortage of specialists in the curriculum area.

- 3.2.6 Retirees can be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area, and this will be kept under review.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 3.2.7 In addition to the above requirements, the below requirements must be met for appointment to the External Examiner role for apprenticeship courses:
- (a) Knowledge and understanding of the apprenticeship standard and EPA plan.
 - (b) Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
 - (c) Familiarity with the EPA performance expected of apprentices to achieve the award being assessed. *(Not applicable to External Examiner Apprenticeship).*
 - (d) Be independent of the apprentice, the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) or employing organisation who are involved in delivering the apprenticeship.

3.3 Timings

- 3.3.1 In most instances, a few months is required in order to complete the appointment, contracting and induction process required by the University. Therefore, application documentation should be submitted normally no later than the 31 May for appointments commencing in September of the following academic year. In exceptional circumstances, appointments may be made mid academic year, in these cases, applications should be submitted no later than three months prior to the start of the appointment.
- 3.3.2 This timescale ensures that the External Examiner's Proof of Right to Work can be verified, their contract issued and signed, access to the necessary IT systems can be authorised and they commence their appointment before any work has been sent to them for judgement.
- 3.3.3 It should be noted that in order to obtain all of the information required, work on some aspects of the Appointment stage should begin well in advance of these deadlines.
- 3.3.4 Where Schools or Colleges are proposing a mid-year appointment they should seek specific guidance from the AQSO at the earliest opportunity.

3.4 Termination, Resignation and Absence

- 3.4.1 The appointment of an External Examiner can be terminated by the University, approved by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards if, for example, they fail to fulfil their obligations, normally subject to three months' notice. Any

termination of an External Examiner's appointment must be reported to the next Academic Board with reasons for termination.

- 3.4.2 There are a number of possible reasons for termination of contract. These include:
- Changes to curriculum or closure of courses.
 - Failure by an External Examiner to carry out their duties in accordance with their contract.
 - An External Examiner no longer meeting the criteria due to changed circumstances, e.g., insufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area following leaving the HE sector; a change in right to work in the UK status, changed circumstance creating a conflict of interest.
 - Evidence that an External Examiner's application/CV was inaccurate.
 - Evidence that an External Examiner does not have the right to work in the UK.
 - Evidence that the External Examiner's judgement/reporting is insufficiently thorough, critical, or objective.
- 3.4.3 Where an External Examiner wishes to resign their post, this will normally be subject to three months' notice to ensure that all standards are secured. Prior to their departure a resigning External Examiner will be required to submit an interim report.
- 3.4.4 An External Examiner can be temporarily replaced where a current External Examiner is unable to carry out their duties for a maximum period of one year.

4 APPLICATION

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 External Examiner Application ensures compliance with regulatory or legislative requirements (e.g., immigration and OfS conditions of registration).

4.1.2 The School or College is responsible for the following at the Application stage:

- (a) Identification of candidates for post.
- (b) Completion of External Examiner Application Form.
- (c) Approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College.

4.2 Identification of candidates for post

4.2.1 A Course Leader who wishes to propose the appointment of a new External Examiner should identify appropriate candidates for the role.

4.2.2 External Examiner posts can be advertised on the External Examiner JISCMail List or other official network or forum to ensure that all appropriate candidates have the opportunity to express their interest in roles at the University.

4.3 Completion of Application

4.3.1 A Course Leader who wishes to propose the appointment of a new External Examiner or an extension of time and/or duties of an existing External Examiner, must complete the External Examiner Application Form. The form is accessible from the [AQSO SharePoint site](#). Although the Course Leader is responsible for completing the Application Form, the Academic Quality Lead (or designate) will have oversight of the Appointment process.

4.3.2 In completing the form, the Course Leader will need to:

- (a) consult Paragraph 3.2 above to ensure that the proposed External Examiner can demonstrably meet all necessary requirements.
- (b) provide the intended details of the course(s) and modules for which the External Examiner is to be appointed. The application form must include reference to specific courses and modules where these are currently being delivered, however any new modules should be referenced with indicative titles prior to the completion of course approval.
- (c) ensure that all required documentation is submitted with the application form e.g., CV, to the AQSO.

4.3.3 Schools or Colleges should consult the Apprenticeships Quality Team when completing applications for apprenticeship courses.

