

Section 39 External examiners for taught programmes

39.1 Purpose

- 39.1.1 External examiners appointed by York St John University are an essential part of the University's framework for assuring the standards and quality of our awards. External examiners are external to and independent of the University, the awarding body.
- 39.1.2 External examiners for taught programmes are appointed for all provision leading to a Higher Education award, including those offered under franchise agreements or for validated programmes offered through collaboration with external partners.
- 39.1.3 The University recognises the key role played by its external examiners as follows:
- To ensure that the academic standards of programmes meet the requirements of the relevant National Qualification Framework.
 - To ensure the value of our qualifications awarded is in line with Higher Education sector recognised standards.
 - To calibrate and maintain academic threshold standards for our qualifications both internally across cohorts and collaborative providers, and in relation to the broader Higher Education system.
 - To verify that the standards set are appropriate in the awards and modules for which they are responsible.
 - To ensure that the assessment procedures are fair, reliable and transparent, and that integrity is maintained in their operation.
 - To contribute to improvement and enhancement of core practices through comment on areas of good practice, innovation and enhancement.

39.2 Nomination and appointment

- 39.2.1 The University appoints external examiners as follows:
- An appropriate number of External Examiners – as subject specialists.
 - A Regulatory External Examiner, covering overall award and progression for the University as a whole.

Person specification

- 39.2.2 External examiners should:
- Have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK Higher Education sector.
 - Be appropriately experienced in programme design and student assessment at the level of the award, and in operating a variety of assessment tasks/procedures appropriate to the subject.
 - Have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge, and/or where appropriate have the extensive practitioner experience required to assess standards in an effective manner, in order to identify good practice and to recommend enhancements to inform programme development. External examiners with professional qualifications should be qualified at least to the level of the qualification being externally examined.
 - Have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively, including experience of agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
 - 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.

- f) Have familiarity with the standard expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed.
- g) Have fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements).
- h) Meet applicable criteria set by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).
- i) For Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) accredited programmes, external examiners must possess current registration on the appropriate part of the NMC Register.
- j) Have awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.

39.2.3 External examiners will normally hold current posts in institutions within the UK Higher Education system and will, preferably, have experience of external examining. In certain circumstances, it will be appropriate to appoint either a person who possesses particular professional expertise, but who does not work within the Higher Education sector, or a person who does not yet hold external examining experience. Such proposals will be assessed on their merits. The proposing School will identify whether first-time external examiners require extra support and put appropriate support in place as necessary.

Restrictions on appointment

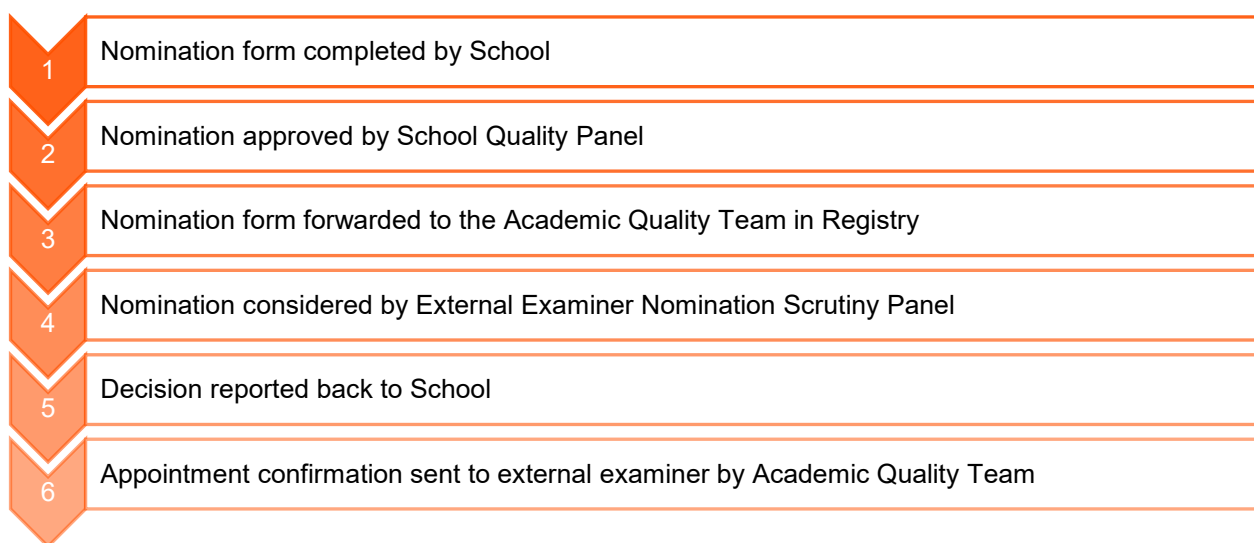
- 39.2.4 External examiners should normally hold no more than 2 external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.
- 39.2.5 A previous external examiner of the University may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of 5 years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- 39.2.6 Recently retired academic staff from a UK Higher Education institution may be appointed, provided that the appointment starts within 2 years, and is completed within 6 years, of retirement.
- 39.2.7 Particular attention is paid to nominees who have been involved in the development of the programme or its component parts, for example, as an external consultant, or who have acted as a member of the validation panel (or equivalent) which approved the programme. The University, via the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) External Examiner Scrutiny Panel, will balance the benefits of engaging someone who is familiar with the programme and its rationale with any risk to their ability to provide a fully independent perspective. Only in exceptional cases will approval be forthcoming.

