



# External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy and Guidance

**Scope:**

All taught programmes leading to an award of City, University of London.

**Senate Regulations:**

[Senate Regulation 19 Assessment](#) (Includes section 5.6 - 'External Examiners')

**Summary:**

This policy outlines the University's approach to the appointment of External Examiners and the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

**Date approved/re-approved:**

Approved by Senate for implementation from December 2012  
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Minor Updates October 2021

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2024

**Effective from:**

September 2022

**To be read in conjunction with:**

External Examiner – Guide  
External Examiner – Guidance for Schools

## Equality and Diversity Statement

City, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

## Contents

Policy Overview and Scope.....	3
Equality and Diversity Statement .....	3
External Examiners' Roles .....	3
Appointment of External Examiners .....	4
Selection .....	4
Appointment Criteria.....	4
Nominations .....	5
Appointment of the External Examiner.....	5
Appointment Term .....	5
Induction.....	5
Resignation, Interruption of Appointment Terms, and Termination of Appointment.....	6
Complaints and Concerns .....	6
Complaints relating to the External Examining Role .....	6
Concerns relating to Academic Standards or Quality.....	7
External Examiners for Taught Programmes Guidance.....	8
Types of External Examiner.....	8
Programme External Examiner .....	8
Module External Examiner .....	8
External Examiner Duties and Responsibilities .....	8
External Examiners' Annual Reports .....	9
Expenses and Fees.....	10
Conflict of Interest .....	10
Appendix 1 - City, University of London Roles and Responsibilities .....	12
Student and Academic Services .....	12
Programme Director .....	12
Boards of Studies .....	13
Secretary of the Board of Studies .....	13
Academic Lead for External Examining .....	13

## Policy Overview and Scope

1. City, University of London's External Examiner framework forms a key part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. It supplements the University's Taught Assessment Regulations which govern the conduct of assessment.
2. External Examiners play a critical role in supporting the maintenance of academic standards and overseeing the assessment process. The University appoints External Examiners for all provision that leads to a City award, including activity delivered through validation and partnership.
3. This policy outlines the University's approach to the appointment of External Examiners and the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.
4. The External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy is underpinned by the national guidance published in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance External Expertise (November 2018).

## Equality and Diversity Statement

5. The University is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.
6. Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

## External Examiners' Roles

7. The role of the External Examiner is to:
  - provide independent and impartial advice and comment on the University's academic and assessment standards, processes and student achievements
  - comment on the quality and standards of programmes in relation to the national standards and frameworks, and standards achieved at other UK institutions.
  - comment on the integrity and rigour of assessment and the fairness, reliability and transparency of assessment and degree classification
  - identify good practice and opportunities for enhancement and contribute to programme and course design
  - fulfil the duties of an External Examiner as outlined in the Examiner Duties and Responsibilities section of the Guidance attached to this Policy, and published in [the Guide for External Examiners \(Taught Programmes\)](#)
  - complete an annual report after the main Assessment Board(s) meeting for each academic session of their appointment. Further details are provided in the Annual Reports section of the Guidance.

8. External Examiners are members of the Assessment Board with voting rights for the Programme(s) and/or Module(s) that they oversee.
9. External Examiners do not contribute to delivery through teaching or any in other direct capacity.

## **Appointment of External Examiners**

### **Selection**

10. To ensure academic standards and externality in the assessment process, City, University of London appoints one or more External Examiners to each taught programme.
11. External Examiners will 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.
12. External Examiners are drawn from institutions, industry and the professions which align with the particular programme content to enable appropriate scrutiny to be undertaken.

### **Appointment Criteria**

13. Appointments are made according to criteria and conditions that ensure the seniority and expertise of External Examiners to carry out the full range of duties.
14. The following criteria are considered in the approval process for the appointment of an External Examiner:
  - Seniority and credibility within the subject area
  - Appropriate levels of academic and, where appropriate, other professional expertise, and experience in relation to the relevant subject area and assessment
  - Appropriate levels of experience in learning and teaching to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined and/ or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
  - Knowledge and understanding of the area of study
  - Competence and experience in relation to the appropriate design and operation of a range of relevant assessment methods in the subject.
15. In order to provide sufficient time for undertaking the requirements of the role, individuals are normally expected not to hold more than two programme external examinerships at the same time.
16. Appointment of candidates from outside higher education, for example from industry or the professions is permitted. In proposing such candidates, Boards of Studies or the Course Board submitting the nomination will need to confirm the ability of the proposed External Examiner to comment on the appropriateness of assessment components and academic standards achieved by students.