- 4.3.4 An application for an extension of time and/or duties should be completed largely in the same way as for a new application, with the following exception:
- (a) There is not a requirement for an External Examiner to submit an updated CV when being nominated for an extension of time or an extension of duties unless they have changed role/job since their original application was considered or where there is additional information included within the CV which would be helpful when considering an extension of duties which expands the subject area which they would be examining.

4.4 Approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College

- 4.4.1 The fully completed and signed External Examiner Application Form must be submitted for approval by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College or their designate. In signing the form, the Dean or Director or Head of School or College or their designate, normally the Academic Quality Lead or a Head of Subject, confirms that the proposal has been discussed and approved at executive level within the School or College.
- 4.4.2 The Dean or Director or Head of School or College approval confirms that the following points have been discussed and confirmed at both Executive and Operational level:
- (a) The allocation of modules or awards is appropriate.
 - (b) There are adequate resources allocated to the support of the External Examiner in undertaking their duties (e.g., an appropriate mentor has been identified).
- 4.4.3 The signed External Examiner Application Form must be sent to the AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk to enable the remaining stages to be completed. Where the AQSO considers that the application is either incomplete or does not meet the requirements for appointment this will be returned to the proposer with a clear explanation of the matters for consideration.

5 APPOINTMENT

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The External Examiner Appointment process ensures compliance with regulatory or legislative requirements (e.g., immigration and OfS conditions of registration). The Director of Academic Quality and Standards or their designate is authorised by the Academic Board to undertake this delegated duty.

5.1.2 The External Examiner Appointment process consists of two stages:

- (a) University Approval
- (b) Confirmation of Appointment

Apprenticeship courses:

5.1.3 External Examiners who are appointed to apprenticeship courses are subject to the appointment criteria and approval process outlined in this section of the handbook. For external examining arrangements for apprenticeships, the following need to be taken into consideration during the appointment process:

- (a) The University needs to be assured that the External Examiner is suitably qualified to undertake the role, providing a balance between academic and workplace practice experience and having currency of experience in both areas. In terms of workplace practice experience, consideration should be given to academic nominees who are working with a relevant industry to support delivery of a course (e.g., guest lecturers from industry, live briefs, experience of running an apprenticeship), members of an industrial liaison committee or undertaking consultancy in a relevant area. If an External Examiner cannot be found who matches the criteria, consideration should be given to appointing both an examiner with academic subject expertise and one with appropriate practice-based expertise.
- (b) External Examiners from industry may be appointed where appropriate; but each board shall have at least one External Examiner who has recent examining experience at the relevant level and who is familiar with the standards required for comparable courses.

5.1.4 Appointment of External Examiners will always be made following the guidance as stipulated within the Assessment Plan for each individual apprenticeship standard.

5.2 University Approval

5.2.1 Once the application form and accompanying CV have been submitted, the application will be considered by the AQSO and a critical reader (an academic member of staff from another School or College) who is trained for the consideration of applications. The purpose is to check that the proposed External Examiner complies with internal and external regulations, prior to submission to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards.

- 5.2.2 Critical Readers are not required to undertake scrutiny of applications for an extension of time or an extension of duties, unless the AQSO deem that the nature of the extension request requires academic judgement in relation to the ability of the External Examiner to take on the amended role.
- 5.2.3 After considering the proposal, the Director of Academic Quality and Standards will take one of the following actions:
- (a) Approve.
 - (b) Request further information.
 - (c) Not approve and require further identification of an appropriate External Examiner candidate.
- 5.2.4 Once the Director of Academic Quality and Standards has granted final approval, the AQSO will send an Offer Letter (contract) and information pack to the External Examiner. External Examiners are required to sign and return a copy of the Offer Letter to the AQSO. Once this has been received, the AQSO will liaise with the Human Resources Department and IT Services Department in order to ensure that the External Examiner is set up on the required systems. The AQSO will also notify the lead School or College; the School or College must inform the academic partners (where appropriate) and normally where the course is sub-contracted. For validated courses, the AQSO will normally notify the academic partner and the lead School or College.