Reciprocity and conflicts of interest

- 39.2.8 To ensure impartiality and independence the University does not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:
 - a) A member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the University or one of its collaborative partners.
 - b) Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study.
 - c) Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study.
 - d) Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to significantly influence the future of students on the programme of study.
 - e) Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or module(s) in question.
 - f) Former staff or students of the University or one of its collaborative partners unless a period of 5 years has elapsed, and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).
 - g) A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution.
 - h) The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution.
 - i) The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.
- 39.2.9 To ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to appointment of external examiners, the University holds a central record of examining appointments held by York St John University staff at other institutions and this is consulted as part of the nomination process.
- 39.2.10 External examiners and York St John University staff must notify the Academic Quality team in Registry of any changes in circumstances which may create a conflict of interest. In such instances this may result in the termination of the external examiner's appointment for the University.

39.3 Nomination process

- 39.3.1 The approval of appointments of external examiners is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Committee on behalf of the Academic Board.
- 39.3.2 Nominations for the appointment of external examiners to be effective in October should be made by **1 May**.
- 39.3.3 Nominations will be made by the School responsible for the module(s) and programme(s) concerned. For programmes delivered through a collaborative arrangement at a partner institution, the nomination will come forward from the partner organisation in consultation with the Collaborative Partner Representative. All nominations will be considered by the External Examiner Nomination Scrutiny Panel, acting on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee. Details of external examiner appointments will be reported to the Quality and Standards Committee.
- 39.3.4 Nominations will be considered in accordance with the criteria for appointment set out in the section above. In making nominations, Schools should ensure that the appointment criteria are met; any exceptions must be clearly identified for consideration by the External Examiner Nomination Scrutiny Panel.
- 39.3.5 The Panel's decision will be reported back to the School by the Academic Quality team in Registry.



Support for external examiners without previous experience

- 39.3.6 Schools nominating examiners without previous experience will be required to provide details of appropriate support, for example, mentoring for their first year of appointment, particularly for those from a non-UK Higher Education background. Schools are responsible for identifying a suitable mentor who should be a current external examiner at the University.

39.4 Changes to duties following appointment

- 39.4.1 Requests for reallocation of duties of an existing examiner, for example, module allocation, must be made in writing and include a rationale for the change. The request must be approved by the relevant School Quality Panel prior to being submitted to the External Examiner Nomination Scrutiny Panel through the Academic Quality team in Registry.

