

Policy Coversheet

Name of Policy:	External Examiner Policy and Procedures
Purpose of Policy:	To define the appointment, briefing and roles and responsibilities of external examiners at Staffordshire University.
Intended audience(s):	Staff/External Parties
Approval for this policy given by:	Academic Board
Last Review Date:	24/01/2018
Review Due Date: (3 years from last review)	23/01/2021
Individual responsible for review:	Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards
Authorising department:	Academic Development Unit

EXTERNAL EXAMINING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TAUGHT AWARDS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This procedure describes the appointment, briefing and roles and responsibilities of external examiners at Staffordshire University. This encompasses all undergraduate and postgraduate taught awards, including taught elements of professional doctorates and those delivered by collaborative partners.
- 1.2. External examiner arrangements for MPhil and PhD candidates are not covered by this procedure. These are set out in the university's regulations for MPhil and PhD degrees.
- 1.3. This procedure has been informed by Chapter B7 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. External examiners assist the university in maintaining the academic standards of its awards, providing essential feedback on whetherⁱ:
 - 2.1.1. The university is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements.
 - 2.1.2. The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the award(s) and is conducted in line with the degree awarding body's policies and regulations.
 - 2.1.3. The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK degree-awarding bodies of which the external examiners have experience.
- 2.2. External examiners are expected to provide informative comment and recommendations onⁱⁱ:
 - 2.2.1. Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment.
 - 2.2.2. Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

3. EXTERNAL EXAMINER STRUCTURE

- 3.1. External examiners at Staffordshire University are appointed to one or more of the following two roles:

3.1.1. Module External Examiners

Module external examiners are appointed for their specialist subject knowledge and have responsibility for ensuring the standard of the modules to which they are assigned. A single module external examiner is normally appointed to each module. Where greater flexibility is required, or for large modules (e.g. project/dissertations), a school may assign multiple examiners to a module. In this situation, one examiner will be identified as the principal

module external examiner. The principal module external examiner will normally be responsible for approving assessment briefs and amendments to modules.

3.1.2. *Award External Examiners*

Award external examiners provide feedback on the overall standard of the award; its coherence; and the extent that the outcomes are aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements.

Award external examiners are appointed from among module external examiners.

An award examiner will be appointed to all awards of the university. Where a course is delivered at multiple locations (e.g. at the university and one or more partner institutes), separate award external examiners may be appointed to the course at each location.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Module External Examiners

4.1. The responsibilities of a module external examiner are:

- 4.1.1. To maintain oversight and comment on the academic standards of the module(s) to which they are appointed, confirming that:
 - Module content remains current
 - Module outcomes are aligned with relevant qualification descriptors set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
 - Modules are aligned with relevant subject benchmark statements
 - The standards of the modules are commensurate with standards at other higher education institutions with which they are familiar
 - Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements are being met (where appropriate)
- 4.1.2. To judge the overall standard of student performance on modules to which they are appointed.
- 4.1.3. To comment on the form and content of examination papers, coursework and other assessments that count towards the outcome of the module (summative) in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the module content and regulations and in such a way that examiners will be able to judge whether the students have fulfilled the module outcomes and reached the required standard.
- 4.1.4. To scrutinise a sample of examination scripts and summative coursework covering the range of marks awarded and verify the standard of marking.

The size and composition of the sample made available to the external examiner should reflect the second marking guidelines set out in the university's Assessment Policy and Procedures.

Where an external examiner is not satisfied with the standard of the marks awarded to a sample of student work, they may recommend that the university re-mark all student work for that examination or assessment.

Where a module is delivered at different sites or partners, the external examiner should ensure that each instance of delivery to which they are appointed receives adequate scrutiny and comment.