5.3 Confirmation of Appointment

- 5.3.1 Prior to appointment as an External Examiner, a nominee must successfully complete a Right to Work in the UK verification.
- 5.3.2 In order for the University to comply with its legal duties under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006), checks that all External Examiners are eligible to work in the UK must be conducted prior to appointment. To avoid any possibility of discrimination this documentation is required from everyone, even if they are a UK citizen.
- 5.3.3 To enable swift appointment and to manage the expectations of applicants when staff members approach suitable candidates, they must mention to the candidate that they will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

6 EXAMINING

6.1 Introduction and contact

6.1.1 Induction and support for newly appointed External Examiners

6.1.1.1 External Examiners will be briefed before the start of their duties. The AQSO will arrange induction sessions for External Examiners to be held, as required depending on appointment dates. The dates are normally scheduled to take place in October and November with an additional session scheduled in February.

6.1.1.2 The aim of these sessions is to provide information on the role of the External Examiner at the University as well as to look at the key processes e.g., assessment boards and associated regulations.

6.1.1.3 The induction sessions should be interactive and informal and give newly appointed External Examiners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with University processes and meet with representatives from their School or College.

6.1.1.4 The [External Examiners Web Area](#) also provides guidance and support in undertaking the role.

6.1.2 Information provided by the AQSO and other departments

6.1.2.1 The Offer Letter, sent by the AQSO will contain: details of the course(s) and module(s) the External Examiner will be covering including reference to academic partners (where applicable); period of tenure; contact details, and induction session information.

6.1.2.2 The Human Resources Department will send a welcome letter to the External Examiner together with guidance for claiming fees and expenses via the MyView Dashboard system.

6.1.2.3 The IT Services Department will send the External Examiner login information in order to access the University's IT systems including the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Blackboard.

6.1.2.4 The AQSO will send to the External Examiner an Annual Agreement by the end of October each academic year or following appointment during the year which details the course(s) and module(s) they are examining that academic year, including reference to academic partners (where applicable), fee information, and School/College and Academic Administration contact details.

6.1.2.5 The Academic Administration Department will provide Assessment Board dates to the External Examiner.

6.1.2.6 The workload of an External Examiner can change, reduce or increase annually for a number of reasons including:

- (a) Changes in curricula coverage due to changes in External Examining arrangements.

- (b) Modules closing or new modules running.
- (c) The addition of academic partnership provision.

6.1.2.7 The Apprenticeships Quality Team will ensure that External Examiners for apprenticeship provision have access to the following information on confirmation of appointment:

- (a) The relevant apprenticeship standard.
- (b) The EPA Plan for the apprenticeship course.
- (c) Any relevant assessment materials.

6.1.3 Information provided by the Course Leader

6.1.3.1 The Course Leader will ensure that the following information is sent to the External Examiner to complete initial briefing:

- (a) Access to specific modules and pages in Blackboard.
- (b) Website link to the academic regulations.
- (c) Course documentation including Course Handbook and Module Study Guides for each module for which the External Examiner has responsibility.
- (d) A document mapping the academic course to the apprenticeship standard (if applicable).
- (e) PSRB requirements (if applicable).
- (f) Student handbooks (if applicable).
- (g) Previous External Examiner reports and responses.
- (h) Course monitoring reports.
- (i) Any relevant discipline assessment criteria, marking schemes or model answers.

6.1.3.2 For Apprenticeship courses the following areas will also require clarification by the Course Leader during induction:

- (a) The employers who are involved with the apprenticeship.
- (b) Whether the EPA is integrated, or non-integrated and how this affects the External Examiner role.
- (c) Cohort numbers and delivery patterns (which might be different for different employers).
- (d) Whether an External Examiner will be working alongside another External Examiner for the course (e.g., whether one External Examiner will have

particular responsibilities for the practice/vocational aspects of the apprenticeship).

6.1.4 Mentoring arrangements for new External Examiners

6.1.4.1 A course team may wish to nominate an External Examiner who, whilst being well qualified to examine in terms of their specialist subject knowledge, does not have sufficient recent taught provision external examining experience. Nominees without sufficient taught provision external examining experience should, where possible, join an experienced external examining team and the School or College must allocate a mentor to offer support on the University's processes in their first year as an External Examiner. The mentor must be an existing and experienced External Examiner, normally already with experience of working in this role at the University and should preferably be associated with a similar subject area. There is normally no additional fee associated with acting as a mentor.

6.1.5 Meeting with students

6.1.5.1 There is no formal University requirement for External Examiners to meet with students, although it is a PSRB requirement in some instances. External Examiners should be provided with the opportunity to engage with students where this is deemed appropriate by the course team. This will in part be determined by the nature of the discipline and assessment methods.

