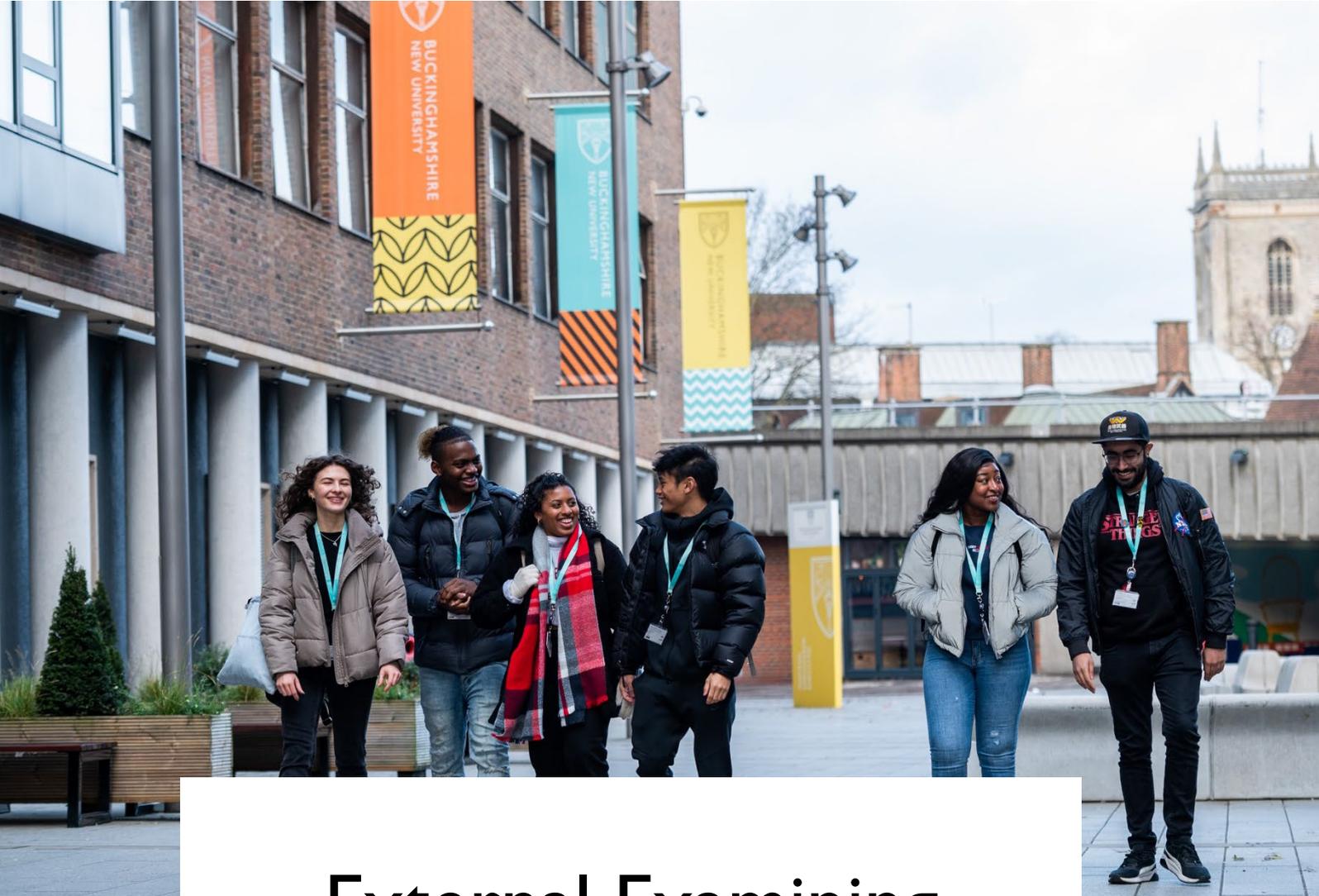


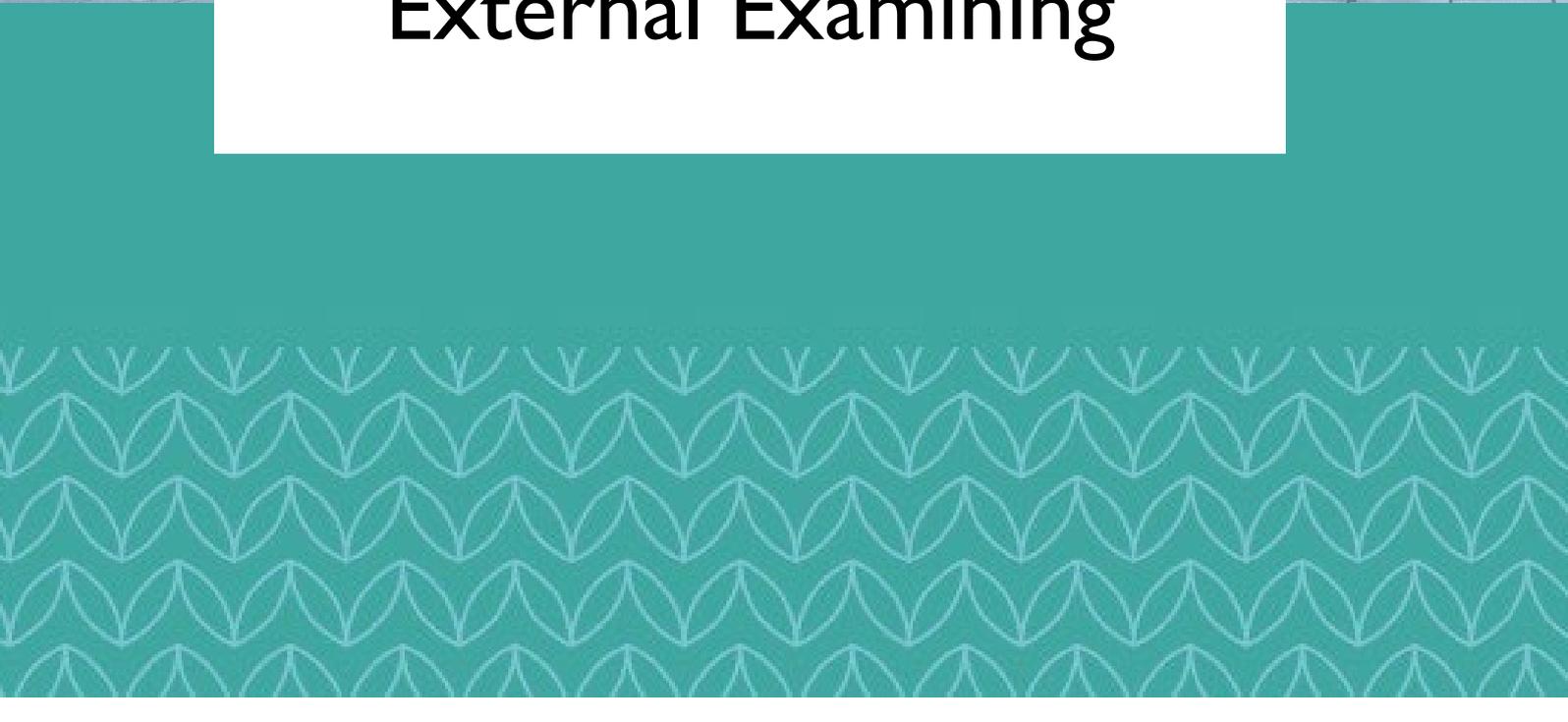


BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# External Examining



# Contents

Background .....	1
Purpose and Scope .....	2
The Role of External Examiners .....	2
Responsibilities of External Examiners.....	3
External Quality Assurance External Examiner for Apprenticeships .....	3
Nomination.....	4
Appointment.....	6
Reporting.....	6
Fees and Expenses .....	7
Information and support.....	8
Appendix I: Apprenticeship Quality Assurance .....	9

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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 where appropriate, their dual role of External Quality Assurance External Examiner (for integrated or higher degree apprenticeship programmes);
  - d the quality and standards of the University's programmes in relation to national standards and frameworks;
  - e where appropriate, the comparability of student achievement with those in other higher education providers with whom the External Examiner has experience;
  - f 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;
  - g 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.
  - f Where appropriate, those with the dual role of External Quality Assurance External Examiner, carry out external examiner monitoring
- 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 for integrated higher or degree apprenticeship programmes are required to undertake external examiner monitoring. See paragraph 11-16 for further detail on this requirement.
- 10 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.

## External Quality Assurance External Examiner for Apprenticeships

- 11 The University's normal external examining arrangements will apply for an academic award associated with level 5, 6 or 7 apprenticeships. Level 4 may be included if required by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).
- 12 External Examiners appointed for an apprenticeship that has an integrated End Point Assessment (EPA), are expected to have the relevant practice-based experience and

occupational competence in the area of work related to their appointment.