17. Sufficient evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the proposed appointee meets the criteria, for instance their relevant academic and/or professional experience, seniority in their role, membership of professional bodies, examining experience.
18. Additional supporting information must be supplied for any nominee whose suitability may not be immediately obvious from the information on the nomination form and accompanying CV.
19. Where the criteria are not fully met, a Board of Studies or Course Board may make a case and present a rationale for special consideration by the Academic Lead for External Examining and Vice President (Education).

## **Nominations**

20. Nominations for potential External Examiners should evidence how individuals would be able to fulfil the range of duties for the role and their relevant professional and/or academic experience.
21. Nominations will take account of any potential conflicts of interest which might affect, or which might be perceived to affect, the requirement for independent and impartial judgements by External Examiners. Examples of conflicts of interest are provided in the External Examiners Guidance.
22. The Board of Studies responsible for the programme or specific part of a programme, or (for validated provision) Course Boards, consider the nominations. Consideration is undertaken by Board members rather than by Chair's action and may be by circulation in advance of a Board, if appropriate, to avoid delay to the appointment process.

## **Appointment of the External Examiner**

23. Appointments are made by Senate following nomination by Boards of Studies or Course Boards. Senate has delegated this function to Educational Quality Committee and final sign-off is undertaken by the Academic Lead for External Examining on behalf of the Vice President (Education).

## **Appointment Term**

24. External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of up to four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity. Further re-appointment may occur in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
25. Each year of the appointment term commences at the start of the academic year for the programme and concludes with the final Assessment Board for that year's delivery of the programme.

## **Induction**

26. Schools will provide an induction to brief newly appointed External Examiners to enable them to fulfil their duties in accordance with the Programme Team Induction Checklist. Due attention, guidance and training will be given to support first-time External Examiners.

27. All newly appointed External Examiners will be invited to a University level Induction organised by Student & Academic Services in liaison with Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD) and the Academic Lead for External Examining.

## **Resignation, Interruption of Appointment Terms, and Termination of Appointment**

28. Appointments can be terminated prematurely by either side.

29. Where an External Examiner wishes to resign prior to completion of their contracted term of engagement, they are requested to provide reasonable notice (at least 3 months) and complete their duties for the current year of appointment where possible.

30. Where an External Examiner is unable to complete their duties for the current year of appointment or wishes to interrupt for a defined period of time alternative temporary appointments, may be established.

31. Where a conflict of interest arises during the tenure, the External Examiner appointment will be terminated by the University.

32. Where the termination is instigated by City a recommendation for the termination of the External Examiner's appointment will be proposed by the Board of Studies, or in the case of partnership provision via the governance arrangements detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement and approved by Educational Quality Committee (which has delegated powers from Senate in this matter).

33. City can terminate the appointment on any of the following grounds:

33.1. Discontinuation of the provision for which the External Examiner was appointed;

33.2. Irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the External Examiner and the School or Validated Institution;

33.3. 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);

33.4. New conflict of interest following a change of role of the Examiner;

33.5. Other grounds, as applicable, put forward by the Board of Studies.

## **Complaints and Concerns**

### **Complaints relating to the External Examining Role**

34. If an External Examiner is dissatisfied with an aspect of their appointment, duties or the termination of their appointment, and wishes to raise a complaint they should contact the University in writing as soon as possible and within 28 calendar days of the issue concerned.

35. External Examiners should contact their School with any concerns in the first instance. For concerns relating to the External Examining role and duties, the External Examiner

should provide details of the issue to the Programme Director or regular Programme contact for resolution in the first instance, or the External Examining Team, as appropriate. For concerns relating to appointments or termination of appointments, the School will provide details of these to the External Examining Team in Student & Academic Services for investigation.

