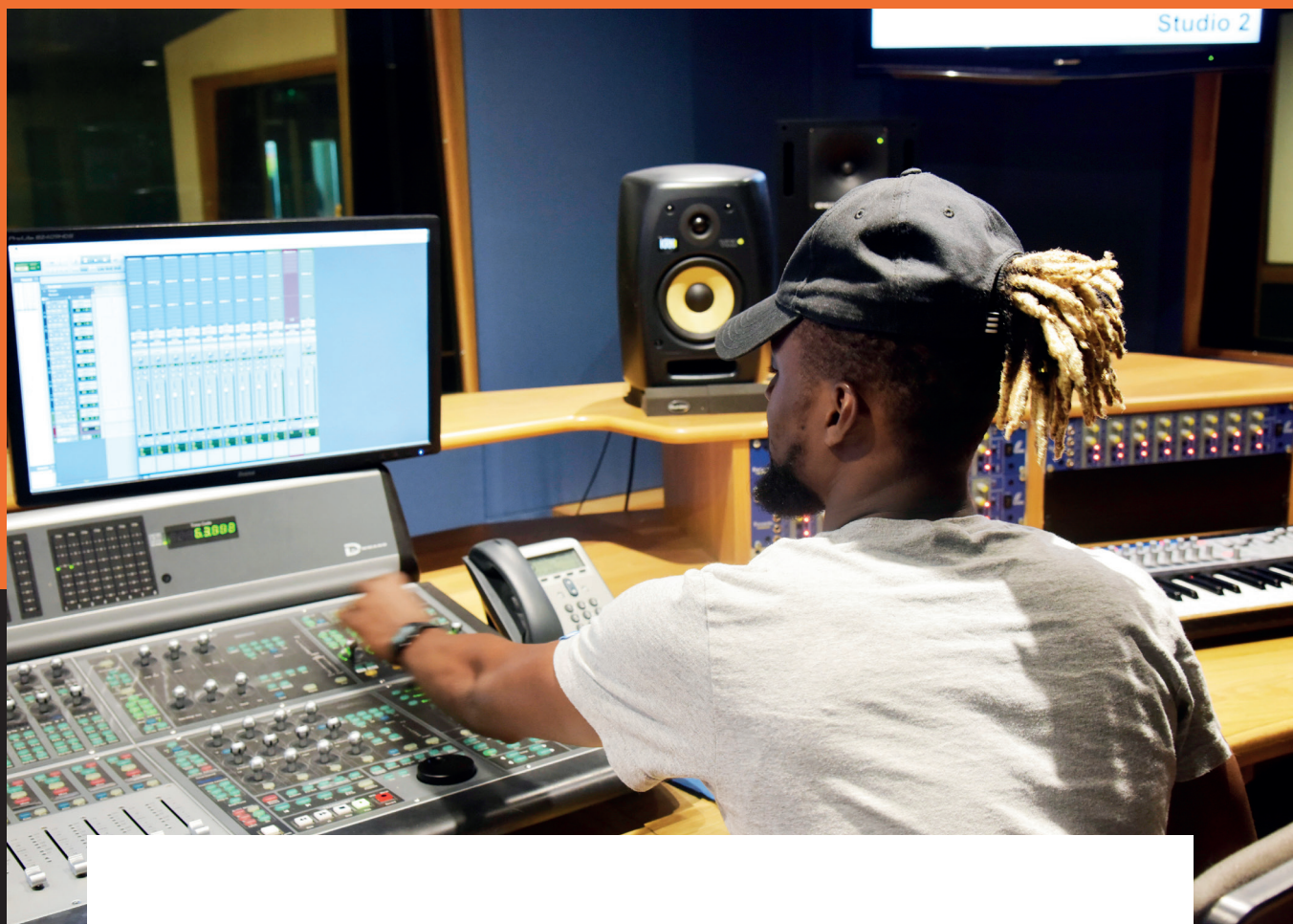




BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



EXTERNAL EXAMINING

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Note: Hyperlinks have been provided for ease of reference. For other documents (referred to in italics) please see the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>).

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Background

- 1 External Examiners are a key element of the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework. They act as independent and impartial advisors and provide informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards.

Purpose and Scope

- 2 This *External Examining Policy* sets out the framework for institutional practice in relation to all aspects of External Examining in compliance with sector expectations and best practice.
- 3 The policy applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes delivered by Bucks New University or by an approved collaborative partner. Arrangements for External Examiners for research degree provision can be found in the University's *Regulations for Research Degrees*.
- 4 Further information and guidance for staff on External Examining arrangements, including access to related documentation, can be accessed via the Academic Registry pages of the University Intranet.

The Role of External Examiners

- 5 External Examiners are appointed by the University to provide impartial and independent advice, as well as informed comment on:
 - a the threshold academic standards set by the University for its programmes and student achievement in relation to those standards, including the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level;
 - b where appropriate, consideration of cohorts across locations and collaborative partners of the University;
 - c the quality and standards of the University's programmes in relation to national standards and frameworks;
 - d where appropriate, the comparability of student achievement with those in other higher education providers with whom the External Examiner has experience;
 - e the extent to which the University's assessment processes are rigorous and maintained, ensuring equity of treatment for students, and their consistent implementation in accordance with institutional regulations and guidance;
 - f any good practice or recommendations for enhancement they have identified.
- 6 External examiners do not contribute to delivery through teaching or any other direct capacity.