39.5 Terms of office

Period of appointment

- 39.5.1 The term of office for an external examiner will **normally be 4 years**, with the possibility of extension to 5 years in exceptional circumstances to ensure continuity. No term of office will exceed 5 years.
- 39.5.2 Requests for an extension of the period of approval must be made in writing and include a rationale for the change. The request must be approved by the relevant School Quality Panel prior to being submitted to the External Examiner Nomination Scrutiny Panel through the Academic Quality team in Registry.
- 39.5.3 Undergraduate external examiner appointments will normally start on **1 September** and end **31 August** in their final year. Postgraduate external examiner appointments will normally start on **1 September** and end **30 November** in their final year.

Early termination of appointment

- 39.5.4 An external examiner's appointment may exceptionally be terminated at any time by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Quality and Standards Committee on the following grounds:
- a) Changes in programme and module structure which render the appointment unsuitable.
 - b) Withdrawal of a programme or group of modules.
 - c) Failure to fulfil external examiner obligations.
 - d) Failure to attend School Assessment Boards where attendance is required without making alternate arrangements.
 - e) Irretrievable breakdown of relations with the University sufficient to compromise the assessment process and adversely affect students.
 - f) A conflict of interest has arisen that cannot be satisfactorily resolved.
 - g) Undeclared or unidentified reciprocal arrangements are identified.
- 39.5.5 Should an external examiner's circumstances change, and they feel unable to continue their duties in the role, the external examiner must notify the University in writing, giving a **3-month** period of notice. Letters of resignation must be sent to the Academic Registrar and Head/Dean of School.

39.6 Student information on external examiner appointments

- 39.6.1 Information on the University's external examiners, including their names and institutions, is available on the University's website. Students are provided with this information, and information on the external examining system, in relevant School information and on Moodle.
- It is made clear to students that it is not appropriate for them to contact external examiners directly. External examiners must refer any direct contact received from students to the University.

39.7 Preparation for the role

Appointment letter and welcome pack

- 39.7.1 Following appointment external examiners are provided with the following materials by the Academic Quality team in Registry:
- a) Appointment email.
 - b) [Code of Practice for Assessment](#).
 - c) [Principal dates for the assessment events at the University for the academic year](#).
 - d) Information on fees and expenses and expenses claim forms.
 - e) [Annual report form \(online link information\)](#).
 - f) Previous external examiner reports (where relevant).

External examiner induction

- 39.7.2 To ensure that our external examiners are effectively briefed on University requirements and regulations and on the detail of the modules and programmes for which each examiner is responsible, external examiners will have access to an online Moodle induction site with accompanying support materials. It is also expected that programme teams will brief their external examiners. External examiners for programmes delivered in collaboration with partners should be briefed by the relevant programme team, with input from the York St John University Collaborative Partner Representative where appropriate.
- 39.7.3 External examiners may contact the Academic Registrar if they feel they have not had access to induction materials or had guidance from their programme team. Further information on the external examiner role is also available through our [External examiner page](#).

School induction materials

- 39.7.4 The following materials are sent by the School following appointment. Schools and partner institutions may find it useful, however, to share some of this material with a prospective external examiner before a nomination is sent forward for approval so that they can be satisfied about the duties proposed.
- a) Module and programme documentation including the relevant programme specification(s) and module specifications.
 - b) Information on School or partner institution specific dates.
 - c) School or partner institution specific assessment information including marking criteria (via Moodle).
 - d) An update on programme developments.
 - e) Annual Assessment Schedule (once finalised).

Annual updates

- 39.7.5 All external examiners will receive an update of any relevant material annually or during the year should any major changes occur.

The University's virtual learning environment

- 39.7.6 Moodle is the University's virtual learning environment.
- 39.7.7 External examiners will need to engage with Moodle as part of the induction and assessment processes. Moodle also provides external examiners with the opportunity to engage directly with teaching materials and learning support.
- 39.7.8 The virtual learning environment for our collaborative partnerships will be confirmed by the partner.