- 4.1.5. To monitor arrangements for live assessments, including performances and presentations. The minimum requirement is that external examiners are provided with detailed assessment records that clearly demonstrate how the assessment criteria has been applied to each assessment and the rationale for the mark awarded.
- 4.1.6. To monitor and report on the internal moderation of assessment results (in accordance with the procedure outlined in the university's Assessment Policy and Procedures).
- 4.1.7. To provide feedback on examples of good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment and to make recommendations regarding opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.
- 4.1.8. To contribute, in line with their overall remit, to the production of confirmed module results to be presented at first sit award boards.
- 4.1.9. To review all failed assessments prior to a re-sit board.
- 4.1.10. To produce an annual report ([see section 5](#)).
- 4.1.11. To report to the Pro-Vice Chancellor - Student Experience on any serious matters of concern ([see paragraph 5.26](#)).
- 4.1.12. To receive a Staffordshire University external examiner briefing ([see section 7](#)).
- 4.1.13. To mentor new external examiners, when necessary ([see paragraph 6.14](#)).
- 4.1.14. To comment on and approve changes to existing modules and the design of new modules on request.

Award External Examiners

- 4.2. The responsibilities of an award external examiner are:
 - 4.2.1. To comment on the academic standards of the award(s) to which they are appointed; confirming that:
 - The curriculum of the course remains current and coherent
 - Award outcomes are aligned with relevant qualification descriptors set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

- Awards are aligned with relevant subject benchmark statements
 - Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements continue to be addressed within the overall design of the course
- 4.2.2. To monitor the overall standards of student performance on awards to which they are appointed.
 - 4.2.3. To provide feedback on examples of good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment and to make recommendations regarding opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.
 - 4.2.4. To attend or submit a report to the award board ([see paragraph 4.9](#)).
 - 4.2.5. To produce an annual report ([see section 5](#)).
 - 4.2.6. To report to the Pro-Vice Chancellor – Student Experience on any serious matters of concern ([see paragraph 5.27](#)).
 - 4.2.7. To receive a Staffordshire University external examiner briefing ([see section 7](#)).
 - 4.2.8. To mentor new external examiners, when necessary ([see paragraph 6.14](#)).
 - 4.2.9. To comment on and approve changes to award structures on request.

Academic Regulations

- 4.3. External examiners appointed by the university should be conversant with the university's regulations.
- 4.4. External examiners will be invited to consider and report upon the manner in which university regulations are applied and the extent to which university regulations are in line with national standards and expectations.

Extenuating Circumstances and Academic Misconduct

- 4.5. Claims for extenuating circumstances are considered in accordance with separate policies, which promote consistency of practice across the university. External examiners do not participate in these processes. The agreed outcomes from these processes will be noted at the relevant board.

Visits to Partner Institutes

- 4.6. The University will ensure that all external examiners appointed to collaborative provision have full oversight of the modules and awards to which they are appointed, including resources available at the partner institution. This may be facilitated through electronic meetings (e.g. via skype/video conference) with academic staff members based at the partner institution.

Module External Examiners

- 4.7. Normally, external examiners are not required to visit partner institutions in their capacity as a module examiner. Where, in exceptional circumstances, module external

examiners are required to visit a partner institute, this will not impact on the requirement to appoint a sufficient number of external examiners with the appropriate specialist subject expertise. The requirement to visit the partner institution will be made clear to the examiner prior to their appointment.

Award External Examiners

- 4.8. Award external examiners should visit partners to which they are appointed once, normally towards the start of their four-year tenure. Where external examiners will be expected to make more frequent visits to the partner institute, this will be made clear to the examiner prior to their appointment. Where boards are held at the Partner institute, the external examiner will normally participate in the board remotely ([see paragraph 4.11](#)).

Meetings with Students

- 4.9. External examiners may ask to meet students outside the assessment process to assist with their understanding of a programme and the way in which it operates, but this is not part of their formal remit. Any meetings with students based at collaborative partners will normally be conducted remotely using appropriate audio/visual technology.

Attendance at First Sit Award Boards

- 4.10. The constitution of a first sit award board includes the award external examiner(s) for the courses under consideration.
- 4.11. Where boards are held at the partner institute, the external examiner will normally participate in the board remotely, using appropriate audio/visual technology (e.g. video conference). External examiners will usually attend the University to participate in these boards jointly with staff from Staffordshire University.
- 4.12. On appointment, Student and Academic Services will provide external examiners with details of relevant boards.
- 4.13. Examiners should be informed of the specific dates of boards as early as possible during the academic year.
- 4.14. The University recognises that circumstances may arise which prevent an external examiner from attending a board. It is the responsibility of the external examiner to inform the school if they are unable to attend a board. Wherever possible, the external examiner should complete an *in absentia* report for presentation at the board.
- 4.15. At least one external examiner must be present at a first sit award board.