6.1.5.2 External Examiners find it useful to meet with students to assist in evaluation of the appropriateness of assessment methodologies, as well as to assist them in forming a view on standards and on quality of delivery.

6.1.5.3 Where External Examiners do meet with students the focus of discussion should be on the students' experience of learning and assessment. Questions might include:

- (a) Are students made aware of the overall outcomes for the course? Are timetables and workloads appropriate?
- (b) Do students feel they are being challenged?
- (c) Do students know how they are doing?
- (d) What feedback do students get on their progress and does it help them improve?
- (e) Are the library and IT facilities adequate?
- (f) What are the course strengths and are there any areas for improvement?

6.1.5.4 The University expects the External Examiner to exercise judgement when reporting on student views and interpret them against their wider knowledge of the course. Students should be encouraged to support and illustrate their views with examples of practice. The contribution from the External Examiner is to provide an independent critical perspective on student feedback. The University values student feedback and the course team should already have a good understanding of

student opinion. It does not always add value for External Examiners to simply report student views as stated without placing them in a critical context.

6.2 Approving Assessment Tasks

- 6.2.1 External Examiners must be consulted on draft assessment briefs and examination questions at undergraduate levels 5 and 6, and at postgraduate taught level 7. Assessment briefs and examination questions must be reviewed by External Examiners where the assessment is part of an enrollable Cert HE, Dip HE or Foundation Degree or where required by a PSRB or other subject specific requirement. To facilitate consideration by External Examiners, model answers, outline solutions and related marking schemes must be provided along with draft assessment briefs and examination questions.
- 6.2.2 All documents should be provided to External Examiners at least four months in advance of the assessment.
- 6.2.3 External Examiners should normally be consulted regarding students' choice of projects and/or design exercises and/or dissertations where these are integral components of module assessment at Level 6 or Level 7.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 6.2.4 All apprenticeships whether integrated or non-integrated, will require an independently assessed synoptic EPA. The arrangements for which are detailed in the respective apprenticeship's standards EPA plan. Where the EPA will be conducted by a separate independent apprenticeship EPAO, the EPAO is selected by the employer, where there is more than one approved EPAO for the apprenticeship standard.
- 6.2.5 Where an apprenticeship standard is an integrated degree apprenticeship, the EPA is included within the degree award and the University will need to ensure that they meet the requirements of the respective EPA plan in demonstrating the independence of the process for EPA.
- 6.2.6 As such, for integrated apprenticeships, the External Examiner (External Apprenticeship (EPA)/EPA External Assessor) may be involved in the oversight of the EPA. This might require undertaking consultation on the development and implementation of assessment materials specifically for the EPA. Where the EPA consists of ratification by the Assessment Board, the External Examiner may be required to participate and conduct EPA activity.
- 6.2.7 For non-integrated apprenticeships, the External Examiner Apprenticeship will not play a direct role in the EPA but will be involved in the awarding of the degree aspect of the apprenticeship. Where the University only acts as the EPAO it may be necessary to appoint an EPA External Assessor where this is required by the EPA Plan.

6.3 Sampling Assessed Work

- 6.3.1 The External Examiner has the right to see all assessed work in order to select an appropriate sample for moderation and/or audit against marking schemes/model

answers/outline solutions. Detailed arrangements for selection shall be agreed with the External Examiner in advance.

- 6.3.2 The minimum moderation sample of student work, at all levels for all awards is: 10 percent of student work for each assessment on any modules that contribute to the final award, or ten pieces of work per assessment (whichever is the greater). The sample should reflect the range of marks across the module and include all borderline fails.
- 6.3.3 Where a sample is provided it should include:
- (a) The assessment(s) marked highest overall;
 - (b) A selection of passed assessments from each classification band;
 - (c) Any problematic assessments particularly where there was wide disagreement among internal examiners;
 - (d) A sample of fails;
 - (e) At the External Examiner's discretion, all fails in dissertation/major projects can be reviewed.
- 6.3.4 Assessments include all components contributing to a module including coursework elements and examination papers. The reference to 'problematic assessments' is intended to cover a variety of eventualities where the School or College wants the particular advice of the External Examiner. This would include, for example, exceptional cases where there is internal disagreement on the application of the marking scheme but must not be regarding a mark for a script or coursework assignment.
- 6.3.5 The External Examiner has the right to see any worked scripts and other assessed assignments, including coursework, projects, dissertations which contribute to the module mark. External Examiners shall have discretion to sample material which will allow them to render a judgement as to the:
- (a) Overall suitability of the assessment methods in practice.
 - (b) Coherence of the assessment strategy.
 - (c) Reliability of internal marking.
- 6.3.6 The External Examiner may conduct viva voce examinations in such exceptional cases as shall be determined by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College in consultation with the External Examiner.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 6.3.7 For apprenticeship courses requirements will be stipulated as per each EPA Plan.