39.8 External examiner role

- 39.8.1 External examiners are formally and directly involved in assessments that contribute directly to the award of intended qualifications.
- a) For postgraduate taught, graduate programmes, and taught modules on Professional Doctorate programmes, the external examiner will be directly involved with the assessments for all modules.
 - b) For Integrated Master's programmes the external examiner will be directly involved with the assessment of Levels 5, 6 and 7.
 - c) For undergraduate programmes the external examiner will be directly involved with the assessment of Levels 5 and 6.
 - In calibrating standards for undergraduate degrees as a whole, however, an external examiner will wish to comment on the role of Level 4 within this and should be provided with evidence to support this through the School Assessment Board.
 - d) For Degree Apprenticeship programmes the external examiner may also be involved in reviewing the End-point assessment (EPA) grades.
 - e) For Foundation Degree programmes the external examiner will be directly involved with the assessment for both Levels 4 and 5.
 - f) External examiners are asked to carefully review intended sub-degree awards such as Foundation Certificates, the Certificate of Higher Education or Diploma of Higher Education where these are made within the context of a degree programme.
 - g) Where appropriate, the University will, additionally, make provision for an external examiner to be involved in freestanding modules, or groups of modules that do not lead to an award.
 - h) External examiners will be appointed for the first year of delivery of all programmes.
- 39.8.2 Programmes of study will be clearly attributed to a subject-area within a School although they may include modules from elsewhere. An external examiner will not normally be asked to take responsibility for a module belonging to another subject-area, but they should take a view on whether that module, in combination with others, can deliver the programme learning outcomes or skills profiles expected by the University.
- 39.8.3 For Joint Honours programmes, subject external examiners will take a view of modules contributing to the Joint Honours strand in that subject-area and for the overall coherence of the programme managed by the nominated lead School. Increasingly, subject-areas across the University are developing broad programmes of modules that can contribute to a number of programme routes leading to named awards.
- 39.8.4 The University asks its external examiners to take a view on the academic standards for programmes of study including classifications. Progression and award profiles will be supplied to School Assessment Boards so that external examiners can scrutinise profiles with a view to assisting boards in making recommendations about individual cases to the Special Cases Panel and taking an overview of standards for programmes. Other evidence from which an examiner might form a view of the overall standards of the programme might be:
- a) Review of curriculum structure and the learning, teaching and assessment strategy for a programme which can be considered independently of the annual assessment process.
 - b) Consideration of overall profiles, summary results for a programme and comparative statistics which can be considered by a subject-area external examiner after the meeting of the School Assessment Board and advice can be offered accordingly in the annual report.
 - c) Involvement with revalidation of its taught provision or curriculum amendment, should it take place within their term of office.
- 39.8.5 External examiners can be consulted on any proposed change of mark for module(s) that may arise outside a formal meeting of a board.

- 39.8.6 External examiners should direct any requests for additional evidence to enable them to discharge their responsibilities through the relevant Programme/Course Lead or nominee.

39.9 Commenting on draft assessments and examination papers

- 39.9.1 External examiners are involved in the review and evaluation of proposed assessments. This includes the verification of examination papers for all levels that are running for the first time and all modules that are contributing to an award and other assessment tasks.
- 39.9.2 Schools are required to provide external examiners with draft assessments and examination papers, along with accompanying model answers/marking criteria, for comment and approval.
- 39.9.3 Schools must share draft assessments and examination papers with external examiners in good time to allow ample opportunity for feedback to be provided.
- 39.9.4 Comments made by an external examiner on proposed examination papers or other assessments will be considered by the programme team, and a response provided on the outcomes of this consideration. Information on how examination papers and assignment briefs will be made available to external examiners will be confirmed to them by the School.

39.10 Meeting with students

- 39.10.1 Many external examiners find it useful to meet students on programmes they are examining at some point during their period of appointment to inform their wider understanding of the context within which assessment takes place. While this is not a requirement of the University, School staff will be pleased to arrange meetings with students on request. Students will be given clear information on the purpose of such meetings.