Endorsement of Award Board Decisions

- 4.16. At the end of each first sit award board the award external examiner(s) will be asked to indicate whether they endorse the decisions of the board. The response from each examiner will be recorded within the minutes.
- 4.17. Any instances where an external examiner feels unable to endorse a decision taken by an award board will be referred to the Dean of Students (or their nominee) for

consideration. Where this occurs, schools will ensure that the final decision of the Dean of Students (or their nominee) is communicated back to the external examiner. Schools will inform students of any delay in finalising and communicating their results.

Procedures to be Followed Where No External Examiners will be Present at a First Sit Award Board.

- 4.18. Where, due to exceptional circumstances, a school wishes to hold a first sit award board with no external examiners being in attendance, they must make a formal request to the Dean of Students (or their nominee) outlining the reason for the request.
- 4.19. Authorisation from the Dean of Students (or their nominee) will be noted at the start of the meeting and recorded in the minutes. Written confirmation of this authorisation will be appended to the minutes.
- 4.20. *In absentia* reports detailing the views of external examiners will be presented at the board. If there has been insufficient input from any absent external examiners the board will be cancelled and re-convened on a later date.

Resit Award Boards

- 4.21. Award external examiners will not attend resit award boards.

Figure 1 – Summary of External Examiner Roles and Responsibilities

Role/Responsibility	Module External Examiner	Award External Examiner
1. To maintain oversight of, and comment on, the academic standards of the module(s) to which they are appointed.	●	
2. To maintain oversight of, and comment on, the academic standards of the award(s) to which they are appointed and the quality and coherence of the award(s).		●
3. To judge the overall standards of student performance on modules to which they are appointed.	●	
4. To monitor the overall standards of student performance on awards to which they are appointed.		●
5. To comment on the form and content of examination papers, significant elements of coursework and other assessments that count towards the outcome of the module (summative).	●	

6. To scrutinise a sample of examination scripts and a significant proportion of summative coursework covering the range of marks awarded and verify the standard of marking. This applies to: all modules at level 5 and above; all level 4 modules which contribute to the final award classification.	●	
7. Scrutinise a sample of project reports. Where there is a significant practical element, the school should make arrangements to enable external examiners to interview students regarding the progress of their project.	●	
8. To monitor arrangements for live assessments, including performances and presentations.	●	
9. To monitor and report on the internal moderation of assessment results.	●	
10. To contribute, in line with their overall remit, to the production of confirmed module results to be presented at first sit award boards.	●	
11. To review all failed assessments prior to a re-sit award board.	●	
12. To be a member of and attend first sit award boards.		●
13. <i>External examiners appointed to collaborative provision:</i> To visit partners to which they are appointed once, normally towards the start of their tenure. (Where external examiners will be expected to make more frequent visits to the partner institute, this will be made clear to the examiner prior to their appointment).		●
14. To produce and submit an annual report using the standard Staffordshire University template by 15 July (undergraduate) or 15 September (postgraduate); unless advised of an alternative date.	●	●
15. To report to the Pro-Vice Chancellor – Student Experience on any matters of concern.	●	●
16. To receive a Staffordshire University external examiner briefing, including verification of right to work.	●	●
17. To mentor new external examiners, when necessary.	●	●
18. To comment on and approve changes to existing modules and the design of new modules.	●	

19. To comment on and approve minor changes to course structures (i.e. proposals not requiring a full course re-approval).		●
--	--	---

5. EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS

Initial Feedback at Award Boards

- 5.1. After the award board has completed its deliberation on candidates, award external examiners will be invited to give a brief oral report, which should cover:
 - 5.1.1. Their opinion of the assessment procedure, including its fairness, accuracy and efficiency.
 - 5.1.2. Their opinion of the academic quality of the cohort(s) that they have just examined.
 - 5.1.3. Any recommendations to improve the teaching or assessment process.
 - 5.1.4. Their opinion as to whether recommendations made in previous years have been suitably addressed.
- 5.2. External examiner(s) will be asked to indicate whether they endorse the decisions of the board. The response from each examiner will be recorded within the minutes. ([see paragraph 4.16](#))