6.4 Approving Student Achievement

- 6.4.1 External Examiners shall be bound by the academic and assessment regulations of the University.
- 6.4.2 External Examiners shall offer advice and comments regarding the standards of the cohort and the assessment process. The External Examiner shall have equal power with internal members of the Assessment Board and may not override the collective view of the Board.
- 6.4.3 External Examiners must sign the matrices to signify endorsement of the marks for the modules and that decisions have been made in accordance with the University regulations.
- 6.4.4 Where unable to attend, the External Examiner must submit a statement to the Chair of the Assessment Board which states that they agree with the final marks awarded and standards achieved, and this should be attached to the matrices in lieu of their signature.

Where an External Examiner does not wish to or refuses to sign, see paragraphs on disputes below.

- 6.4.5 The signed pass lists will be retained within Academic Administration records as part of the Award and Progression Board minutes.
- 6.4.6 Disputes involving External Examiners
 - 6.4.6.1 However, where an External Examiner does not agree with decisions taken by the Board or disagrees regarding issues of standards on taught modules, the views of the External Examiner shall be noted in the minutes of the relevant Assessment Board and in time in the External Examiner's report.
 - 6.4.6.2 In these cases, the decisions of the Board must be separately ratified by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards before they are final.
 - 6.4.6.3 The External Examiner may appeal, in exceptional circumstances, to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. The decision of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards shall be final.
 - 6.4.6.4 If the External Examiner is unwilling to sign then they shall submit, in writing, their rationale, with justification to the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards will investigate any issues which might mean that students' marks would not otherwise be considered at the Award Board. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards shall have authority to sign the pass list in lieu of the External Examiner.
 - 6.4.6.5 When the decision of an External Examiner considering a dissertation submitted for a Master's degree by Examination gives rise to a case of dispute between the External Examiner(s) and internal examiners it is within the power of the Director of Academic Quality and Standards to decide on the matter, at their discretion, or to appoint another External Examiner to provide an independent opinion. The Director

of Academic Quality and Standards may take into account any written reports submitted by members of the Assessment Board.

- 6.4.6.6 In choosing a second External Examiner the Director of Academic Quality and Standards may also take into account, but need not be bound by, the nomination (if any) of an Assessment Board for a second External Examiner. A decision on whether or not to reconvene the Examining Board shall be at the discretion of this second External Examiner whose decision on this matter shall be final.

7 REPORTING

7.1 Submitting the annual report

- 7.1.1 External Examiners will provide reports on individual modules to the module leaders throughout their tenure. External Examiners are required to submit (a) written report(s) on an annual basis to the University according to the deadlines set in the report template(s) and communicated to the External Examiners. The report(s) must be received before payment of fees is authorised. Such reports should cover the full range of activities with which the External Examiners have been involved. External Examiners will be advised by the University on the annual report(s) they are required to submit based on their annual remit.
- 7.1.2 The final report(s) (completed on the same template(s) as the annual) made at the end of the term of office, should give general observations based on the whole period as well as covering the year in question. Particular attention should be paid to any issues that have been raised, but not addressed during the External Examiner's period of tenure.
- 7.1.3 Where an External Examiner is appointed to oversee work delivered at the University and (an) Academic Partner(s), the External Examiner must refer specifically to the academic partner(s) cohort(s) in the relevant annual report(s), raising any issues (where appropriate) and confirming the academic quality and standards of the provision.
- 7.1.4 Interim/supplementary reports may be submitted at any times where an External Examiner considers that issues have arisen which require prompt attention. This report is intended to be exceptional, and it will not be necessary for External Examiners to report on the satisfactory operation, or progress of the work, of the assessment board.
- 7.1.5 An External Examiner may send a separate report to the Vice-Chancellor and President on any matter which they deem necessary; such a report may be sent in confidence at any time. If an External Examiner has serious concerns about issues related to standards within the University and has exhausted all internal procedures including a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor and President, they should access the independent mechanism for addressing concerns about standards and quality in higher education managed by the OfS.