36. The matter will be investigated by the relevant person as appropriate, and a suitable remedy sought wherever possible to resolve the concerns. The School will inform you of who will be responsible for investigating the complaint.
37. If it is not possible to resolve the concerns at this stage, the matter may be escalated by the School to Human Resources for investigation or review.
38. Where a matter is being escalated, the External Examiner must provide the grounds for requesting the investigation or review of the issue, and supporting evidence including, where available, copies of relevant documentation.

### **Concerns relating to Academic Standards or Quality**

39. In the event that an External Examiner wishes to raise a concern about academic standards and quality, they should first raise the matter with the Programme Director to explain the concern and discuss how the issue may be resolved. This could include liaison with Learning Enhancement and Development or other internal or external source of advice and guidance.
40. If concerns remain, the External Examiner may provide details of the further developments required in their Annual Report for response by the Programme. Further details are provided in the Annual Report section of the Guidance.
41. In line with standard national practice, in the event that an External Examiner feels it appropriate to raise a matter of significant concern or sensitivity, they may send a separate confidential report directly to the President.

## External Examiners for Taught Programmes Guidance

This guidance has been developed to supplement the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy. Details of City roles and responsibilities are provided in Appendix 1 and further operational guidance is available for Schools.

### Types of External Examiner

42. External Examiners for taught programmes can be appointed at programme level or at module level.

#### Programme External Examiner

- To ensure academic standards and externality in the assessment process, each Programme will have at least one External Examiner who takes an overview of the assessment process of the Programme. An External Examiner may also be appointed to cover a number of related Programmes.
- There may be additional External Examiners appointed to cover particular academic areas within a programme to ensure adequate consideration of achievement, progression and award, as determined by the appropriate Board of Studies.

#### Module External Examiner

- Where necessary, Schools may appoint External Examiners for specific modules that require expertise not covered by the Programme External Examiners. Where this is the case, a Programme External Examiner should still be in place to provide an overview of the assessment process of the Programme.

### External Examiner Duties and Responsibilities

43. External Examiners provide essential independence in the assessment process and have the following responsibilities. The External Examiner will:

- Review, approve or otherwise, and comment on the assessments compiled by the Internal Examiners, before these are made available to students. These include all assessment tasks that contribute to the final Award. External Examiners have a right to see all assessment material if they wish.
- Review appropriately sized samples of assessed work, which should be proportionate for the module or programme under review. Any sample should comprise marked and moderated work across the range of marks including the fail grades to the highest marks. As a guide, External Examiners may be looking at a sample of 10% to 20% from the range of work. The scope of the External Examiner's minimum assessment requirements will be agreed at an early stage in each academic year and/or assessment period.
- Attend meetings of the Assessment Board(s) for the Programme as a voting member where Award or progression is being considered and participate in decision-making. Examiners may also attend other Assessment Boards if they wish but would not have voting rights at those Boards.
- Approve the decisions of the Assessment Board(s) or provide advice on decisions as necessary. If they are unwilling to approve any one or more of the Assessment



Board decisions, External Examiners can make independent representation to the President via Student and Academic Services.

- Report to City on the standard of the Award(s) and the standard of student performance. External Examiners are expected to comment on the comparability of City's Awards with Awards made at other institutions
- Report to City on academic standards on Programmes; the robustness of the marking and the soundness and fairness of processes for the assessment and determination of Awards.
- External Examiners should report to City through initial comments to be considered at meetings of Assessment Boards and a written report, which submitted annually.
- Perform such other special duties that might be requested by City and agreed with the External Examiner. This might include, by arrangement, attendance at any oral and practical assessment or interview.

44. External Examiners have the right to submit written comments on any aspects of the assessments to the President.

45. External Examiners are not expected to change individual marks of a sample, but they can advise programme teams and raise concerns about the quality of or assessment, moderation or second marking

46. External Examiners are also not expected to conduct VIVAs if that is not in the assessment strategy, or to attend periodic reviews.

## **External Examiners' Annual Reports**

47. City regards External Examiners and their reports as an important and integral part of institutional quality assurance, and a public reference point on quality and standards.

