

Academic Regulations

HANDBOOK FOR NEW EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

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Introduction

Welcome from our Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education)



Welcome to the University of Portsmouth! As Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), I am delighted to have you join us as an External Examiner. We value the expertise and perspective you bring to this important role. Your involvement is crucial in maintaining and enhancing the quality of our academic courses, ensuring that our standards align with national benchmarks and reflect best practices in higher education. As part of our academic community, we look forward to working closely with you and to uphold our commitment to excellence, fairness, and continuous improvement in student learning and assessment.

About the University of Portsmouth

The University of Portsmouth is a dynamic and forward-thinking institution located on the south coast of England. We are proud to have retained our Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Gold rating in 2023, which reflects our commitment to outstanding teaching, strong industry partnerships, and internationally recognised research. Offering a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses across disciplines like business, engineering, creative arts, humanities and the sciences, we have grown into a global leader in academic excellence and innovation.

With a diverse student body of over 25,000 students from more than 140 countries, we take pride in our cutting-edge facilities, high levels of student satisfaction, and strong employability rates for our graduates.

We are an ambitious institution and as such, we set ourselves high standards and targets. As part of this, we are deeply committed to closing the awarding gap and ensuring that every student, regardless of background, has an equal opportunity to excel. This commitment is embedded in our work with students, staff, external partners, and crucially, our External Examiners. As an External Examiner, your independent, expert oversight of our academic standards and assessment practices plays an integral role in helping us ensure equal opportunity, fairness and inclusivity in all that we do.

Our students enjoy a vibrant learning experience on our main campus, located in the historic city of Portsmouth. In 2024, the University welcomed its first cohort of students to our London Campus, extending our commitment to delivering high-quality education and fostering industry connections in the UK's capital. To learn more about our London Campus, please visit our website [Our campus | UoP London](#)

We are thrilled that you have chosen to join us and look forward to working with you!

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the External Examiner

The role of the External Examiner is essential to maintaining academic standards and ensuring fair and consistent assessment across courses. You provide independent scrutiny of our assessment processes, verifying that the standards are appropriate, and student performance is assessed fairly.

This handbook provides you with guidance on your role, responsibilities, and key processes. It serves as a reference for understanding expectations, processes, timelines, support, and the University's assessment framework.

All External Examiners are appointed as Subject External Examiners with a defined list of modules. The role is to be a constructive critical peer by providing independent and impartial advice and informative comments relating to academic standards and students' achievement in relation to those standards.

Key Responsibilities

As an External Examiner, your core responsibilities include:

- Attendance at mandatory training session within the first year of appointment
- Review a sample of assessment materials
- Moderate marking and ensure consistency across assessments
- Attend Examining Board meetings and provide input on decisions
- Complete an annual External Examiner's Report.

To ensure you are able to fulfill the requirements successfully, the University will ensure you are provided with timely access to relevant materials, offer you support and clarification on policies and processes, and ensure we maintain open communication with you and address any concerns.

Training

Whilst there are common standards and features across the UK, each university has its own approach to assessment frameworks and regulations. To ensure that you are fully prepared and understand the specific practices of our institution, it is mandatory for all new External Examiners to attend an online training session within the first year of your appointment.

Training Requirements:

- Training must be completed before you attend any Exam Boards.
- The training will cover the University's assessment framework, specific regulations, and expectations for your role, and support available to you.

Find Out More: To explore the training session available and schedule your attendance, please visit the External Examiners webpage: <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/structure-and-governance/policies-and-standards/external-examiners>

Policies and Frameworks

There are a number of central policies, regulations and academic frameworks which you will come across in your role. You will learn more about these in the training, but here are links to them to help you to familiarise yourself with them:

Home Page to our Policies and Procedures:

<https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/structure-and-governance/policies-and-standards>

External Examiner Policy

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-128.pdf>

Awards of the University of Portsmouth

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-110.pdf>

Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-107.pdf>

Assessment Regulations for the Conduct of Examinations

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-283.pdf>

Key Processes and Timelines

Wiseflow and Moodle

Wiseflow offers a streamlined workflow that allows External Examiners to access student submissions directly within the platform. This feature saves a significant amount of academic staff time that would typically be spent downloading student submissions and uploading them to Google Drive. Wiseflow ensures a secure environment where External Examiners can view student submissions along with their corresponding grades and feedback right in the system.

Academic teams looking to request External Examiner access for Moodle and Wiseflow can find relevant information in the [External Examiners section of the CADI website](#). This page includes process diagrams and user guides to assist staff including user guides for legacy external examiner processes.

