Chapter 6: External Examining
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1. External examining

External Examiners of undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision play a key role in the College’s quality assurance and enhancement processes as set out in Section 5 of the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment. They are primarily responsible for:

- Ensuring that the standards set for the awards made by Royal Holloway, University of London, or Royal Holloway and Bedford New College are appropriate for qualifications at the level set for the relevant subject;
- Confirming that the standards of student performance are comparable with those for similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions;
- Confirming that the processes for assessment and examination were conducted soundly and fairly;
- Advising departments on ways in which the academic provision for and assessment of students can be enhanced.

To this end such examiners must generally:

- Be able to provide appropriate subject or industry expertise with sufficient authority to command respect in the discipline and/or profession;
- Be familiar with current, national standards and procedures in Higher Education and/or professional training;
- Have an impartial view and have had no involvement in the development of the proposal or other close relationship with the department.

1.1 Appointment and Induction

Criteria for the selection and appointment of External Examiners on taught programmes, a full description of their role in the assessment process, and any other requirements regarding guidance and documentation are outlined in the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment. Advice on all aspects of this, including payment, is available from the Academic Quality and Policy Office. Information on the appointment and role of examiners on research degree programmes is also available from Student Administration in the Directorate of Academic Services.

On appointment, External Examiners should be provided with the following information from the Academic Quality and Policy Office. If you do not receive this, please contact exteralexaminers@rhul.ac.uk.

- External Examiner Contract: This will set out the period of appointment (not more than four years), identify the Sub-board to which you have been assigned, and set out the rights of each party for the termination of the appointment.
- External Examiners are re-appointed on an annual basis, for the term of their tenure, in order to ensure they are still able to act for the next academic year. Each year the contract of employment will need returning to exteralexaminers@rhul.ac.uk with their External Examiners Declaration. Their contract of employment will indicate their External Examiner fee for the year.
- Awards: External Examiners will be provided with a list of all Award that may be considered by the Sub-board of Examiners to which you have been assigned. Where new programmes are validated and therefore added to the remit of the Sub-board, the External Examiner will be notified by the Department once the programme has been approved. The External Examiner should also be consulted in the validation process.
- All UG External Examiners will be provided with a list of the programmes associated to the sub-board to which they have been appointed. PGT External Examiners are appointed by Programme not by sub-board and therefore do not receive a list of programmes.
- College Regulations, Policies and Guidance: Relevant regulations, policies and guidance documents are made available to all External Examiners on appointment here.

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A typical undergraduate External Examiner appointment pack would include the following documents:

- External Examiner Contract
- New Starters Form
- Pension Scheme Automatic Enrolment letter (Pension Scheme Automatic Enrolment FAQs available [here](#))
- College’s Statement of Safety Policy
- College’s Travel and Subsistence Policy
- External Examiners List of Responsibilities
- External Examiners Declaration
- Programmes attached to Sub-board
- Request for Payment Form
- Guidance on completion of the Request for Payment Form

New undergraduate External Examiners **must** complete a New Starters Form and provide proof of right to work in the UK prior to undertaking any work for the College.

Proof of right to work documentation should be presented to one of the following prior to starting employment:

- Departmental Administrator/Department Manager when they visit the department

A typical postgraduate External Examiner appointment pack would include the following documents:

- External Examiners' List of Responsibilities
- Invoice Proforma
- Guidance on completion of the Invoice Proforma
- College’s Statement of Safety Policy
- Travel and Subsistence policy

1.2 Specific Duties and Responsibilities

The role of the External Examiner will vary according to the discipline, e.g. the department may ask you to attend presentations, recitals etc. in line with guidance in the Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors; however the key duties of the External Examiner role are as follows:

1.2.1 Sub-board Attendance

The Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment contain further information on the composition and quorum for Sub-boards (paragraphs 36-38) and pre-Sub-boards to discuss extenuating circumstances (paragraph 13).

**Undergraduate:** Sub-board of Examiners meetings are held in June. The Chair of Sub-board or a departmental administrator will contact the External Examiner regarding the dates of the meetings each year and every effort will be made to schedule the Sub-board at a convenient date for all examiners. At least one External Examiner is expected to attend the pre-Sub-board meeting at which extenuating circumstances of students are discussed.

Sub-boards are also held in September, primarily to consider the results of first and second year students who have resat courses in August. External Examiners are not normally required to attend these meetings and results may be approved via a virtual Sub-board.

At all boards External Examiners are expected to comply with the regulations and procedures of the College.