48. External Examiners are expected to complete an annual report after the main Assessment Board(s) meeting within each academic session of their appointment. An online form is available for this purpose and Examiners are asked to submit this within two weeks of the relevant Assessment Board. Receipt of the report is acknowledged by Student and Academic Services, and triggers payment of the annual fee.

49. The report will be available for discussion within City and may be requested by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. It is also made available in full to students and may be supplied to an incoming External Examiner.

50. In their annual reports, External Examiners are particularly asked to provide commentary and judgements on:

- whether the standards set are appropriate for City's awards, by reference to published national subject benchmarks (where applicable), national qualifications frameworks, institutional programme specifications and other relevant information;
- the standards of student performance in the programmes or modules assessed, and on the comparability with those of similar level programmes in other UK higher education institutions;
- the extent to which the processes for assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted.

51. Guidance and advice on any aspect of practice and provision, including programme structure and content and assessment strategies, are also welcomed.
52. Examiners in their final year of appointment are asked to include an overview report on developments in the programme during their term of office.
53. All External Examiners' reports are read by a member of Student and Academic Services to identify items for response as well as areas of good practice or strengths within the programmes. They are then passed to Schools for consideration of the issues and preparation of a response. An annual thematic report based on the External Examiners annual reports is compiled and presented to Senate which identifies good practice and recommendations. The thematic report is publicly available [here](#).
54. External Examiners' reports are used to inform the Annual Programme Evaluation process.

## **Expenses and Fees**

55. The External Examiner's annual fees are communicated in the contract letter and paid annually upon completion of the annual report.
56. The annual fee is for the agreed range of activities during the year, including attendance at assessment boards and submissions of the annual report.
57. City, University of London is required by the Inland Revenue to deduct the basic rate of income tax from all fee payments to External Examiners of taught programmes. A payslip will be issued, notifying the fee payment and deductions made.
58. The External Examiner will be issued with a P60 at the end of the tax year. Fee payments to External Examiners are excluded from National Insurance deductions.
59. Travel and incidental expenses are paid in addition to the annual fee. Travel and subsistence expenses are not subject to income tax deduction.

## **Conflict of Interest**

60. Conflict of interests may arise during engagement or tenure and are defined as the interests of one party affecting the motivations and impartiality of another. This might include a close personal or professional relationship with staff, students or previous experts involved in their area of responsibility, an excessive influence due to their standing in other roles, or because their inclusion in a team of experts creates an unbalanced view.
61. A conflict of interest could build up over time because of an excessive engagement period or re-engagement with the same institution.
62. A former member of staff or student should not be invited to become an External Examiner unless a period of five years has elapsed since their departure from City.
63. Reciprocation should be avoided; the proposed Examiner should not be appointed from a department in an institution where a member of the inviting department is serving as an

External Examiner. Staff who perform External Examiner duties in other Universities should keep their School informed in order to ensure that reciprocal arrangements involving equivalent programmes do not occur.

64. Candidates should not have a close relationship with City or one of its collaborative partners.
65. An Examiner is not normally appointed from the same institution as the predecessor External Examiner. Exceptions may be considered where there is a very small pool of potential examiners from which to draw.
66. Past and present visiting academics and practitioners, and past External Examiners (whether for the same or a different programme) count as members of staff and are therefore, not eligible for appointment as External Examiners for a period of five years.
67. External Examiners nominees with a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship with a student being assessed cannot be appointed.
68. Examiners who are, or who know they will be, in a position to significantly influence the future of students on the programme of study or any of the courses in question cannot be appointed.
69. Nominees who are significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research or scholarly activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or module(s) in question may not be appointed. Significant involvement in this context means directly involved with a close knowledge of one another's work. Where this is difficult to avoid due to specialist nature of the discipline, a rationale may be put forward to the Academic Lead for External Examining which includes measures that would be taken to mitigate any conflict of interest.
70. Any nominee who has an honorary position at the University or has held an honorary position at the University within the last five years may not be appointed.
71. Where a conflict of interest arises during the tenure, the External Examiner appointment will need to be terminated by the University in line with the policy.