Submission of Annual External Examiner Reports

- 5.3. External examiners will submit a formal annual report to the university by 15 July (undergraduate awards) or 15 September (postgraduate awards), unless advised otherwise by the school to which they were appointed. The Quality Enhancement Service (QES) will make bespoke report templates available to external examiners listing the modules/awards that should be included within their report.
- 5.4. The use of alternative report templates developed by, or at the request of, professional, regulatory or statutory bodies must be approved by the university prior to use. Wherever possible these should be submitted electronically to the above email address.
- 5.5. Annual external examiner reports form a major source of information in the university's annual monitoring process. Examiners should provide full reports identifying any good practice, recommendations or causes for concern. Reports should reiterate comments made orally in discussion with the module/course team or at the award board.
- 5.6. Reports must not refer to individual students or staff members by name.
- 5.7. Each report should clearly identify the module(s) or course(s) to which each comment relates.
- 5.8. Where examiners are appointed to provision delivered at a number of sites or collaborative partners reports must clearly identify to which site or partner any specific

comments refer. Where a specific judgment or comment does not relate to all sites of delivery this must be indicated clearly within the report.

- 5.9. Completed reports should be submitted electronically to quality@staffs.ac.uk.

Procedure for Identifying and Obtaining Late External Examiner Reports

- 5.10. Responsibility for pursuing late reports from external examiners is that of the university. The following procedure will be used when QES identifies that an expected report has not been received by the stated deadline, or alternative deadline agreed by the school and QES:
- 5.10.1. QES will liaise with the school to check that the examiner has not submitted his/her report directly to the school or course leader. If already received, the school must immediately send the original report to QES.
 - 5.10.2. Where a report has not been received, QES will write to the external examiner (via email) requesting that a report is submitted as soon as possible.
 - 5.10.3. Late reports received by QES will be processed in accordance with the procedures set out below.
 - 5.10.4. If QES does not receive a response from the external examiner, the Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards will write to the external examiner requesting that a report is submitted as a matter of urgency.
 - 5.10.5. If a response is not received, the Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards will normally confer with the Associate Dean - Students and the Chair of the University Quality Committee with a view to the external examiner's appointment being terminated in accordance with the procedure set out in [section 11](#).

Consideration of External Examiner Reports

- 5.11. External examiners' reports are formally received by QES on behalf of the university. External examiners will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their reports from QES.
- 5.12. QES will place the external examiner report on the university's Quality Documents Drive and make available to relevant staff members (e.g. Associate Deans – Student, Heads of Department, Course and Module Leaders).
- 5.13. QES will forward external examiner reports relating to collaborative provision to quality assurance or higher education contacts nominated by partner institutes.

Inadequate Reports

- 5.14. If an external examiner report is thought to be inadequate, QES will refer the matter to the relevant Associate Dean - Students.
- 5.15. If an Associate Dean – Students feels (after taking advice or seeking further information from the school if necessary) that an external examiner report is

inadequate, s/he will write to the external examiner asking that a revised report be submitted by a given date.

- 5.16. If a revised report is received by the given date, the Associate Dean - Students will assess its adequacy. If it is considered adequate, the Associate Dean will write to the examiner to acknowledge receipt, copying the report and correspondence to QES.
- 5.17. If the second report is still considered inadequate, the correspondence will be copied to the chair of the University Quality Committee who will consider the reports, seek further information or advice from the school if necessary and contact the external examiner to discuss the matter. The outcome of this consideration and/or discussion will be reported in writing to the Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards and copied to the school. Where necessary, the outcome of the consideration may be a letter terminating the examiner's appointment in accordance with the procedure set out in [section 11](#).
- 5.18. If a revised report is not received by the given date, the correspondence will be passed to the Chair of the University Quality Committee who will write to the examiner and request that a further report is submitted immediately. This correspondence will be copied to the Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards and the school.
- 5.19. If a further report is not forthcoming, the Chair of the University Quality Committee will seek advice from the school with a view to the appointment being terminated in accordance with the procedure set out in [section 11](#).

