Guide for External Examiners

Taught programmes
Introduction and thanks

Thank you for agreeing to undertake the role of being an External Examiner here at City University London.

Your external examining role will play an important part in providing one of the principal means for maintaining nationally comparable standards within independent higher education institutions. It will contribute to enhancement and development of our programmes and provide an external process for monitoring fair practice in the assessment of students’ academic performance.

This guide should provide assistance in your role and responsibilities as an External Examiner. It supplements the University’s policies on external examining for taught programmes.

Contact information

Student and Academic Services plays a central role in supporting the University’s management and development of its educational offering.

Natalie Shepherd
Development Support Officer
Student and Academic Services
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V0HB
T: +44 (0)20 7040 8932
E: exexadmin@city.ac.uk

For further information on external examining at City University London, please visit the following website: www.city.ac.uk/external-examining
Appointments are made by Senate following nomination by the relevant School Boards of Studies or (for validated provision) Course Boards. Senate has delegated authority from Council (the supreme governing body of the University) for the enhancement of academic quality and assurance of academic standards. Senate has delegated this function to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. External Examiners are drawn from such institutions, industries and professions as befit the particular programme content in order to provide for appropriate scrutiny.

Once your nomination has been approved on behalf of the University, you will be sent an External Examiner appointment pack. The pack contains a formal contract letter, an acceptance/bank details form, an expenses claim form, an External Examiner programme team checklist, the Assessment and Feedback policy and this External Examiner’s Guide.

The contract letter will include:

- Details about the academic year that your appointment is due to commence
- The length of your appointment, the programme you have been assigned to, in that particular School or validated institution
- Information on how you can access the University’s policies, a brief outline of the External Examiner role
- Your fee and payment details.

Please check that all information is correct, and if so, complete and return the acceptance/bank details form. This is important to confirm your agreement to the appointment and to enable fees to be paid to you in due course. If you have any queries regarding your letter, please contact Student and Academic Services.

In line with national guidance, from 2012/13 External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of four years, with an exceptional extension of one year if necessary to ensure continuity. Re-appointment may occur in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since the last appointment.

Schools are responsible for the timely nomination of external examiners for both new and continuing programmes. Nominations are made before the end of one session for appointments (and re-appointments) commencing the following session. The Programme Team are expected to arrange for a handover from the outgoing External Examiner to the incoming Examiner.
Your contact details

Please keep us informed of changes to address by email, so we can keep in contact and pay you.

---------------------

Briefing, induction and support

All newly appointed External Examiners will be invited to a briefing provided by the programme director that provides detail about the programme and School to ensure that you:

- Understand and are fully equipped for your roles(s)
- Are familiar with the programme(s) and modules for which you have been appointed
- Understand external examining, assessment and award processes and associated administrative procedures at a University and School or programme level
- Have a knowledge and understanding of City University London’s assessment regulations
- Develop effective working relationships with relevant staff within the programme, School and University.

Additionally, you will receive a letter inviting you to an institutional induction to the role of external examining at City University London.
Duties of an External Examiner

As part of our emphasis on externality, we believe that External Examiners play a critical role in supporting the maintenance of the academic standards of awards made in our name. Through their reports, External Examiners contribute to the continuing development of our educational provision.

Your role will require you to undertake the following duties:

- Approve the assessments compiled by the Internal Examiners, including coursework, examination papers and resit papers
- Review assessment material agreed with the School in advance. External Examiners have a right to see all assessment material if they wish
- Review the assessed work according to a scope agreed at the briefing meeting
- Attend meetings of the Assessment Board(s)
- Approve recommendations of the Assessment Board(s) for submission to Senate or, if unwilling to approve any one or more of them, make independent representation to Senate via the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student and Academic Services
- Contribute to enhancement and development of the programme through discussion with and feedback to the programme team
- Report on the standard of the award, the standard of student performance and the soundness and fairness of processes for the assessment and determination of awards through:
  - Initial comments to be considered at meetings of Assessment Boards
  - A report to the University submitted within two weeks of the final meeting of the Assessment Board each year. This should incorporate the initial comments made at Assessment Board meetings.
- Be able to exercise discretion in a consistent manner in the following areas:
  - The right to submit comments on any aspects of the assessment(s) to the Vice-Chancellor
  - By arrangement, attend any oral and practical assessment or interview in addition to those at which their attendance is agreed.
- Perform such other special duties as may be agreed.
University regulations

Details of the academic policy which governs external examining at City University London may be found in the External Examining section of the University’s Quality Manual, available via the following link: www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual

Other relevant key documents include the following:

• Assessment and Feedback Policy
• Assessment Regulations
• Academic year structure
• Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook for validated programmes.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) expectations of an External Examiner

The role of the QAA is to safeguard academic standards and quality in UK higher education. Their expectations of an External Examiner are that he or she will:

• Verify that academic standards are appropriate for the award or part thereof which the External Examiner has been appointed to examine
• Help institutions to assure and maintain academic standards across higher education awards
• Help institutions to ensure that their assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line with the institution’s policies and regulations.