Examining Board Meetings

The University operates a two-tier system of assessment and examination boards to agree assessment outcomes in accordance with the [Assessment Regulations](#). These are Module Assessment Boards (MABs) and Boards of Examiners (BoEs).

Module Assessment Boards (MABs) consider modules grouped into cognate areas and confirm marks at module level, and Subject External Examiners are required to attend the (MAB). The Boards of Examiners considers named awards, similarly grouped into cognate areas, and confirms awards and decisions on progression. Award External Examiners are required to attend the (BoE).

As the Subject External Examiner you should satisfy yourself that students are assessed fairly, and standards at module level are comparable with those at other institutions.

You have the right to see any work submitted for assessment for any module for which you are responsible. This enables you to report to the MAB and via your annual report, on the appropriateness of the assessment and standards of students' performance.

You have the right, and we would encourage you, to meet and undertake discussions with students in order to identify examples of good practice and potential areas for development, and to form an opinion of the effectiveness of the modules.

Award External Examiners, are appointed from the pool of Subject External Examiners, and are responsible for a number of courses, and confirm, or not, that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere, and the curriculum is relevant and coherent. Award External Examiners are required to attend the Board of Examiners (BoE), in accordance with the [Assessment Regulations](#) and submit annual reports.

Under exceptional circumstances regarding concerns relating to assessment standards or procedures, whether you are acting as a Subject or Award External Examiner, you can contact the Vice-Chancellor in confidence. This can be outside of any issues reported via the Annual Report.

Exceptionally, if you are unable to attend the MAB or BoE you must make your views known to the relevant Board before it meets.

Review of Assessments and Examinations

The School will provide you with the link to the University's Course and Module Catalogue detailing the assessment activities and learning outcomes, the elements of assessment and their marking schemes. As the Subject External Examiner, you may comment on these but may not require immediate changes with effect for the current delivery of the module.

A sample of the students' assessed work will be provided to the Subject External Examiner, which should be no less than 20% of the total assessment for the module, although this can be agreed with the School. The sample should contain work that has been verified and spans the full range of marks. Note, the University applies a categorical marking framework, and wherever possible all assessments should be marked against the categorical marking criteria. A cover sheet will also be sent to you where you can add comments on particular assessment elements.

SCOPE Meetings

From the 2025/26 academic year, the University will be **replacing Boards of Studies with SCOPE Meetings** (Student-Centred Outcomes, Planning and Evaluation).

SCOPE meetings are designed to offer a more focused, quality-driven forum for reviewing student outcomes, course delivery, and opportunities for enhancement. These meetings will take place **after the main Board of Examiners** and will involve Course Leaders, Module Coordinators, External Examiners, student representatives, and (where applicable) collaborative partners.

Key aims of SCOPE meetings include:

- Evaluating course quality, relevance, and student support.
- Drawing on student feedback, performance data, and your examiner reports.

- Supporting continuous improvement through structured, evidence-based discussions.

We would welcome your engagement at the SCOPE meeting. We hope that it will provide a mutually beneficial forum for sharing subject good practice and continuous improvement. More details and guidance on the SCOPE process will be shared with you by the academic School ahead of the 2025/26 academic year.

External Examiner's Report

Key Areas for Reporting

Your External Examiner report is an essential contribution to the University, and it forms part of your contractual obligations to provide a report each academic year. We ask for your academic judgment and feedback on a number of critical areas, this includes:

- Whether assessment standards were appropriate and reflect what you see across the sector in the discipline;
- The fairness and consistency of marking;
- Any issues related to the curriculum or assessment methods;
- Your suggestions on how we could improve the student experience, our provision and practices;
- Your thoughts on how we could improve outcomes for all students, and importantly reduce the awarding gap.

The annual report should be submitted within 30 days following the final Examination Board meeting.

Response to Reports and Institutional Feedback

Your annual report is hugely important to us, and the University will provide you with a formal response, this is typically from the Course Leader or Head of School, or nominee. You can expect the response to you to outline any actions or changes resulting from your feedback.

Support and Communications

Support

You are supported by and work closely with a number of staff in the School. This includes Module Co-ordinators, Course Leaders and Faculty Administration Centres. If this is your first appointment as an External Examiner or if you feel you have limited examining experience, you

will be supported by an academic mentor either from the School or from another External Examiner.

Fees and Payment

Your annual fee will be confirmed to you in your appointment letter. All fees and expenses are paid annually, and only after receipt of your annual report.