Responsibilities of External Examiners

- 7 External Examiners are required to:
 - a Undertake moderation of a sample of assessments in accordance with the *Assessment and Feedback Policy*.
 Note: This will include the opportunity to comment in advance on whether assessments set are of an appropriate standard for the task, level and nature of the module and will normally be carried out electronically.
 - b Comment on the continuing currency and appropriateness of the programme(s) to which they are appointed, including feedback on any proposed changes to the curriculum;
 - c Attend relevant Module and Assessment Boards in accordance with the *Board of Examiners Policy* to confirm the University's processes for awarding academic credit and conferring awards;
 - d Submit an annual report using the template provided and to the deadlines set by the University;
 Note: Where an External Examiner is appointed to cover both undergraduate and postgraduate provision two separate reports will be required.
 - e Raise any issues or concerns and / or identify good practice regarding academic standards, assessment or student performance.
- 8 External Examiners for programmes which lead to external accreditation by a Professional Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB) may be required to undertake additional duties as defined by the PSRB. These will be confirmed in writing to the External Examiner on appointment.
- 9 External Examiners are also strongly encouraged to make an interim visit during the year to meet with programme teams and other External Examiners and, where possible, to meet with students. Students are not permitted to make direct contact with External Examiners regarding their individual performance.

Nomination

- 10 Academic Schools are responsible for ensuring that at least one External Examiner is appointed to examine each programme of study which leads to a higher education award.
 - Where there is a strong rationale to do so, a number of External Examiners may be appointed to a programme to ensure there is full subject coverage and / or to ensure that appropriate allowance has been made for the quantity and complexity of provision.
 - An External Examiner may be appointed to examine more than one programme of study, especially where there is a strong overlap between provision, or in the event of a short course which leads to an award.
 - Operationally, sufficient time should be allowed for the nomination process to take place prior to an appointment commencing.

- 11 All External Examiner appointments must be formally approved by the University. The External Examiner Approval Panel has delegated authority on behalf of Senate for approval of all External Examiner nominations submitted by Schools, including as necessary changes to such appointments. The Panel will also agree and periodically review the required format of nominations and related documentation.
- 12 All External Examiner nominees should normally have:
 - a knowledge and understanding of UK higher education reference points for academic quality and standards;
 - b current experience in the subject area(s) or parts thereof covered by the programme, including awareness of their design and delivery;
 - c relevant academic and / or professional qualifications and / or extensive practitioner experience;
 - d familiarity with the standard expected of students at the required academic level;
 - e sufficient academic or professional standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the subject area;
 - f fluency in English. Where programmes are delivered and assessed in another language, nominees should also have fluency in the relevant language unless other arrangements have been agreed.
- 13 For specialist programmes with a professional or vocational focus, the External Examiner Approval Panel may, at the discretion of the Chair, approve nominees who do not meet the above criteria. Any such nominations will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 14 External Examiners for programmes accredited by a PSRB may also need to meet additional criteria to those listed above, e.g. current registration with the relevant PSRB. These should be specified by the School when the External Examiner is nominated.
- 15 Previous experience of External Examining within a UK higher education provider is preferred but not required. Where a nominee has no previous experience the nominating School must indicate how the External Examiner will be supported in their first year of appointment, normally through a mentoring arrangement.
- 16 An External Examiner should have sufficient time available to undertake the role and therefore should not hold more than two such appointments concurrently.
- 17 To ensure impartiality in judgement and avoid conflicts of interest, proposed External Examiners should not have had any close involvement with the University or one of its collaborative partners within the previous five years.

Note: This includes having been a member of staff, governor or student of the University, or a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study to which they will be appointed. The Chair of the External Examiner Approval Panel will make the final decision on any such perceived conflicts of interest.
- 18 Reciprocal external examining arrangements between cognate programmes at the University and another higher education provider is not permitted. A gap of at least two years should also be completed before appointing another External Examiner from the same subject area at that higher education provider.

Appointment

- 19 An External Examiner will normally be appointed for a period of four academic years. Exceptionally, and where there is a strong rationale to do so, an appointment may – with the agreement of the External Examiner – be extended for one further academic year.
- 20 Upon confirmation of appointment, External Examiners will be provided with a formal contract of appointment. This will confirm the dates of the appointment, the rate of pay and the expectations associated with the appointment, including any additional duties, e.g. to meet PSRB requirements.
- 21 All External Examiners are regarded as employees of the University and, as such, are required to provide documentary evidence confirming their right to work in the UK in accordance with UK legislative requirements.
- 22 An External Examiner appointment may be terminated by the University, via the External Examiner Approval Panel, for any of the following reasons:
 - Where a programme has been closed or is in the process of being taught out;
 - Non-fulfilment of External Examiner duties without reasonable cause or explanation, such as non-submission of or incomplete submission of an annual report or non-attendance at a required Board of Examiners;
 - Unprofessional conduct, such as submission of a fraudulent expenses claim, or a breach of confidentiality with regard to personal or sensitive information
 - Irretrievable breakdown of relationship with the programme team that would disadvantage students;
 - A conflict of interest that has arisen during the course of the appointment.
- 23 The same External Examiner may not be reappointed within five years of a previous appointment at the University. The maximum number of re-appointments permitted is one.
- 24 The External Examiner Approval Panel will monitor and review the number and allocation of External Examiners across the University's academic portfolio on an ongoing basis and will remind Schools periodically of any appointments coming to the end of their term and requiring replacement.