39.11 Role in external moderation

- 39.11.1 Our external examiners are moderators of standards. External examiners are required to review assessed work including the outcome of examinations to calibrate standards across the subject-area and with comparable courses elsewhere, with close attention to work at pass/fail, grade and classification boundaries.
- 39.11.2 External examiners are required to review the marks achieved by students in modules contributing to the determination of awards. This means that external examiners are not involved routinely in moderating assessment at Level 3 and 4 of an undergraduate Bachelor's degree programme but would be involved with Level 4 of a Foundation Degree and a programme with the intended award of Diploma of Higher Education, or if the award is set entirely at either Level 4 or below.
- 39.11.3 Programme teams are responsible for ensuring that appropriate samples of assessment from each module are sent to the external examiner for moderation.
- Samples must include examples from the full range of grades awarded, including a sample of failed assessments, where these exist.
 - Samples should be a sensible size and must involve **a minimum of 5 scripts or the square root of the number of scripts** whichever is greater.
 - The important principle is that the external examiner has a sufficient range of work to reach a clear judgment about standards.
 - Should normally include all reassessment failures, especially at final level or where enforced withdrawal following programme failure is likely to be recommended. If for any reason an examiner has not been involved in the review of all failed work, the Academic Registrar may ask an examiner to review a particular piece of work if necessary. Refer to [section 39.14](#) regarding endorsement of assessment results for further details.
 - In the case of oral work or presentations, agreement should be reached with the subject area on how this can be achieved.
 - Where the minimum sample size cannot be met due to approved extensions, the Programme/Course Lead must agree an appropriate approach with the external examiner. This may include:
 - Reviewing additional work following the submission of approved extensions;
 - Deferring full endorsement of the module until a sufficient sample is available; **or**
 - Confirming that, in the professional judgement of the external examiner, sufficient evidence exists to form a view on standards.

Such arrangements must be documented and reported to the School Assessment Board.

39.11.4 Programme teams are responsible for ensuring that:

- a) The examiner receives samples as quickly as possible after the internal moderation. The 'Assessment Schedule' provided by the School at the start of the academic year will indicate when the sample is expected.
- b) The examiner receives accompanying information about the module (Module Handbook/Moodle site) including assessment criteria together with the internal moderators' feedback and comments.
- c) The examiner receives clear written information about any individual cases which they are being asked to consider.

39.11.5 As well as receiving samples of assessed work, external examiners may be asked to consider individual student cases. For example:

- a) To advise on reported academic misconduct.
- b) To consider exceptional/outstanding work, awarded very high grades.
- c) To consider failed assessments.
- d) To advise the School Assessment Board Chair on a disputed grade following extensive internal moderation.

Reassessments and deferrals

39.11.6 External examiners are not required to review samples for reassessments or deferrals of passing standard unless they explicitly state in advance that they wish to do this.

Borderline marks

39.11.7 In the case of borderline grades for first submissions of undergraduate dissertations or postgraduate dissertations, external examiner review and endorsement is required, and should be arranged to manage the holiday period.

39.11.8 It is neither necessary, nor good practice, to send all assessments at classification borderlines to the external examiner. The internal moderation process should resolve most individual cases. If that process produces a borderline grade, then there should be confidence in that grade and notes of the moderation process should justify it.

39.11.9 Typically, this entails reviewing samples of student work from each class/award and class boundary. While such sampling will include first class work, the University does not require all first class work to be seen by an external examiner if they have had sufficient access to such work to establish standards.

Adjustment of marks

39.11.10 Marks for individual students included in the sample will not normally be adjusted unless the external examiner considers that there is a need to adjust the marks for the **whole cohort** taking a particular module. In these circumstances, an external examiner may recommend a course of action to a School Assessment Board, for example, that an assessment element be re-marked for all students. The Academic Registrar will be consulted regarding the process to be followed in such circumstances.

39.11.11 Individual marks will normally only be adjusted if individual circumstances apply, for example, arbitration of marks where disparity exists between markers. Consideration will be given to the 'Protocol for Identifying and Reviewing Anomalous Performance in Modules' (refer to [section 42.1](#)).