- 13 For apprenticeships where the End Point Assessment (EPA) is integrated, the External Examiner will have oversight of the EPA. External Examiners appointed to oversee the associated degree may be considered to perform dual roles as both the External Examiner for the degree qualification and the External Examiner (EE) for the EPA. In some circumstances, the University may decide to appoint separate external examiners for the degree qualification and the EPA aspect of the programme. The External Examiner must ensure they are available to attend the EPA Standardisation meeting and Exam Board for programmes with an integrated EPA (Appendix I EPA Standardisation Process).
- 14 Where an External Examiner is appointed to undertake the External Quality Assurance External Examiner (EQAEE) role, they must meet the requirements of the Office for Students' External quality assurance of apprenticeship end-point assessments for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships guidance for providers (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/8783/eqa-of-apprenticeships-end-point-assessments-guidance.pdf>).
- 15 External Examiners will not be directly involved with non-integrated EPAs but will be involved in awarding the academic award associated with the degree.
- 16 The EQAEE is expected to conduct a visit to the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) and the University for each cohort of apprentices completing the EPA. Therefore, for a three-year apprenticeship, there would be a minimum requirement to visit once every three years. The purpose of this visit will be to assess the performance of the EPAO in delivering the apprenticeship EPA. The visit is not required to be on-site and can be conducted online where appropriate.

## Nomination

Note: The nomination and appointment of the EQAEE follows the normal process for external examiners outlined in this policy.

- 17 Colleges 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.
- 18 All External Examiner appointments must be formally approved by the University. The Quality Assurance Team has delegated authority on behalf of Senate for approval of all External Examiner nominations submitted by Colleges, including as necessary changes to such appointments. The Quality Assurance Team will also agree and periodically review the required format of nominations and related documentation.

- 19 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.
- 20 For specialist programmes with a professional or vocational focus, the Quality Assurance Team may, at the discretion of the Head of Quality Assurance, approve nominees who do not meet the above criteria. Any such nominations will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 21 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 College when the External Examiner is nominated.
- 22 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 College must indicate how the External Examiner will be supported in their first year of appointment, normally through a mentoring arrangement.
- 23 An External Examiner should have sufficient time available to undertake the role and therefore should not hold more than two such appointments concurrently.
- 24 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. Head of Quality Assurance will make the final decision on any such perceived conflicts of interest.
- 25 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

- 26 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.
- 27 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.
- 28 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.
- 29 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.
- 30 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.
- 31 The Quality Assurance Team will monitor and review the number and allocation of External Examiners across the University's academic portfolio on an ongoing basis and will remind Colleges periodically of any appointments coming to the end of their term and requiring replacement.

## Reporting

- 32 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.

- 33 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 Dean of College as appropriate.

- 34 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.
- 35 Where an External Examiner has raised a significant area of concern this will be appropriately flagged and reported to the relevant Head of College as requiring urgent attention. Areas of concern will also be flagged to the University's Education Committee for ongoing monitoring.
- 36 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.
- 37 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.
- 38 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.
- 39 The EQAEE monitoring activity must be evidenced by producing a report, which forms a part of the EQA monitoring the EPAO submits. This activity is completed by the Apprenticeship Hub.

## Fees and Expenses

- 40 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 Quality Assurance Team. The role of the EQAEE is not separately remunerated by the University.
- 41 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

- 42 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 appropriate regulations and other relevant policies and procedures.
- 43 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 I: Apprenticeship Quality Assurance

### APPRENTICESHIP HUB - Quality Assurance

#### Quality Assurance – Standardisation Meetings and EPA External Examiner (EPA EE) Apprentices of Integrated EPA (Digital L6, ACP L7, PCDA, Nursing Associate (Health))

#### Moderation to ensure BNU is delivering against IfATE principles:

- **relevant** – Ofqual/OfS and other stakeholders are encouraged to recommend improvements to the delivery of EQA including the EQA Framework
- **reliable** – effective relationships between the Institute and Ofqual/OfS will ensure that issues are resolved, and learning is captured, allowing assurance to employers and apprentices. Independent audits of EQA will be conducted periodically
- **positive** – the Institute is committed to listening to all feedback and taking appropriate action. Good practice will be shared with Ofqual/OfS
- **efficient** – the Framework has been introduced to make the delivery of EQA more efficient and effective. The Institute will review its operation to ensure that it continues to do so
- **learning** – continuous improvement is built into every part of the Framework and open and honest feedback is encouraged

Delivery of EPA is:

- **Relevant** The EPA is current and genuinely measures occupational competence. Achievement of the apprenticeship is a dependable predictor of success in the occupation.
- **Reliable** The EPA produces consistent outcomes irrespective of context, cohort, timing or the organisations involved.