**Postgraduate:** Sub-board of Examiners meetings are normally held in June/early July to discuss progression to dissertation and/or summer resits. A further Sub-board is held in the Autumn term to agree on..
final awards. The External Examiners must attend both meetings. Where a programme has more than one
External Examiner, a minimum of one should attend the Sub-board in June. The Chair of Sub-board or a
departmental administrator will contact the External Examiner regarding the dates of the meetings each year
and every effort will be made to schedule the Sub-board at a convenient date for all examiners. At least one
External Examiner is expected to attend the pre-Sub-board meeting at which extenuating circumstances of
students are discussed in both June/early July and the Autumn term.

At all boards External Examiners are expected to comply with the regulations and procedures of the College.

1.2.2 Assessment and Moderation

External Examiners help the College to ensure, as far as practicable, that the process of assessing students is
fair and operated equitably through involvement in the following;

- Marking Schemes/criteria
  - External Examiners should be provided with marking schemes for all assessments associated with
    their appointment. These may be contained in the student handbook, or there may be a separate
document. These may be provided on appointment, or sent with samples of student work. External
Examiners are expected to advise on whether these are consistent with national standards and
appropriate to the discipline.

- Award Assessment Schemes
  - External Examiners are expected to advise on whether assessment schemes are consistent with
national standards and that methods of assessment are appropriate to the discipline.

- Draft Examination Papers
  - External Examiners approve draft examination papers. This would normally take place in the Spring
Term.

- Coursework
  - External Examiners also approve new or amended summative coursework assessments which
constitute more than 20% of the final grade for a course unit

- Moderation
  - External Examiners moderate the marking of internal examiners. Guidance on sample sizes and
documentation to be provided (assessed work, marking schemes, mark sheets and statistical
data) are provided in the Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors.

- Adjudication
  - Only in exceptional cases will an External Examiner be asked to be involved in the marking process;
for example, if there is a disagreement between Internal Examiners.

- New Course/Programme Proposal and Amendments
  - External Examiners are asked to comment on:
    - New course proposals;
    - Amendments to the method, volume or weighting of assessment for existing courses;
    - Major amendments to the content of existing courses;
    - Amendments to the structure of existing programmes.

- Signing mark lists
  - At the conclusion of the Sub-board the External Examiners are required to sign lists showing the
final outcomes of course assessments and awards.

- Completing an External Examiner’s Report
  - Please click here for guidance on completing the External Examiner’s Report Form.
1.3 College Regulations, Policies and Assessment Guidance

The list below includes links to a number of documents which are relevant to the External Examiner role. Of primary importance is the Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors, the relevant undergraduate or postgraduate taught regulations, the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment and, for those External Examiners attending pre-Sub-boards to discuss extenuating circumstances, the Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for Students.

- Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors
- College Regulations
- College Policies
- Late Submission (see Section 13.4 of the undergraduate/postgraduate taught regulations)
- Overlength work (see Section 13.5 of the undergraduate regulations/postgraduate taught regulations)
- Illegible Scripts
- Return of assessed work
- Instructions to Candidates
- Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for Students

1.4 Department Specific Programme and Assessment Information

Departments are expected to provide External Examiners with the following details about their programmes and assessments practices.

- Programme Specific Information:
  - Programme specifications relevant to their role as External Examiner. Please see the College’s Programme Specification repository.
  - Course Specifications for all courses for which the External Examiner has responsibility.
- Assessment Information:
  - Departmental policies on second marking- (blind) double marking or single marking with moderation;
  - List of undergraduate courses which are exempt from summer resits;
  - Marking criteria for assessed work;
  - Copies of examination papers or assessment tasks;
  - Mark sheets and other relevant statistical information;
  - Recordings of oral presentations, recitals, etc.

1.5 External Examiner Reports

External Examiners are expected to complete the External Examiner Report Form within three weeks of the main meeting of the Sub-board of examiners (June for undergraduate programmes and the Autumn term for postgraduate programmes) (Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment, Section 5 (5e))

The form along with guidance on how to complete it is available at

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/teaching/aqpo/templates-and-forms/external-examiner-forms.aspx

1.6 External Examiner Responses- Departmental and Institutional

- Departmental responses
  - Chairs of Sub-board/Programme Directors are required to respond to External Examiners within two months of receipt of their reports (Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment, Section 7 (4f)). Reports and responses are considered as part of the faculty scrutiny of taught provision and a summary report is then presented to the College’s Quality and
Standards Committee and the College Board of Examiners’ Executive Committee.

- Institutional Responses
  - Thereafter the Vice-Principal (Quality and Standards) will respond to all External Examiners indicating how the College is addressing issues which are relevant at institutional level. The College also has an obligation to report on External Examiners’ Reports to the University of London.

Please click here for:

Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – UG 2013-14
Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – PGT 2013-14
Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – UG 2014-15
Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – PGT 2014-15
Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – UG 2015-16
Annual External Examiners’ Report for College – PGT 2015-16