1. To date 64 External Examiners have submitted reports, which includes 4 for CeDAS provision and 2 for Kaplan provision. Two are still outstanding – one from Computer Science and one from SMLLC.

2. Of those who have submitted reports for undergraduate taught programmes, most have generally confirmed that:
   - the standards set for the awards were appropriate;
   - the standards of student performance were comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which they were familiar;
   - the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted.

3. As indicated in an earlier version of this paper, two of the Externals have, in response to question 2 (second bullet point above), queried the disproportionate number of Firsts and 2:1s awarded, which they believed were out of line with comparable programmes in the sector (Earth Sciences and Economics). In the former case the point was also made that the Department should seek to ensure that marking standards are applied consistently across course units as there was a disparity in average marks between courses in each of the years and also that anonymity need to be preserved on all courses. In the latter case the External noted that first year students had not done as well as in the past and this might lower the number of good degrees in future. An External in Media Arts, in the answer to a question on issues from a previous year that had not been addressed, noted that marking appeared to be ‘too generous’. These issues will need to be taken up with the departments concerned.

4. Of the External Examiner reports received since a prior version of this paper was presented to the Committee in August, an External Examiner in Psychology has raised concerns about standards of awards in that department. He has not confirmed any of the statements in 2 above and believes there was “inappropriate grade inflation” in 2017-18 with 38% of students being awarded a 1st. He thinks this is because of the change in weighting of the project and the College’s regulation on auto raising. This was noted by both External Examiners although the 2nd examiner for the programmes concluded that after much decision at the Sub-board there were multiple factors involved and he was satisfied with the final awards.

5. One External, in response to question 3 (third bullet point above) raised a question about marks awarded to assignments with high similarity rates and noted that there need to be more scrutiny amongst markers in this respect. This will be taken up with the department.

6. They were generally satisfied in the other areas on which they are asked to comment:
   - Organisational arrangements and documentation
   - Assessment methods and marking
   - Curriculum and Programme Review.

7. As indicated in the table below there are some areas where the College needs to reflect on the comments made/ issues raised and consider what action it may take. It is anticipated that where specific issues have been raised with departments, e.g. where an External Examiner has noted that the quality of feedback is not consistent this will be raised with the department concerned as part of the Faculty Scrutiny process and will feature in the departmental action plan as reflected in the right hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>College Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment methods and marking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of marking criteria</td>
<td>External Examiners were generally very positive about marking and moderation procedures which they perceived to be appropriate and applied consistently. In one department one External commented that marking schemes were not provided for some questions/ were rudimentary (Earth Sciences).</td>
<td>During the Annual Review process the departmental responses to the External Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not been addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking and moderation practices</td>
<td>The general consensus was that marking methods were appropriately applied with three externals disagreeing citing inconsistencies in how moderation was carried out</td>
<td>During the Annual Review process the departmental responses to the External Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not been addressed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(Classics), mark changes noted for individual student’s which is not in line with the College's moderation practice (SMLCC), providing clear evidence of second marking and how differences are resolved, indication of how many scripts had been so marked (SoM), marking schemes not provided for some questions/ where provided being rudimentary and some assessment appearing to have been set to avoid double marking (Earth Sciences). There was also a comment that marking and moderation in one department did not follow the rubric for the department which had been agreed by Faculty Board (Electronic Engineering).

Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not be
en addressed.

Feedback

On the whole the Externals were extremely positive about the quality and quantity of feedback given to students to support their learning. There were a few comments about quality and quantity of feedback being inconsistent across the department (Earth Sciences, Computer Science, Classics and History).

Departments are aware of the importance of the quality of feedback given to students. During the Annual Review process the departmental responses to the External Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not been addressed.

Curriculum and programme overview

Learning outcomes and inclusivity

With the exception of two, all External Examiners answered questions in this section positively. The two issues raised were:
1. One External in Earth Sciences noted that he could not assess the appropriateness of learning outcomes as these were not made available to him. He cited in particular GL3001, where discussions with students supported his view.
2. One of the Externals in Media Arts believes that diversity in the curriculum is still an issue, and one which was raised last year but not been addressed.

During the Annual Review process the departmental responses to the External Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not been addressed.

Regulatory issues

1. **Weighting of the first year**: There has been a suggestion again that the first year be weighted to improve student engagement with their studies.

2. **Summer resits for ‘condonable fails’**: One External Examiner felt that students with marks in the condonable range should be permitted to resit the course in the summer, rather than waiting until the following academic year. This examiner felt that the College response to his comment on this last year had not been addressed.

1. The College has debated this issue and agreed that it is not something that it wishes to pursue at this stage. The Vice Principal (Quality and Standards) to address this in his annual email to External Examiners.

2. Students are not obliged to resit condonable fails in the following year and under the old regulations would not have been offered resits in the summer and would not have had to do them the following May either. The College is, however, monitoring the impact of the new regulations annually at the meeting of the College Board of Examiners’ Executive Committee (CBEEC) so will bear this in mind.
3. Given the issues raised in by one of the Psychology External Examiners the department has suggested that the regulations be changed to raise students to the upper class based upon the candidate having half or more courses, rather than half course units, in the upper class.

3. The current wording is confusing (four 15 credit units in the upper class), which should read 60 credits in the upper class and the plan is to change this for 2019-20.

We cannot change the regulations to refer to ‘having half or more courses’ in the upper class. This would mean Psychology students potentially have to have more credits in the upper class depending on whether or not they are taking full or half units in addition to their project of 45 credits.

### Organisational arrangements and documentation

| Oversight of coursework and examination papers | It would appear that most departments are sending coursework titles (where work counts 20% or more) and examination papers to External Examiners for consideration. There seem to be some instances where this may not be routinely happening (Earth Sciences, Media Arts and PIR).
There is also a note from one External Examiner about the number of errors in examination papers, which were not rectified (Earth Sciences) |
| The College will issue a reminder to staff about this. The Head of AQPO will be meeting with Department Managers in September to stress the importance of this. CBEEC has already contacted the Department of Earth Sciences regarding errors in examination papers. |
| Documentation | A few External Examiners (Earth Sciences, Geography, Media Arts) noted that they were not provided with enough information on courses/programmes they were reviewing and/or were not provided with a full pack of information to carry out their moderation, e.g. no mark sheets |
| During the Annual Review process the departmental responses to the External Examiners’ will be scrutinised and action taken if these comments have not been addressed. Department Managers will be reminded of the guidance on this in the Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors. |
| Range of work | One External Examiner in Biological Sciences indicated that work is split amongst examiners by year, which seems unusual. |
| QASC and CBEEC to consider whether this needs to be reviewed. |
| Operation of pre-Sub-board | An External in MEL raised a number of issues relating to the consideration of extenuating circumstances by the pre-Sub-board. These related to:
- The requirement for original documentation (was this necessary?);
- Development of a more comprehensive strategy for identifying and managing the large number of students who present with depression and anxiety;
- Putting in place a better process for assessing extenuating circumstances. |
| The College is aware that the consideration of extenuating circumstances can be improved and will be considering in future whether there are more efficient ways of assessing submissions. |
| Data provided to Sub-board | Two examiners (Psychology and Physics) consider that the College needs to provide External Examiners with better statistical analyses of the marks, specifically scatter plot and summary statistics on how the marks on |
| The Secretary to raise this with Student Administration/Strategic Planning and Change |
| one module/course compare to mean marks on other courses (for the same students) so that they can appropriately assess calibration. |