## **Appendix 1 - City, University of London Roles and Responsibilities**

The External Examiners Taught Programmes Policy and Guidance and the sections below describe City's roles and responsibilities relating to External Examining.

### **Student and Academic Services**

72. During the appointment process, staff in Student and Academic Services are responsible for
- identifying where appointments/reappointments are required
  - writing to External Examiners to confirm appointment
  - retaining a log of all External Examiners on a central database and
  - providing an institutional induction as required.
73. During an External Examiners' tenure members of staff in Student and Academic Services are responsible for
- receiving and logging External Examiners' annual reports
  - identifying comments relating to good practice and issues for response by Schools
  - logging copies of responses to reports
  - reporting on compliance to procedures and common issues raised across the institution
  - processing External Examiner payments and expenses
74. During the termination process, members of staff in Student and Academic Services are responsible for
- identifying where termination of an External Examiner contract may be necessary and informing the relevant Programme Director for notification to the Board of Studies
  - receiving the notification from the Board of Studies for the termination of a contract for the Academic Lead for External Examining sign-off
  - writing to the External Examiner to confirm termination of contract.

### **Programme Director**

75. The Programme Director is responsible for identifying potential External Examiners and for making a recommendation to the Board of Studies.
76. The Programme Director is responsible for providing programme and School information to the External Examiner and for arranging an orientation visit for new External Examiners as part of the School induction process.
77. During the External Examiner's term of appointment, the Programme Director is responsible for overseeing the programme's working relationship with the External Examiner and provision of materials and resources for them to fulfil their role.

To ensure continuity, the Programme Director will oversee the handover arrangements between an outgoing External Examiner to the incoming Examiner for the programme or module(s).

78. The Programme Director is responsible for providing responses to comments and issues raised in External Examiners' annual reports, for approval by the Board of Studies.

79. Should the potential need for the termination of an External Examiner contract arise, the Programme Director is responsible for investigating and then making a recommendation to the Board of Studies

## **Boards of Studies**

80. The role of the Board of Studies is to ensure the timely nomination of External Examiners for both new and continuing programmes. During the last year of an External Examiner's appointment, or on approval of a new programme, Schools to begin the nomination procedure for the new incoming External so that the nomination can be considered by the Board of Studies and Academic Lead for External Examining in time for appointments to be made in time for the start of each academic year.
81. The Board of Studies is responsible for identifying the number and roles of External Examiners required for effective scrutiny of the assessment and award of processes for programmes within their remit.
82. The Board of Studies considers the nominations for External Examiner appointments and the annual fees for External Examiners in accordance with City guidance, and makes a recommendation for appointment for consideration and final sign-off by the Academic Lead for External Examining on behalf of Senate.
83. The Board of Studies is responsible for the approval of the Programme Directors' responses to External Examiners' reports and for annually considering themes arising from reports received in their School.
84. Where the need for termination of the termination of an External Examiner's contract arises, the recommendation will be approved by the Boards of Studies prior to final sign off by the Academic Lead for External Examining.

## **Secretary of the Board of Studies**

85. The Secretary of the Board of Studies is responsible for ensuring that the External Examiner receives a copy of the response to their annual report. They are also expected to copy responses to the External Examining Team in Student and Academic Services.

## **Academic Lead for External Examining**

86. The Academic Lead for External Examining considers recommendations for the approval or termination of External Examiner Appointments and conducts final sign-off as appropriate, on behalf of City's Educational Quality Committee and Senate.
87. The Academic Lead conducts the External Examiner's University level induction in liaison with Student and Academic Services and Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD).

<b>Policy Title</b>	
External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy and Guidance	
<b>Policy Enabling Owner and Department</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementation and Department</b>
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<b>Publication of Policy</b> ( <i>tick as appropriate</i> )	
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<b>Website Link:</b> https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/external-examinations	<b>Intranet Link:</b>
<b>Storage of Policy</b> ( <i>Previous versions of the policy must be stored in the drive by the author</i> )	
<b>Drive Address:</b> reg-dev\QUAD\Quality Manual	
<b>Queries about this policy should be referred to</b>	
<a href="mailto:QUAD@city.ac.uk">QUAD@city.ac.uk</a>	