Quality assurance of EPA is:

- **Efficient** The process is high-quality, easy to use, cost-effective and facilitates the entry of new employers and EPAOs. To ensure that the right aspects of quality are measured, the right activity is undertaken by the right people, at the right time, and enabled by a digital system that generates actionable Management Information and supports a risk-based approach that is specific to apprenticeship assessment.

- **Positive** EPA is trusted and respected by employers, apprentices and providers to deliver the right outcomes. The experience is open, transparent and accessible. Learning Continuous improvement is embedded in all areas of the EQA framework to ensure an enduringly proactive and progressive approach to quality.

#	Trigger	Responsibility	Process with Purpose/Aim
#	Pre-requisite	College/Quality Assurance EE Nomination and Appointment – the EPA EE and EE can be the same person	# EE appointed and inducted to BNU EE policy, attends annual EE briefing i) EE QA and ii) EPA EE EPA Manager ## Final Year learners progressed to EPA via Gateway Board
1	EPA Dissertation/Synoptic Project/Report/EBRB submission date	Learner	Work Marked and Internally moderated, Mark and Feedback given to Learner via Blackboard  Academic Provisional Mark for Coursework sent to Registry Officer
2	Dissertation/Synoptic Project/Report/EBRB submitted	Registry Officer/External Examiner	Sends work to EE, who completes and returns moderation to the Registry and the College for any further action or discussions needed
3	EPAs booked	EPA Manager	Book in Standardisation Meeting (after the IA will have had time to mark and feedback on the EPAs)
4	10 working days before EPA	Programme Leader/EPA Manager	Shares EPA work, mark and feedback via MS Teams or Shared Folder with the Independent Assessor (and EPA Panel members if required on the standard's Assessment Plan) and the EPA External Examiner  Reasonable Adjustments, Declaration of Conflict of Interests and Gateway Compliance Documents added to the MS Team/Shared Folder
5	EPA completed	Independent Assessor/EPA Manager	EPA Recordings, Grades and Feedback Report uploaded MS Team/ Shared Folder and on ACE360 (provisional grades)
6	Standardisation Meeting per EPA Cohort/minimum of one per year	Independent Assessor(s)* EPA External Examiner*, BNU Quality Assurance* EPA Manager*, Programme Leader Internal Moderator(s)  Essential *	Review EPA Components  IA presents their assessment process and rationale for assigned grades – Grade Ratification and confirms stages of QA  EPA EE contributes to discussions and is able to report standards met or any issues to the final award board. Completed EPA EE Quality Assurance Report shared in the meeting invite

External Examining

			<p>QA contributes to discussion and comments on BNU QA issues (marking matrix, borderline grades etc)</p> <p>EPA Manager completes and shares EPA Standardisation Record with all parties for appropriate action – feeds into annual EPA Process Review and/or Programme Review as appropriate</p>
7	Standardisation Report	EPA Manager	Confirms to Registry the EPA Grades have been ratified prior to the Award Board
8	Final Award Board	Registry Officer, Programme Leader, External Examiner, EPA Manager, APM	<p>Award and Apprenticeship Completion ratified by the board and results released to Learners vis MyBNU</p> <p>Registry – send Award Certificates EPA Manager/ACE – send Apprenticeship Certificate</p>
9	Learners completed	Programme Leader/ College	<p>Feedback EE reports, recommendations or good practices to share in programme review process</p> <p>PL takes immediate action if needed to rectify issues promptly</p> <p>AH notes any recommendations, good practice, and changes being made for the employer and to feedback into other Standards EPA processes</p>
10	Governance Meetings	Employer/SARM-Apprenticeship Hub	Update Employer on moderation feedback, good practice, and recommendations for their comment and feedback. Share updates and changes with the employer and feedback to the Programme Leader
11	Annual EPA Review	EPA Manager/SARM/PL	<p>Review all feedback and apprenticeship standard EPA plan</p> <p>Update Process documents as needed</p> <p>Plan any changes in EPA plan due</p> <p>Share good practices across apprenticeship programmes</p>

(EPA External Examiner role and responsibilities document shared in induction and yearly update)



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