Responding to External Examiner Reports

- 5.20. The relevant academic staff member(s) will provide a response to each external examiner in the designated section at the end of the report template. The response will identify actions that have or will be taken in light of the comments made by the examiner. Where it is not considered appropriate to take action, the reasons for this decision should be given. The response may also comment on the areas of good practice highlighted by the examiner.
- 5.21. If the report encompasses provision delivered by a collaborative partner(s), the partner institute(s) should contribute to the production of a joint response.
- 5.22. Draft responses to external examiner reports, incorporating feedback from partners as appropriate, will be appended to the annual monitoring report and be considered at the School annual monitoring meetings.
- 5.23. External examiners should be sent their response once it has been approved at the School annual monitoring meeting.
- 5.24. Where an external examiner report identifies a number of serious concerns, the School should provide an early response to the external examiner, prior to annual monitoring. Such early responses should be approved by the relevant Associate Dean – Students.
- 5.25. QES will place the response to the external examiner report on the Quality Documents Drive. The date on which the approved response was placed on the drive and sent to the external examiner will be recorded on the annual external examiner report register.

Responding to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

- 5.26. Schools will be responsible for ensuring conformance to professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements regarding external examiner reports.

Matters of Serious Concern

- 5.27. External examiners wishing to raise a matter of serious concern with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor – Student Experience should send a confidential letter, separately from their report, to The Pro-Vice Chancellor – Student Experience, Staffordshire University, College Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 2DE.
- 5.28. The Pro-Vice Chancellor will conduct necessary investigations and respond directly to the external examiner. Any resulting actions will be monitored by the university's Quality Committee.
- 5.29. Only when an external examiner has exhausted all applicable internal procedures for reporting serious concerns, including the submission of a confidential report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, should he/she invoke [QAA Concerns about Providers Scheme](#) or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

Themes and Issues arising from External Examiner Reports

- 5.30. QES will produce an annual report identifying common themes emerging from external examiner reports for consideration by the university.

6. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Modules and Awards Requiring the Appointment of External Examiners

- 6.1. Module external examiners will be appointed to the following taught modules:
- 6.1.1. All modules at level 5 and above.
 - 6.1.2. Level 3 and 4 modules contributing to the final classification of an award (e.g. level 4 modules contributing to a foundation degree programme) or contributing to a standalone award at level 3 or 4.
- 6.2. Module external examiners will be appointed to all taught modules contributing to professional doctorates. Module external examiners will NOT be appointed to professional research modules that are wholly assessed by a thesis/project for which a viva external examiner is appointed in accordance with the university's Professional Doctorate Framework.
- 6.3. Award external examiners will be appointed to all university taught courses that lead to an award of the university. This includes standalone awards at levels 3 and 4 and professional doctorates.
- 6.4. Module and award external examiners will not be required to monitor or report on provision at level 3 or 4 which forms part of a larger course, leading to an award at a higher level. In confirming the academic standards of a final award, an award external examiner confirms that s/he endorses the level and standards of its component parts as appropriate to the structure of that course.

- 6.5. Where it is necessary to appoint module external examiners to modules that contribute to an award during its first year of delivery, a corresponding award external examiner will also be appointed.

Dual Awards

- 6.6. Staffordshire University will appoint external examiners to modules and courses leading to the Staffordshire University award. Where an external examiner(s) is also appointed by the partner institute, joint appointments may be explored. Such arrangements must be approved by the university Quality Committee.

