

### Introduction to External Examining at Bangor University

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# The Purpose of the External Examiner



External examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining nationally comparable standards within autonomous higher education institutions in the UK.

### QUALITY ASSURANCE in Higher Education



#### **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

Published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Sets out the **Expectations and Practices** that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet as well as **Guiding Principles** 

Expectations are supplemented by **Practical Advice**, which indicate how expectations may be met

### External Expertise



The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.

External examiners contribute to course design and approval, course review, setting and maintaining academic standards and alignment with the relevant national qualifications framework, Characteristics Statements and their alignment with Subject Benchmark Statements, and any other requirements, such as those from PSRBs or funding bodies.

The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sectorrecognised standards.

standards and confirm their alignment with UK-recognised standards in determining awards.

#### **Core Practices** related to the External Examiner role



### External Expertise



Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a

External examiners play an important role in identifying good practice and making recommendations for enhancement of assessment policies and procedures. [Critical friend]

# The Role of the External Examiner



There are four broad aspects of the role of an External Examiner:

Maintainer of academic standards Guardian of national standards Process checker Critical friend Specific Tasks of an External Examiner 1



On all taught programmes at Levels 5, 6 and 7 (and L4 for Foundation degrees)

Comment on all draft examination papers and a representative sample of draft assignments which contribute to the final award;

Moderate a representative sample of internally marked work;

Attend the Board of Examiners meeting (normally June for UG & late October/early November for PGT programmes);

Endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes by signing Confirmation of Results Process form.

# Specific Tasks of an External Examiner 2



Annually report on standards of student performance and how they compare with the sector, the fairness of assessment methods and the accuracy and consistency of internal marking;

Contribute to the ongoing development and enhancement of the provision through feedback and dialogue with the programme team;

Observe students in their practice where appropriate (Nursing, Midwifery, Initial Teacher Training, Music);

Scrutinize documentation related to recognition of prior learning, where relevant.

### **Preparing for External Examining**



With reference to the programme specification, External Examiners should familiarise themselves with the programmes and the modules that they will examine.

In particular, they should look at:

programme aims;

intended learning outcomes, curriculum and teaching and assessment strategies of the programme and modules;

the link between particular modules and the programme as a whole.

They should also familiarise themselves with key internal and external







The annual report provides an independent and objective

provision

Reports **must** be completed using the pro forma provided. This contains sections on:

- academic standards
- the programme
- assessment, including assessment strategy
- professional placements, if relevant
- the Board of Examiners meeting

Reports must be submitted within one month following the Board of Examiners meeting

### What happens to the



No individuals should be named in the Report Quality Enhancment Unit reads each External Examiner report on arrival. Copies are sent to the Head of School. Reports made available to Programme Directors Reports considered within School

#### **Serious Concerns**



If an External Examiner raises serious concerns in their report:

### **Professional Practice**



- The most important role of an external examiner is to confirm threshold standards, rigorous process and comparability of standards
- Opting to be a critical friend may feel more rewarding and easier, but it is not more important than overseeing academic standards
- To be confident about overseeing standards you need to be confident that the academic standards you use are representative of the subject community to which you belong
- As the only check on outputs, the job of External Examiner holds a lot of responsibility for stakeholders and UK standards
- It is important for examiners to be well informed about the evidence around effective assessment rather than just relying on their own experience of assessment
- Given the complexity of clarifying academic standards it is important for External Examiners to be able to evaluate the relevance of factors in that complexity

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### **Useful Resources**



Bangor University External Examiner Handbook: https://www.bangor.ac.uk/quality/ext\_exam.php.en

Bangor University Quality and Standards webpages: https://www.bangor.ac.uk/quality/index.php.en

QAA UK Quality Code: https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise

Advance-HE External Examiner Handbook: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/HE\_Academy\_Exter nal\_Examiners\_Handbook\_2012.pdf