39.11.12 In the event that an external examiner determines that the overall level of grading on a module or modules is inappropriate, a request should be made that all work submitted for the assessment in question be re-marked by Module Directors/Leads, considering the examiner's judgement about the original level of grading. If possible, this should be completed prior to the School Assessment Board meeting. Where this is not possible, module grades will be approved through Chair's Action.

Summary of external examiner moderation requirements

39.11.13 Summary of moderation requirements

Programme	Contribute to award	Moderation requirements
Level 3 entire programme	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures
Level 3 Foundation Year	<i>No - Progressional</i>	• New programmes or modules only – first run through ▪ Sample of first attempt work for all modules* ▪ All reassessment failures • Overview thereafter
Level 4 entire programme	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures
Level 4 and 5 Foundation Degree	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures
Level 4 and 5 Diploma of Higher Education (intended award)	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures
Level 4 Bachelor's	<i>No - Progressional</i>	• New programmes or modules only – first run through ▪ Sample of first attempt work for all modules* ▪ All reassessment failures • Overview thereafter
Level 5 Bachelor's	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures
Level 6 Bachelor's / Integrated Master's	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures • All borderline dissertations
Level 6 Graduate Certificate / Graduate Diploma	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures • All borderline dissertations
Level 7 Integrated Master's	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures • All borderline dissertations
Level 7 Postgraduate	Yes	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures • All borderline dissertations
Level 8 Doctorate	Variable	• Sample of first attempt work for all modules* • All reassessment failures

* The square root of the number of scripts with the minimum being at least 5 scripts – including work from each class/award banding and a sample of failed assessments.

Note – While such sampling will include first class work, the University does not require all first class work or all dissertations to be seen by an external examiner if they have had sufficient access to a sample to establish standards.

39.12 Role in enhancement of quality

- 39.12.1 The Heads/Deans of School or nominated representative will ensure that external examiners are kept fully apprised of proposed curriculum developments.
- 39.12.2 External examiners will be consulted on changes to approved forms of assessment where these are made outside the normal cycle of programme review and approval.

39.13 Role at School Assessment Board meetings

- 39.13.1 Each subject-area will have its own School Assessment Board (SAB). These boards in turn report to the University Assessment Board.
- 39.13.2 External examiners are full members of the SAB for the subject-area to which they have been appointed. The SAB agrees marks. Subject-area external examiners are expected to attend meetings, especially where module results contributing to awards are considered, but they are not required to attend the meeting of the University Assessment Board.
- 39.13.3 The University Assessment Board has oversight of decisions taken by School Assessment Boards on the progress of students and the classification of degrees and other awards. The Regulatory External Examiner is a member of this committee and attends.
- 39.13.4 SAB meetings are usually convened several times a year, normally at the end of Semester 1 in March, at the end of Semester 2 in June, and then again to consider the results of resits and deferred students in September. Board meetings for some postgraduate programmes normally takes place in November. Boards for non-standard programmes and postgraduate resits may take place at other times during the year.
- 39.13.5 External examiners will be notified of the meeting dates at the start of the academic year by Schools.
- 39.13.6 External examiners are invited to all meetings and are **required to attend at least 1 meeting annually**. The SAB meetings take place online.
- 39.13.7 If an external examiner is unable to attend the SAB meeting, but has been involved in the examining process throughout, a written statement confirming their concurrence with the module results should be submitted to the Chair for recording purposes in advance of the SAB meeting.
- 39.13.8 Non-attendance by an external examiner without good cause may result in termination of the appointment.
- 39.13.9 Details on the operation of School Assessment Boards are set out in [section 41](#).