Criteria for the Appointment of All External Examiners (Module and Award)

- 6.7. External examiners will be appointed in accordance with the following criteria, which have been informed by the person specification set out in Chapter B7 of the UK Quality Code (indicator 6)ⁱⁱⁱ.
- 6.8. All external examiner nominations should demonstrate that the proposed examiner meets the following criteria:
- 6.8.1. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the modules/awards to which they will be appointed. Where appointed to multi-disciplinary awards, the award external examiner should have experience of the delivery and assessment of similar awards at another institute.
 - 6.8.2. Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the award(s)/module(s) being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate.
 - 6.8.3. 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.
 - 6.8.4. Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students at the level of the award(s)/module(s) being assessed.
 - 6.8.5. Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
 - 6.8.6. Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures.
 - 6.8.7. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
 - 6.8.8. Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
 - 6.8.9. 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. (See *Additional Quality Assurance Arrangements for programmes not delivered in the English Language* for more information)

6.8.10. Satisfies applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

Conflicts of Interest

- 6.9. The University will not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:
- 6.9.1. A member of a governing body or committee of the university or one of its collaborative partners.
 - 6.9.2. A current employee of the university or one of its collaborative partners.
 - 6.9.3. Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course of study.
 - 6.9.4. Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course of study.
 - 6.9.5. Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course of study.
 - 6.9.6. 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 course(s) or module(s) to which the examiner will be appointed.
 - 6.9.7. Former staff or students of the university or one of its collaborative partners unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their course.
 - 6.9.8. A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution.
 - 6.9.9. The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home institution.
 - 6.9.10. The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.
- 6.10. The University will not normally appoint an external examiner to provision delivered at a partner institution where the external examiner's home institution is currently collaborating or seeking to collaborate with the same partner institution in a cognate discipline/subject area.
- 6.11. The university does not regard having previously acted in the capacity of an external panel member at a course approval event and/or academic review to constitute a conflict of interest.

Exceptions and Special Cases

- 6.12. The university will appoint as external examiners individuals who do not meet all the above criteria only where there is a legitimate case for making such an appointment. This may include:
- 6.12.1. Practitioners with considerable professional experience who: do not hold the formal qualifications anticipated; the academic background; and/or have sufficient experience of assessment.
 - 6.12.2. Researchers who are eminent in their field, but lack experience in providing and enhancing the student learning experience.
 - 6.12.3. External examiners in specialist disciplines where the pool of potential external examiners is restricted.
- 6.13. Practitioners appointed as module external examiners will work in tandem with an external examiner with an academic background, with the two examiners being appointed to each module. The external examiner with the academic background will be appointed as the award external examiner for the associated courses.

Appointment of First-Time External Examiners

- 6.14. The university supports the nomination of suitably qualified individuals wishing to secure their first post as an external examiner. First-time external examiners will be allocated a mentor at the time of appointment. The mentor will normally be an experienced external examiner who is currently examining a cognate subject. Where this arrangement is not practicable, e.g. the size of the provision makes it impracticable to have more than one external examiner, the mentor may be an experienced external examiner in a different field. In some instances, it may be possible to overlap appointments of examiners so that first-time examiners have the opportunity to shadow their predecessor in the role.

Period of Tenure

- 6.15. The standard term of office for an external examiner is four academic years.
- 6.16. Only in exceptional circumstances will an external examiner's tenure be extended for a fifth year, by mutual agreement.

Nomination and Appointment Process

- 6.17. Schools should be prepared to replace an external examiner as early as possible during their final year of tenure. QES will provide reports for schools regarding the status of all external examiner appointments and exception reports where an external examiner's tenure is coming to an end and a suitable replacement has not yet been identified. New external examiners should normally be appointed by the end of April, prior to commencing their role at the start of the next academic year.
- 6.18. Partner institutes may assist the university in identifying potential external examiners. All nominations will come forward from the university school.