- 7.1.6 External Examiner Annual reports will be processed and reviewed by the AQSO who is responsible for ensuring that reports are considered and that any necessary actions are taken within the University.
- 7.1.7 Annual reports should be completed as directed by the AQSO; the templates or means of reporting may change annually. The report(s) is/are a major source of information in the annual monitoring process. The report(s) should contain clear information on academic standards and should advise on good practice, innovation and areas for enhancement. The most useful reports not only celebrate the positive aspects of courses but also give specific recommendations for actions.
- 7.1.8 In the unlikely event of a report not being sufficiently clear or informative, the University may seek further details.
- 7.1.9 Where an External Examiner has not submitted the required annual report(s) and following numerous attempts to contact the External Examiner by both the AQSO and the School or College, the School or College must submit a Record of External Examiner Activity to the AQSO, in lieu of the annual report(s). Written reports or minutes from assessment boards can also be used as evidence of External Examiner engagement. By completing this form, the School or College is confirming that the External Examiner concerned undertook the activities indicated in the form and appropriately engaged with the School or College in completing these activities.

Apprenticeship courses:

- 7.1.10 If the External Examiner remit includes an apprenticeship course, the annual report will also require specific feedback from the External Examiner on the delivery of the apprenticeship, this may include details on EPA delivery depending on the appointment. External Examiners may be expected to comment on the following aspects:
- (a) Is the apprenticeship aligned to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Characteristic Statement for Apprenticeships?
 - (b) Does the apprenticeship provide evidence of development of Maths and English?
 - (c) Is there evidence that learning and teaching includes coverage of Safeguarding, Prevent and British Values?
 - (d) Does the teaching and learning fully cover the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours set out in the Apprenticeship Standard?
 - (e) Is it clear how the minimum 'off-the-job' learning is relevant, of benefit to the apprentice and employer, and monitored?
 - (f) Is it clear where elements of assessment within modules are linked to the occupation and the EPA?
 - (g) Have EPAs been carried out following internal and external quality assurance requirements and requirements as set out in the EPA Plan?

(h) Are apprentices receiving a good level of support from the University?

7.2 Responding to the Annual Report

- 7.2.1 The AQSO should acknowledge receipt of an External Examiner's annual report and provide an indication of the timescale for a formal written response from the Course Leader or nominee.
- 7.2.2 The Course Leader or nominee is responsible for preparing the formal response to the External Examiner by the appropriate deadline using the External Examiner's Response Template. For courses being delivered by academic partners, the academic partner course leader is responsible for preparing the draft formal written response and sending this to the Academic Partnership Link Tutor for review.
- 7.2.3 The response must be reviewed by the Academic Quality Lead who is responsible for ensuring that any 'management issues' raised by the External Examiner (for example, relating to staffing resources) are referred to the School or College Executive for response.
- 7.2.4 The response must be checked by the AQSO, and subsequently sent by the AQSO directly to the External Examiner.
- 7.2.5 The AQSO will hold the definitive copy of all External Examiner reports and responses and will ensure they are accessible internally on the [AQSO SharePoint site](#). The full report, subject to redaction where appropriate, and response are shared with students through publication on Blackboard (or equivalent VLE for academic partners). These should be discussed at appropriate student/staff committee structures to strengthen student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. Reports should not include the names of students or members of staff.
- 7.2.6 Summaries of all External Examiner reports and responses are considered by the relevant Course Committees and School or College Quality Committees, as part of the evidence base for the University's monitoring and review processes.
- 7.2.7 Where an External Examiner has raised 'causes for concern' about standards, the Director of Academic Quality and Standards is responsible for ensuring that these concerns are addressed appropriately by the School or College or Academic Partner in a timely fashion and that an appropriate and timely response is sent to the External Examiner.
- 7.2.8 The Director of Academic Quality and Standards has access to copies of all External Examiners' reports and responses. If their attention is drawn to any issue of concern which requires urgent action the issue can be dealt with outside the quality assurance committee structure but must involve the Dean or Director or Head of School or College and other relevant staff. Reports on the action taken, if any, shall be provided to the AQSC, as appropriate. A summary report of all External Examiner reports and external examining activity is submitted to the AQSC annually by the Senior Quality Officer - Monitoring and External Examining. Bespoke summary reports will be provided to other committees or groups as appropriate.