39.14 Role endorsing assessment results

- 39.14.1 External examiners must endorse the results for all modules for which they are responsible by signature (including electronic signature where necessary and appropriate). External examiners attending the School Assessment Board, either in person or online, may provide verbal concurrence (to be recorded in the minutes). External examiners not attending will be asked to endorse the results by providing concurrence by email. In doing so the examiner will be indicating that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process and will be confirming that the standards set in the assessments are commensurate with equivalent awards at other UK institutions.
- 39.14.2 Such endorsement implies that a sample of assessments have been reviewed but does not imply that the external examiner has reviewed the work of every student.
- 39.14.3 It is accepted that the endorsement of first attempt marks presented at the School Assessment Board also confirms concurrence for any reassessment or deferrals of passing standard. Where an external examiner wishes to actively review reassessment work of a passing standard this must be explicitly stated at the School Assessment Board.
- 39.14.4 Delays in providing concurrence to endorse results by the School Assessment Board meeting date will impact upon student reassessment, progression and award decisions and therefore should be avoided where possible. Where a delay is unavoidable the external examiner must liaise with the School Assessment Board Chair, who will notify the Assessment team in Registry (refer to [section 41.7](#)).
- 39.14.5 If an examiner is unwilling to endorse a set of results, the Academic Registrar must be consulted, and the Assessment team must be notified (refer to [section 41.7](#)).

39.15 Regulatory External Examiner

- 39.15.1 The University Assessment Board is supported by a Regulatory External Examiner. The purpose of the Regulatory External Examiner is to act as a guardian for the overall award and progress process for the University. The examiner will perform an important role in offering reassurance that all students are treated appropriately and equitably within the regulations of the University.
- 39.15.2 The Regulatory External Examiner is appointed to the University Assessment Board with the following duties:
- a) To verify that the University applies its rules for award and progress equitably.
 - b) To verify that correct decisions are taken with regard to awards and progress.
 - c) To verify that appropriate consideration has been given to exceptional circumstances through the Special Cases Panel.
 - d) To verify that discretion in academic judgement is exercised consistently.
- 39.15.3 The Regulatory External Examiner is a full member of the University Assessment Board and their advice to the Board will be sought in responding to difficult circumstances or individual cases.
- 39.15.4 The Regulatory External Examiner attends both annual University Assessment Board meetings, typically December and September.

39.16 External examiner annual reports

- 39.16.1 In addition to the valuable advice and comments made formally and informally to the members of staff of the subject-area to which they are appointed, external examiners are required to report annually in writing to the Vice Chancellor of the University. The report is a key element of the University's quality assurance processes.
- 39.16.2 In order for the reports to be available in a timely manner for use in annual monitoring, external examiners are required to complete their online reports by no later than **one month** after the final School Assessment Board of the academic year for a programme.

Content of reports

- 39.16.3 In accordance with the Office for Students' ongoing conditions of registration, the report should provide clear and informative feedback on:
- a) The extent to which the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the sector-recognised standards and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements.
 - b) The extent to which the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations.
 - c) The extent to which the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those other UK Higher Education Institutions of which the external examiner has experience.
 - d) Where applicable, the comparability of achievement on the same programmes operating across several sites and/or using more than one mode of delivery.
 - e) Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment identified by the external examiner.
 - f) Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

Additionally, the report should:

- g) Confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, the examiner should give details).
 - h) State whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to the examiner's satisfaction.
 - i) Address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.
 - j) Give an overview of the examiner's term of office (when concluded).
- 39.16.4 Bearing in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act, external examiners must not include comments on identifiable individuals in written reports.

Serious concerns

- 39.16.5 In recognition that the report is to be treated as an open document, external examiners are reminded that they may make separate and confidential reports to the Vice Chancellor on any matter of serious concern about academic standards.
- 39.16.6 The Vice Chancellor will then ensure that matters raised in any such reports are investigated as swiftly as possible and a written response, outlining any actions taken as a result, will be provided to the relevant external examiner.
- 39.16.7 Where an external examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings relating to academic standards and has exhausted the University's internal processes, including the confidential report to the Vice Chancellor outlined above, they can raise the matter externally with the Office of Students.

Student access to external examiner reports

- 39.16.8 External examiner annual reports are made available to all students on Moodle.