- 6.19. The member of school staff responsible for the area within which the examiner will be appointed (e.g. Head of Department or Course Leader) will arrange for the completion of the External Examiner Nomination Form in full. Details of the module(s) and course(s) to which the external examiner will be appointed and the role to which they will perform (i.e. module and award external examiner) must be documented on the form prior to the form being sent to the nominee for completion. This will ensure that the new external examiner is fully aware of the role for which they are being considered.
- 6.20. The external examiner should be informed of any requirement to visit a partner institute(s) at this stage.
- 6.21. If the nominee is a first-time examiner, the nomination form should clarify the mentoring arrangements that will be put in place and identify any additional support that will be made available.
- 6.22. If the nominee does not satisfy all of the criteria set out above, a rationale for the special exception should be detailed on the nomination form ([see paragraph 6.12](#)). This should include information on any additional support that will be provided by the school or other external examiners.
- 6.23. The completed nomination should be endorsed by the Associate Dean - Students or their nominee prior to being forwarded to QES.
- 6.24. QES will arrange for the nomination to be considered on behalf of the university Quality Committee.
- 6.25. The university Quality Committee will be notified of all external examiner nominations and appointments made on its behalf. The committee will be notified where an external examiner does not meet all of the selection criteria and be provided with a the rationale for the appointment.
- 6.26. QES will notify the school of the decision regarding each nomination. The school will be responsible for ensuring the outcome of the nomination is communicated to collaborative partners, as appropriate.
- 6.27. Following approval of the nomination, QES will issue the external examiner with a letter and contract of appointment, setting out: the role to which the examiner has been appointed; the provision to be examined, the start and end dates of the appointment; and the conditions of the appointment, including details of the fee attached to the position.
- 6.28. In accordance with the requirements of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, Staffordshire University is required to ascertain an external examiner's right to work in the UK. In order to meet our obligations under the Act, the university is required to check an original document, from the list of Approved Documentation. These checks must be carried out in in the examiner's presence and prior to any work being undertaken. QES will contact the new examiner to agree how these checks will be undertaken. Where an examiner is unable to attend the university in person, alternative arrangements will be made to carry out the checks (e.g. via

Skype/FaceTime). All appointments are subject to confirmation of an examiner's right to work in the UK.

- 6.29. External examiners should formally acknowledge their acceptance of the external examiner appointment in writing. This may be by email or letter.
- 6.30. Where appropriate, external examiners may be asked to provide formal consent in respect to commercial confidentiality and/or intellectual property matters associated with a particular module or award.

7. EXTERNAL EXAMINER INFORMATION AND BRIEFINGS

- 7.1. On appointment, QES will direct external examiners to the following information, available on the university website:
 - External examiner procedure
 - Academic award regulations
 - External examiner annual report form
 - Expenses claim form
- 7.2. The following information will be made available to external examiners:
 - i. On-appointment and updated as appropriate during external examiner's period of tenure:
 - Contact details for academic and administrative staff
 - Module descriptors
 - Module handbooks
 - Programme Specifications (On request)
 - ii. During each academic year:
 - Board dates
 - Assessment briefs
 - Marking scheme and assessment criteria
 - Internally moderated sample scripts
 - Module marks
 - Board papers
- 7.3. The following additional information will be made available to award external examiners:
 - i. On-appointment and updated as appropriate during external examiner's period of tenure:
 - Programme specifications
 - Course handbooks
 - ii. During each academic year:
 - Annual monitoring reports from previous academic year and summary of changes made to the course
 - Course Management Committee minutes or equivalent

- 7.4. The previous examiner's annual report will be made available to module and award external examiners in their first year of tenure on request.
- 7.5. Examiners should be informed of the specific dates of boards as early as possible during the academic year.
- 7.6. All external examiners based within the UK will be invited to an annual external examiners' briefing day. The briefing day will provide an overview of the duties, role and responsibilities of external examiners. The briefing will also include an introduction to the university's academic award regulations. The day will focus on the specific expectations of external examining at Staffordshire University and will therefore be relevant to all externals, irrespective of their previous experience. After the event, related materials will be made available on the QES website.
- 7.7. Where an external examiner is based outside the UK or unable to attend the external examiners' briefing day, schools will be responsible for ensuring they receive an equivalent briefing, utilising the standard materials made available on the QES website.
- 7.8. External examiners appointed to courses leading to a dual award must be provided with a detailed induction to each course including full details of the regulatory framework for the award(s).
- 7.9. Schools will provide tailored support for external examiners who have been appointed under the Exceptions and Special Cases provisions set out in [paragraph 6.12](#). to ensure they are able to fulfil their role.
- 7.10. Any major changes to the university regulations or policies that occur during an academic year will be communicated by QES to all external examiners.