Reporting

- 25 All External Examiners are required to complete an Annual Report template providing an overview of the following areas of activity:
 - Alignment of award standards to national frameworks and expectations
 - Comparison of student performance and achievement
 - Academic currency and content of the curriculum
 - Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - Marking, moderation and feedback practices
 - Key comments, recommendations for enhancement, and identification of good practice
 - Responses to previous reports

Additionally, External Examiners who are in the final year of their appointment will be asked to provide an overview of the programme since their original appointment.

- 26 External Examiners should avoid referring to individual members of staff and / or students in their report as these will be shared with staff, students and other stakeholders. Any such references will be redacted by Academic Registry prior to circulation.

Note: Where an External Examiner has feedback regarding an individual member of staff or student this should be raised privately with the Programme Leader or Head of School as appropriate.

- 27 External Examiner Reports will be reviewed on receipt by Academic Registry and will be circulated to Programme Leaders for consideration and for a formal written response to the External Examiner to be prepared.
- 28 Where an External Examiner has raised a significant area of concern this will be appropriately flagged and reported to the relevant Head of School as requiring urgent attention. Areas of concern will also be flagged to the University's Education Committee for ongoing monitoring.
- 29 The External Examiner may report particularly significant or sensitive issues in writing to the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The Vice-Chancellor will initiate any actions deemed appropriate and will respond to the External Examiner accordingly.
- 30 Where all internal procedures have been exhausted and an External Examiner retains significant concerns regarding academic standards, these may be referred to the QAA's [Concerns Scheme](#). Where applicable, the External Examiner may also refer their concerns to an accrediting PSRB.
- 31 An annual summary of issues raised in and good practice identified through External Examiners' Annual Reports will be prepared and considered as part of the University's *Annual Monitoring* procedure.

Fees and Expenses

- 32 External Examiners will receive a fee for their work, which will be payable on an annual basis following submission of their External Examiner Annual Report. External Examiners who are employed to mentor another External Examiner will receive an additional discretionary fee. All fees will be reviewed regularly by the External Examiners Approval Panel.
- 33 External Examiners can also claim reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenses incurred while undertaking their duties in accordance with the University's *Employees Expenses Policy*.

Information and support

- 34 To enable them to undertake their duties, External Examiners will also be provided with:
- access to definitive documentation for the programme(s) to which they are appointed;
 - details of relevant academic and professional service staff;
 - advance notification of Boards of Examiners to which they are invited and an indication as to the assessments to be examined during the year;
 - access to the University's *Academic Assessment Regulations* and other relevant policies and procedures.
- 35 The University will invite all newly-appointed External Examiners to an induction session during the first year of their appointment. Induction materials will also be hosted and made accessible online.

Appendix 1: External Examiner Approval Panel

Reports to	Senate
Standing Committees	None
Non-Standing Committees	None
Minutes	Not published
Executive summary required	Yes
Frequency of meetings	Every Six Weeks (may be held virtually)
Updated/reviewed	September 2019

Membership:

Chair	Pro-Vice Chancellor or Deputy Vice Chancellor (or a nominee from the ex-officio membership of Senate)
Secretary	Appointed by Academic Registry
Ex-officio Members	Principal / Senior Registry Officer: Governance and Quality (being the lead officer responsible for administration of the external examiner process)
Other Members	Two teaching representatives drawn from the School representative membership of Senate (to serve for a period of two years, renewable, or until their Senate term of office expires)
Co-opted Members	None

Terms of Reference:

- a. To consider and approve, on behalf of Senate, nominations, extensions and changes to remit for external examiner appointments to the University's taught portfolio:
 - ensuring that appointments adhere to University and UK sector criteria;
 - reviewing potential conflicts of interest; and,
 - agreeing mentoring and / or other support arrangements as appropriate.
- b. To approve, on behalf of Senate, external examiner appointments for termination
- c. To advise Senate, through the Education Committee, of any quality assurance matters concerning external examiners that may arise

- d. To retain oversight of the external examiner appointment process, including the monitoring of vacancies across the University, the effectiveness of the appointment process and maintenance of documentation to support it
- e. To present a summary report on all approval decisions to Senate for formal endorsement
- f. To take responsibility for other tasks relating to external examiners as delegated by the Education Committee

Notes:

Meetings may be held virtually to facilitate the work of the panel