39.17 Consideration of external examiner reports

Process for consideration

- 39.17.1 The report will be considered as part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes. On receipt, the report will be processed according to the procedure for reviewing external examiner reports in the section below. For collaborative programmes, the report will be sent to the Programme/Course Lead at the partner organisation, and the York St John University Collaborative Partner Representative. Responses to reports will be approved as detailed in **section 39.17.9** below and sent to the Academic Quality team in Registry for central records.
- 39.17.2 The processes for the effective scrutiny of external examiner reports (including those for collaborative provision) are:
- All external examiner reports are read by the Academic Registrar, or nominee, and graded accordingly. Refer to the procedure for reviewing external examiner reports in the following section.
 - External examiner reports, plus the QSC report, are discussed at programme level and at School level (via School Quality Panels (SQP)), with issues identified, actions proposed (with timescales) and good practice noted.
 - Responses to reports are reviewed at SQPs and approval recommended to the Head/Dean of School.
 - The Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) considers all external examiner reports. The Committee reports on:
 - The meeting of standards.
 - Good practice.
 - Issues – including cross-university themes.
 - The QSC report is shared with Schools, Registry, and the Chair of the Education Committee (EC).
 - All the above feed into the Annual Quality Report.

Procedure

- 39.17.3 External examiner reports are received by Registry via the online form. A confidential report can still be sent directly to the Vice Chancellor, to whom all external examiners nominally report.
- 39.17.4 The Academic Registrar or nominee 'grades' the report into one of the following categories:

Grade	Category description
A	Suggested enhancements, or minor issues within a module or modules
B	Issues with the programme structure, sequencing, or across several modules
C	Major programme issues
D	Highly serious issues concerning academic standards or quality processes
E	Confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor

- 39.17.5 For each grade, a flag can be added to show issues with the provision of central services or at University level. This is shown by a (U) character next to the grade to indicate there are perceived issues that do not directly relate to the programme and its delivery.
- 39.17.6 A second flag of (LD) will be added to the grades of reports which are perceived to lack detail. The responsibility for following up on any reports lacking detail with the external examiner will lie with the School. If the School deem the report to be unsatisfactory, and do not resolve this with the external examiner, the Head/Dean of School will recommend that the external examiner enters into the early termination of appointment process as per [section 39.5.4](#). The School can request removal of the flag if they feel the report is sufficiently detailed. If the School is satisfied that the external examiner has given sufficient detail, through communication with them, the flag will remain, but a record will be made (by the School) to note that further detail has been provided.
- 39.17.7 A member of the Academic Quality team in Registry sends the external examiner's report to the Associate Head/Dean of School or nominated representative with the grade.
- 39.17.8 A member of the Academic Quality team in Registry uploads the report onto the Registry Information Page for access by all staff. The Head/Dean of School or nominated representative is responsible for its onward distribution to the members of the Programme team. Reports that receive a grade C or D are referred to the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee.
- 39.17.9 The Academic Quality team in Registry is responsible for publishing all external examiner reports on Moodle, so they are available to students.
- 39.17.10 The external examiner report is reviewed and a response to issues is documented.
- 39.17.11 The responsibilities for approving the response and for contacting the external examiner depend on the grade of the report. Although the programme team may send further acknowledgement to the external examiner, and will discuss the detailed contents as necessary, formal responses are mostly approved by Heads/Deans of School following recommendations by the appropriate School Quality Panel, with responses to more serious issues approved by the appropriate member of the Academic Board, shown below:

Grade	Produce a draft response	Response approved by	Response from
A	Programme team	Head/Dean of School	Head/Dean of School
B	Programme team, Associate Head/Dean	Head/Dean of School	Head/Dean of School
C	Programme team, Associate Head/Dean, Heads of Service	Academic Registrar	Academic Registrar
D	Programme team, Registry	Chair of QSC	Chair of QSC
E	As directed by the Vice Chancellor	Vice Chancellor	Vice Chancellor
(U)	As above, according to grade	Academic Registrar	As above, according to grade

39.17.12 The issues, responses and analysis will continue to be included in:

- The External Examiner Annual Monitoring Report.
- The Annual Quality Report.

39.18 Payment of fees and expenses

39.18.1 Information regarding the payment of fees and expenses is set out in our external examiner [website](#).

39.18.2 Payment of the examiner fee will be conditional on the receipt of the annual report.