The QAA developed a revised chapter for external examining for its Quality Code in 2011. This followed extensive consultation with higher education providers and their representative bodies, the National Union of Students, professional and statutory bodies, and others. The new chapter is available online at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B7.aspx (QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7 - External examining)
Timely submission of an annual report is important in ensuring that your feedback is properly recorded and responded to. We therefore ask that you submit an annual report within two weeks of the Final Assessment Board(s) meeting in each academic year of your appointment.

An online form (EE2) is available here: http://www.city.ac.uk/external-examining
If you are unable to submit an online form, a Word version can be provided.

Receipt of your report will be acknowledged by Student and Academic Services, and it will trigger payment of the annual fee.

Your report will be available for discussion within the University (including Student-Staff Liaison Committees), and may be requested by certain external organisations, including the Quality Assurance Agency and professional and statutory bodies. It may also be supplied to an incoming External Examiner. It will be published on a password-protected web page with personal details removed.

The report requests comments on undertaking your role (Section A), programme structure and standards (Section B) and teaching, learning and assessment practices (Section C). The purpose of the report is to obtain feedback from you on the standards of programmes that lead to an award from City University London and to receive your thoughts on ways in which we can further develop the student learning experience. To support us in this, Section C provides a opportunity to reflect on practices in the programme, including the identification of good practice and areas for development. In addition, though we encourage the inclusion of reflective comments in Sections A and B, Examiners can also choose to give a ‘yes’ answer in this section and then reflect in more detail at a later stage of the report. Where a ‘no’ answer is provided, you will be required to provide further context to enable us to undertake appropriate development.

A reminder will be sent if we do not receive your report on time and the relevant programme team will be notified. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are having trouble submitting your report.

If you wish to raise matters of significance and/or sensitivity, you may send a separate additional report directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

In cases of serious systemic or procedural problems that have not been resolved through internal University procedures (including a report to the Vice-Chancellor), the QAA operates a Concerns procedure. Details are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns/Pages/default.aspx
Consideration and response to External Examiner reports

All External Examiners’ reports are considered by a senior member of Student and Academic Services to identify issues which require a response, as well as areas of good practice or strengths within the programmes. They are then passed to Schools for full consideration of the issues and preparation of a response. A response will be sent directly to you from the School.

External Examiner reports provide valuable feedback that informs the annual monitoring of the programme (called Annual Programme Evaluation) and plans for enhancement of the provision.

If at any point you feel that issues in your report have not been considered appropriately by the School or University please contact Student and Academic Services.

External Examiner fees and expenses payments

You will receive an annual fee. The amount is indicated in your letter of appointment, which also asks you to return the Acceptance/bank details form. Arrangements to pay your fee are made on receipt of your annual report. Claims for travelling and incidental expenses are processed as they are received. They should be made on the Expenses and/or Fee Form EE3 which can be downloaded from the External Examiner website at www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual/7-external-examining. Receipts must be provided, as we are unable to process expenses claims without them.

External Examiners are paid through the University’s Payroll system by electronic transfer into their nominated bank accounts. Payment is credited on the last working day of the month. As the payroll deadline is the 10th of each month, payment may be credited on the last working day of the same or following month depending when a report or expenses claim arrives.

The University is required by the Inland Revenue to deduct the basic rate of income tax from all fee payments to External Examiners of taught programmes. External Examiner fees are excluded from National Insurance deductions. Travelling and subsistence expenses reimbursed are not subject to income tax. A payslip is sent by post in the month of payment detailing fee and expenses payments and deductions made, and a P60 at the end of the financial year.
Termination, interruption of appointment, and premature termination

If you wish to interrupt your appointment for a defined period of time or you are unable to fulfill your duties as an External Examiner, we ask that you put this in writing to the appropriate programme contact and copy your correspondence to Student and Academic Services. Interim arrangements can then be made or alternatively temporary appointments may be established.

If termination is instigated by the University, a recommendation will be made and approved by Education and Student Committee. The University can terminate appointments of any of the following grounds:

- Discontinuation of the provision for which the External Examiner was appointed
- Irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the External Examiner and the School or Validated Institution
- Persistent unavailability/inability to perform duties (e.g. non-submission of reports within a reasonable timescale and/or failure to attend an Assessment Board without good reason)
- New conflict of interest following a change of role of the Examiner
- Other grounds, as applicable, put forward by the School

City University London acknowledges the importance of this role and would like to thank you again for undertaking your duties as an External Examiner for our University.

April 2014