8. PUBLIC INFORMATION

- 8.1. Course handbooks will provide the name and home institutions of the award external examiner for each course.
- 8.2. Students will be advised that they must not make direct contact with external examiners. If contacted directly by students, external examiners should decline to comment and refer the student back to the University.
- 8.3. The university and its collaborative partners will, as a matter of course, make external examiner reports available in full to students. External Examiner reports relating to on-campus provision should be made available via Blackboard. Partner institutes will be responsible for informing students how they can access external examiner reports. The report made available to students should be accompanied by the approved school response.
- 8.4. Schools and partner institutes will share all relevant external examiner reports with students directly via course management (or equivalent) committees.

9. EXTENSION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF AN EXTERNAL EXAMINER

- 9.1. Where an external examiner has not initially been appointed for a full four year period and the school wishes to extend their tenure, an *'Application for Approval of an Extension of Appointment'* should be completed. This form should also be used if the school wishes to extend the duties of an external examiner who was previously only appointed as a module external examiner to perform the additional role of Award External Examiner.
- 9.2. Schools should liaise with QES regarding the requirement to allocate/reallocate modules and awards to existing external examiners. QES will record all allocation/reallocation applications on the allocation/reallocation record sheet.
- 9.3. Schools should secure the external examiner's agreement prior to an application being submitted to QES.
- 9.4. QES will arrange for the application to be considered on behalf of the university Quality Committee.
- 9.5. QES will notify appropriate staff within the school of the decision regarding the application. The school will be responsible for ensuring the outcome of the application is communicated to collaborative partners, as appropriate.
- 9.6. The university Quality Committee will be notified of all extensions to tenure/duties approved on its behalf.
- 9.7. Following approval of the extension, QES will issue the external examiner with a letter and contract of appointment, setting out: the role to which the examiner has been appointed; the provision to be examined, the start and end dates of the appointment; and the conditions of the appointment, including details of the fee attached to the position.
- 9.8. External examiners should formally acknowledge their acceptance of the extension to tenure/duties in writing. This may be by email or letter.
- 9.9. Where appropriate, external examiners may be asked to provide formal consent in respect to commercial confidentiality and/or intellectual property matters associated with any additional module(s) or course(s).

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND DATA VERIFICATION

- 10.1. External examiners or university staff members who become aware of a potential conflict of interest should notify the university school as soon it arises.
- 10.2. Each academic year QES will issue a Data Verification form to all external examiners not in their first year of tenure. The form will invite examiners to update their personal details and declare any potential conflicts of interest that have arisen subsequent to their appointment.
- 10.3. All completed forms will be reviewed by QES. Where a potential conflict of interest is identified, QES will liaise with the relevant school to agree an appropriate course of action.

11. TERMINATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENTS

- 11.1. An external examiner who wishes to resign before the expiry of his or her normal period of office is required to write formally to the Pro-Vice Chancellor – Student Experience giving sufficient notice for the appointment of a replacement.
- 11.2. The university may terminate an external examiner's appointment at any time in the event that:
 - 11.2.1. The examiner fails to perform satisfactorily any of the duties listed in section 4 above, including but not limited to:
 - The examiner fails to attend an award board (where required to do so and without good cause and/or making alternative arrangements).
 - The examiner fails to submit a full and complete annual report by the deadline determined by the university.
 - 11.2.2. An irresolvable conflict of interest arises ([see section 10](#)).
 - 11.2.3. The examiner commits a breach of confidentiality with regard to personal information of students.
 - 11.2.4. The examiner brings the university into disrepute.
 - 11.2.5. The modules or award(s) to which the examiner is appointed are withdrawn or suspended.
- 11.3. In such cases, the reasons for the proposed termination will normally be discussed with the external examiner before such a decision is reached.
- 11.4. Schools should submit a formal recommendation to terminate an external examiner appointment, setting out the reasons for the termination, to the university Quality Committee.
- 11.5. If approved, the Chair of the university Quality Committee will be responsible for writing to the external examiner stating the effective date of termination, and the reasons for it. This letter will be copied to the relevant Associate Dean - Students and QES, for inclusion in the external examiner's personal file.
- 11.6. The school will initiate the process of appointing a replacement examiner as a matter of urgency.

ⁱ Quality Assurance Agency (2011) *Chapter B7: Examiner Examining*, Gloucester, QAA

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid