

Chapter 2

External Examiners

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INTRODUCTION

Degree-awarding bodies are responsible for the quality of their educational programmes and the standards of the awards to which they lead, and the external examiner system within UK higher education is one of the principal means for assuring both. Once set at programme validation¹, external examiners judge whether threshold standards defined within the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications² and subject benchmark statements³ are being demonstrated at module and qualification award level. Beyond threshold (pass) standard, awarding bodies classify degrees according to their own academic regulations and external examiners provide judgements on whether these are applied consistently as well as commenting on the comparability of standards with similar provision elsewhere in the sector.

External examiners are expert assessors whose authority is derived from their knowledge of, and qualifications in, their subject disciplines and their experience of teaching and assessing students at higher education level. The external examiner is also an independent assessor whose judgement will not be compromised by any prior association with the programme team or by some reciprocal arrangement with their home institution.

Edge Hill University's external examiner system addresses the Office for Students' General Ongoing Conditions of Registration⁴ and associated Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018)⁵ by helping ensure that:

	Office for Students Conditions of Registration	UK Quality Code Expectations
1. The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.	OfS Condition B5	Standards Expectation #1
2. The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	OfS Condition B4	Standards Expectation #2
3. Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.	OfS Condition B1	Quality Expectation #1

¹ See Quality Management Handbook (QMH) Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/quality-management-handbook/.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf?sfvrsn=170af781_16.

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements.

⁴ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/.

⁵ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Revised-UK-Quality-Code-for-Higher-Education.pdf.

External examiners are engaged by the University and added to its External Examiners Register⁶ in accordance with the criteria set out in this chapter, providing informative comment and recommendations on:

- Whether the University is maintaining the academic standards it has set⁷ for its awards in relation to national threshold standards defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) degree level descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements, and Edge Hill's own Academic Regulations⁸.
- Beyond threshold, the comparability of Edge Hill's academic standards and student achievement with other UK higher education providers.
- The rigour, equity and fairness of assessment of Intended Learning Outcomes.
- The quality of summative written feedback to students.
- The conduct and transparency of assessment processes including marking, internal moderation and the operation of assessment boards.
- Evidence of good practice and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment, and opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to Edge Hill students.

External examiners are assigned to all Edge Hill modules that lead to the award of credit at FHEQ level 5 and above⁹. With the exception of dissertation, project and 'shell' modules where a range of subject expertise may be required, no module is normally assigned more than one examiner except where the number of students makes sampling too large for a single individual and in such cases examiners will work together to ensure parity and consistency of moderation decisions. A single programme delivered across multiple sites, e.g. by different academic partner organisations is normally assigned the same examiner to enable standards to be compared. Examiners produce an annual report to the University on the programmes/ modules to which they have been assigned and attend the relevant assessment boards¹⁰ where access to complete student profiles enables the confirmation of standards at qualification award level.

Taking full account of current QAA Advice and Guidance on the use of external expertise in academic quality assurance¹¹, this chapter provides information and guidance on:

⁶ The Register comprises those external examiners whose engagement has been approved by the University and are shown as actively engaged in the external moderation of Edge Hill programmes.

⁷ Academic standards are set at Institutional validation through the approval of Intended Learning Outcomes at module and programme level – see Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf.

⁸ www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/strategies-policies/.

⁹ And also at Levels 3 and 4 where prescribed by professional bodies or otherwise approved at validation, for example EHU's level 3 Fastrack: Preparation for HE programme, and Foundation degrees where level 4 contributes to classification of the learner's award.

¹⁰ See also 'Roles and Responsibilities', below.

¹¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise. Further guidance is provided in 'Fundamentals of External Examining' (Advance HE, 2019) www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/Fundamentals%20of%20External%20Examining%20AHE%20March%202019.pdf.

- The nomination and engagement of external examiners.
- The external examiner's role and responsibilities.
- The production and consideration of annual reports.
- Access to internal and external concerns procedures.
- Arrangements for ending an external examiner's engagement.

Information on the appointment of Edge Hill staff as external examiners by other higher education providers is provided in Chapter 6¹² of this Handbook.

All communications with external examiners in relation to their nomination and engagement, and any subsequent changes to it, must use the approved templates which are held on the External Examiners Wiki¹³. Where requested, the External Examiners Mailbox externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk should be copied into such communications to enable Institutional records to be updated.

NOMINATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Criteria for engagement

External examiners are typically academic staff of other UK higher education providers and are academically qualified to at least the level of the qualification in the subject to be examined. The academic and professional criteria utilised by Edge Hill University ensure that our external examiners are capable of exercising impartial, independent and expert judgement to secure the standards of our awards in relation to national reference points¹⁴ and the Institution's Academic Regulations¹⁵, as well as confirming the comparability of standards with those of other higher education providers. The engagement of external examiners complies with Edge Hill's statutory and legislative responsibilities in relation to the employment of casual workers. Individuals seeking to become external examiners of the University are expected to demonstrate appropriate evidence of:

- I. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the module/ programme of study to which they will be assigned.
- II. Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within their discipline to be able to command the respect of academic and, where appropriate, other professional peers.
- III. Knowledge and understanding of the UK sector agreed reference points for the setting and maintenance of academic standards (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Degree Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark

¹² www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/06-quality-assurance-of-learning-and-teaching.pdf.

¹³ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/External+Examiners> (EHU staff login required).

¹⁴ As defined by Framework for Higher Education Qualifications degree level descriptors and subject benchmark statements www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

¹⁵ Available via www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

Statements) and familiarity with the standard to be expected of students in relation to their award.

- IV. (Where applicable) Knowledge and understanding of the standards or other requirements of Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) that govern students' awards.
- V. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of programmes in their subject including competence in and experience of designing and managing assessment.
- VI. Current employment status including eligibility¹⁶ to work in the United Kingdom and (where relevant) PSRB registration.
- VII. Fluency in the English language¹⁷.

'Standing, credibility and breadth of experience' may be indicated by:

- The individual's present post and place of work (as vi, above);
- The range and scope of their experience across higher education/ other relevant professions;
- Current and recent active involvement in research/ scholarly/ professional activities in the relevant field of study.

While a nominee's standing and credibility may be determined in part by their seniority within their home institution, this does not preclude the nomination of other appropriately qualified individuals. Where they have no previous experience of external examining, candidates' nomination should be supported by evidence of:

- other types of 'externality'¹⁸; and/ or
- significant experience of internal moderation or verification of assessment within their home institution; and/ or
- other relevant and recent experience likely to support them in their duties, e.g. participation in their home institution's validation, monitoring and review activities.

Where possible, individuals without previous external examiner experience join an experienced team of examiners and/ or are mentored by an experienced examiner on a related module/ programme. Where an examiner's engagement is conditional on them being mentored, the condition is on the Faculty to approach another current external examiner in the same or cognate discipline to provide such mentoring and to outline to both parties the expectations of the mentoring relationship, which are to develop the mentee's understanding of:

¹⁶ Evidenced by a physical inspection of the individual's passport in line with HM Government's requirements – see 'An Employer's Guide to Right to Work Checks' (Home Office, June 2018), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720858/29_06_18_Employer_s_guide_to_right_to_work_checks.pdf.

¹⁷ **Note:** Edge Hill University's Academic Regulations do not permit delivery and assessment in languages other than English (Academic Regulations C1.5).

¹⁸ For example, association with a PSRB.

- UK sector agreed reference points for the setting and maintenance of academic standards (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Degree Characteristics Statements and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement/s).
- Moderation of assessed student work and the writing of annual reports.
- The operation of assessment and award boards and the role of the external examiner within them.
- Administrative processes and procedures for the engagement and payment of external examiners.

The onus is on the mentor to make initial contact with their mentee following which they are available to provide advice and support on request. Faculties will collect and evaluate feedback from mentors' and mentees' annual reports for reporting to the relevant Faculty Board committee. Faculties provide periodic reports on the mentoring process on request from the University's External Examiners Sub-Committee (EESC)¹⁹.

The engagement of external examiners from outwith the higher education sector may be appropriate in certain circumstances, e.g. to provide specific industrial or other professional expertise. In such cases nominations will describe the extent and relevance of the individual's knowledge and experience including any professional body recognition, and their familiarity with the design, delivery and assessment of higher education programmes. Where an individual from industry is nominated to work in tandem with an academic examiner, this is taken into account during the consideration of nominations²⁰. Nominations from retirees or other former staff of higher education providers will normally only be considered within two years of exit or, exceptionally, where other significant evidence of their academic and professional currency is available. A former external examiner may be re-engaged only in very exceptional circumstances and after at least five years have elapsed since the end of their previous engagement.

Nominees should normally hold no more than two external examiner positions concurrently, including their position with Edge Hill, and exceptions would require special justification during the nomination process (see also below).

Current or previous associations, 'reciprocity' and other restrictions²¹

Academic departments and Faculties supported by the External Examiners Administrator (AQDU) are responsible for ensuring that nominations adhere to the University's rules governing external examiners' engagement. External examiners should not be involved in delivering any modules or programmes of the University, advising students about them, their examination and assessment, or have been a consultant to Edge Hill programme

¹⁹ A sub-committee of the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee, see Quality Management Handbook Chapter 8 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/08-academic-governance.pdf. The annual schedule of Academic Board Committees may be accessed at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/governance/Academic+Governance> (EHU staff login required).

²⁰ See UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on External Expertise (QAA, 2018: 5).

²¹ See also UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on External Expertise (QAA, 2018: 2).

development²² within the last three years. Other conflicts of interest include engagement of **any** of the following:

- Anyone with a professional, contractual or close personal relationship with Edge Hill staff or students.
- Anyone engaged in substantive collaborative research with a member of Edge Hill staff.
- A member of the governing body or current employee of Edge Hill University or one of its academic partner organisations including Erasmus or other overseas partner institutions.

In addition to current associations, other restrictions include:

- a) Reciprocal arrangements with other higher education providers²³.
- b) Engagement of multiple or consecutive examiners from the same department of another provider.
- c) Engagement of former Edge Hill staff or students as examiners until five years have elapsed since their exit from the University or after all students taught by or with them have completed their studies (whichever is the longer).
- d) Ineligibility to work in the United Kingdom.

Where, exceptionally, restriction (b) needs to be relaxed – for example, in the case of discipline areas that are small and specialist and where the pool of potential examiners is extremely restricted and perhaps limited to a very small number of providers – this should be specified clearly in the nomination form and the measures already taken to engage a suitable individual described.

Nomination

Faculty Quality Officers alert academic departments when an external examiner is required for new provision²⁴ and provide sufficient notice of when an existing examiner's period of engagement is about to end²⁵. By instruction of the University's Directorate all nominations must normally have been approved before the start of the academic session in which the individual is due to commence work, typically October for undergraduate programmes or January for some Masters programmes. Where in-year engagement is unavoidable, for example to cover for resignations or terminations, appointments are back-dated to the start

²² This applies specifically to individuals who have provided advice to course teams in their preparations for programme approval (validation). Previous external members of Institutional validation panels may seek appointment as external examiners for a limited term of three years.

²³ Reciprocity occurs **only** where staff of two higher education providers hold external examiner positions in each other's home departments. Edge Hill staff are responsible for checking for potential reciprocity when seeking external examiner positions with other providers – for guidance, please consult the External Examiners Administrator (AQDU).

²⁴ Normally at FHEQ level 5 and above, however certain level 3 and 4 provision including some PSRB-regulated programmes may be assigned a requirement for external examination at Institutional validation.

²⁵ The External Examiners Sub-Committee (EESC) receives regular reports from Faculties confirming external examiner coverage and highlighting current or imminent vacancies.

of the academic session which counts towards the standard four sessions for which examiners are normally engaged.

Heads of department complete and submit to their Faculty a **Nomination Form for a New External Examiner**²⁶ accompanied by a Curriculum Vitae detailing the nominee's employment history, academic and/ or professional qualifications and any previous and current research and scholarly activity. Heads of department ensure that the proposed workload of the examiner does not exceed normal Institutional expectations²⁷. It is essential that nominations contain sufficient information and where this is incomplete it may delay the nominee's confirmation. Nominations are authorised in the first instance by the PVC Dean or Associate Dean of the relevant Faculty before being submitted to the Academic Quality & Development Unit (AQDU)²⁸ following which they enter the system for Institutional approval described below.

Institutional Approval

All nominees must have received both **Committee Approval** and **Personnel Approval** prior to undertaking any work for the University (see *Fig. 1*, below). During Committee Approval, EESC considers²⁹ nominations and makes recommendations on their suitability to the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee which are subsequently approved by AQEC Chair's Action and reported to the next scheduled meeting via the EESC Minutes. Personnel Approval considers all HR-related requirements including pre-engagement checks. Committee Approval and Personnel Approval run concurrently and, on completion, the External Examiners Administrator notifies the outcome to the nominee and proposing Faculty.

Period of engagement

External examiners are typically placed on the Edge Hill University External Examiners Register for a period of four academic sessions (years). In certain circumstances - for example, where a closed programme is being 'taught out' and there is no more than one academic session remaining, or where efforts to secure a replacement have been exhausted - an examiner may be retained on the Register for a longer period. Departments complete a **Permission to Remain on the External Examiners Register Form**³⁰ which is considered and approved by EESC.

If an examiner's period of engagement is interrupted, e.g. through long-term sickness or maternity leave, their engagement is discussed with them and they would not be prohibited from resuming and completing the typical four academic sessions. Where an individual

²⁶ Available from <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/External+Examiners> (EHU staff login required).

²⁷ Based on the estimated time for moderation and other activities contained within the University's workload model for external examiners – see 'Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model', below.

²⁸ To the External Examiners Administrator.

²⁹ Nominations may exceptionally be approved by EESC Chair's Action outside the cycle of scheduled meetings, e.g. to fill current or imminent vacancies.

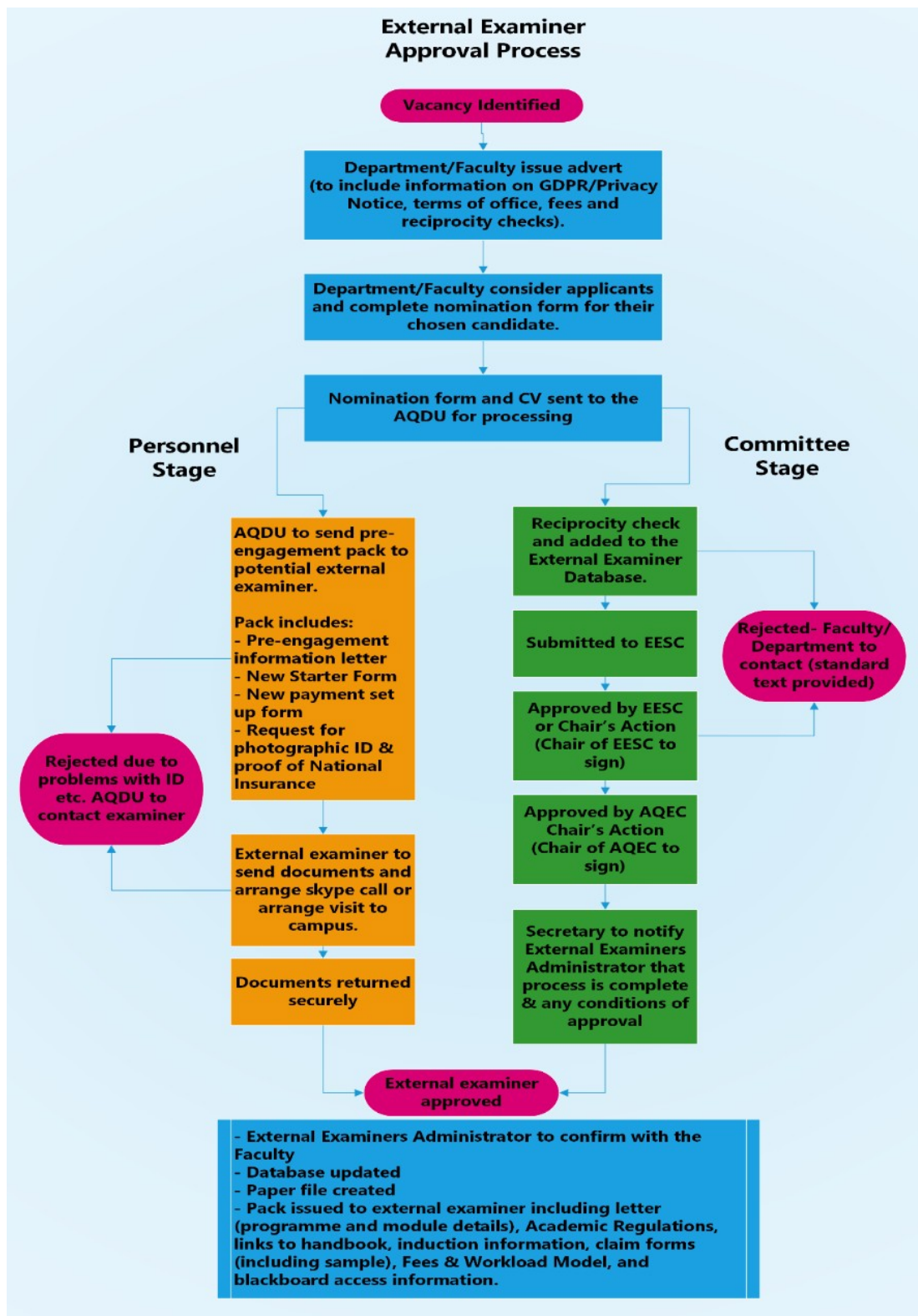
³⁰ Available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/External+Examiners> (EHU staff login required).

ceases to be employed³¹ by a recognised higher education provider during their engagement as an Edge Hill external examiner, they should notify the University and may remain on the Register for a maximum of two further years if they have not resumed relevant HE employment³² in the meantime. Where a serving external examiner applies for and is offered employment by Edge Hill University, the head of the appointing department notifies the Faculty and External Examiners Administrator at the earliest opportunity and takes immediate steps to nominate a suitable replacement examiner or arrange cover by another examiner in the same or cognate subject area (see 'Changes to assigned modules or programmes', below).

³¹ This would include retirement and redundancy.

³² Relevant employment in this case would constitute appointment to another academic position in the same discipline area.

Fig.1 'Edge Hill University External Examiner Approval Process'



Induction

The University undertakes to ensure that all examiners are informed about its organisational procedures and practices with specific relation to assessment and the regulations that govern it. New examiners receive written confirmation of the programmes/ modules to which they have been assigned, in addition to:

- A copy of the University's Academic Regulations³³.
- A hyperlink to the External Examiners Handbook³⁴ incorporating the guidance contained in this chapter with accompanying information on fees, operation of assessment boards and key institutional contacts.
- A copy of the Privacy Notice for External Examiners³⁵ which advises how their data is used and handled in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

New external examiners are advised to inform their employer of their engagement with Edge Hill University and are encouraged to visit the campus in advance of taking up their duties³⁶. An annual External Examiners Induction event is held at the University³⁷ in January and provides an opportunity to meet with host departments and to network with other examiners. Induction sessions cover the role of the external examiner in UK higher education, use of national reference points (FHEQ and QAA subject benchmarks) and practical workshop-style activities.

External examiners familiarise themselves with and observe the University's policies on data protection³⁸ and information security³⁹. Any information passed between the University and its external examiners, e.g. students' names and grades is kept strictly confidential.

Changes of assigned modules or programmes

Where an external examiner has been assigned to modules that combine to form a programme or 'portfolio' of cognate subject modules, the **replacement or addition of modules** within the programme/ portfolio does not require further Institution-level approval. However, in its Faculty Academic Quality Statement⁴⁰ the host Faculty will describe its own process for approving such changes, ensuring that:

- Any substituted or additional modules are within the external examiner's subject expertise (where they are not, the Faculty will nominate an additional examiner for approval by EESC in the normal manner);

³³ Available via www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

³⁴ Available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/external-examiners/useful-information/.

³⁵ www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/files/2020/09/Privacy-Notice-External-Examiners.pdf.

³⁶ **Note:** 2020-21 visits suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁷ **Note:** 2020-21 induction to be delivered online due to COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁸ www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/data-protection-policy/.

³⁹ www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/information-security-policy/.

⁴⁰ Available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities> (EHU staff login required).

- The examiner's workload remains sustainable such that the totality of provision assigned to them will receive sufficient academic scrutiny and does not exceed normal Institutional expectations⁴¹. Moderation activity resulting from changes of assigned modules should not exceed an additional 3.75 hours per year and Faculties will consider this when evaluating the totality of an examiner's workload.

Changes of assigned modules are confirmed with the external examiner via the appropriate template email and copied to the External Examiners Mailbox externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk to enable updating of the External Examiners Register.

Where by mutual agreement an external examiner is asked to assume responsibility for an **additional programme** - typically following the re-validation or replacement of an existing programme, or to fill a programme vacancy in the same subject area - the Faculty ensures that:

- The programme is within the external examiner's subject expertise (where it is not, the Faculty will nominate another examiner for approval by EESC in the normal manner).
- The AQDU and EESC are notified through receipt of a **Changes to Academic Provision Coverage Form**⁴² that has already been approved by the Faculty.

Depending on its relationship to the examiner's originally assigned programme (typically characterised by any module sharing or simultaneous phasing in/ out of modules), the additional programme may be either:

- absorbed within the examiner's existing remit, in which case the totality should be sustainable within their contracted hours and any additional moderation activity not exceed +3.75 hours per year; or
- treated separately from their existing remit with a full annual allowance of hours and fees for the programme that has been added.

Faculties will confirm the terms of adding a programme to an examiner's existing remit with the External Examiners Administrator before entering into any formal discussions with them.

⁴¹ As defined within the University's workload model for external examiners – see 'Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model', below.

⁴² Available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Template+Documents> (EHU staff login required). Faculty-approved Changes to Academic Provision Coverage Forms are received by EESC for noting only (in agenda Section C).

Changes of examiners' circumstances

Examiners are requested to indicate any changes to their current employment status or PSRB registration during their period of engagement to the External Examiners Administrator at externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk. Examiners will consider carefully the impact of taking on additional external examiner appointments during their term of engagement with Edge Hill.

Published information

Students are informed⁴³ of the name, position and home institution of their external examiners and advised that entering into direct correspondence with them is in all circumstances prohibited⁴⁴. Examiners are requested to forward any direct communications from students to their departmental contact and/ or the External Examiners Administrator at externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk. External examiners' reports and department responses are shared with student representatives at the next available Programme Board and made available to all students via the programme area of the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment and/ or Student Information Hub Wiki.

Research degrees

Research degrees including PhD, professional doctorates and Masters by Research (MRes) awards are assessed by dissertation viva panels which include at least one independent external examiner nominated by the relevant academic subject department and approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Arrangements for the external examination of research degrees are described elsewhere in this Handbook⁴⁵.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of an Edge Hill University external examiner are described in full below and the AQDU, Faculties, academic departments and programme teams ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to support examiners in discharging them. Programme teams provide their examiners with the information they need to perform their duties (below).

Examiners normally visit⁴⁶ the University at least once a year to moderate assessed coursework and examination scripts although further mid-year visits may be required for programmes with a performance, practical or professional element, or for cohorts with

⁴³ Via module or programme handbooks and/ or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment.

⁴⁴ Students who wish to raise an academic issue or concern are directed to the relevant University systems and procedures, e.g. personal tutors, programme boards and Institutional processes for complaints www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/complaints-procedure/ and academic appeals www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/academic-appeals/.

⁴⁵ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 9 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/09-quality-assurance-of-research-degrees.pdf.

⁴⁶ **Note:** 2020-21 visits currently suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic. Alternative arrangements for distance moderation and 'virtual' assessment boards to be notified by Faculties/ departments.

variable/ multiple intakes or non-standard completion times. External examiners attend Module Assessment Boards where the detailed discussion of academic standards takes place. In the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Progression and Award Board Examiners ensure the rigour of the process underpinning the conferment of awards through the Board's application of the Academic Regulations. In the Faculty of Education, Chief External Examiners for Initial Teacher Education programmes represent subject examiners at Progression and Award Boards and ensure the rigour of the process underpinning the conferment of awards. In the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine where Module and Progression and Award Boards are conflated, all examiners are in attendance and access complete student profiles to confirm standards at award level. For the Integrated Masters in Nursing and Social Work, a Chief External Examiner coordinates the moderation activities of profession and field-specific examiners as agreed with the relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

In producing their annual reports (see below) external examiners comment on the fairness and consistency of assessment boards' decisions and their adherence to the University's regulations. If in highly exceptional circumstances examiners are unable to attend any of the assessment boards they are requested to be available by other means, e.g. via teleconference or Skype.

In specific relation to **re-assessment**, external moderation of student work is normally unnecessary and internal moderation provides the necessary confirmation of standards. However, an external examiner presence (which may be the Award Board Examiner or Chief Examiner, or a representative programme examiner) is required at Progression and Award Boards to oversee the application of the Academic Regulations.

Primary role of External Examiners

Edge Hill University communicates to its external examiners their role, powers and responsibilities including the extent of their authority at assessment boards. Their main responsibility is to confirm that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained through:

- Reviewing and approving examination papers that contribute to a student's final award, and any other assessment material as agreed between themselves and the programme team for which an annual time allowance is provided⁴⁷.
- Moderating samples of student work that have been marked and internally moderated⁴⁸ in order to be satisfied that students have been graded fairly in accordance with Intended Learning Outcomes and marking criteria, and the University's Academic Regulations.

⁴⁷ Up to 3.75 hours.

⁴⁸ See the University's guidelines on '*Marking and Moderating Assessed Work*' at www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/about/strategies-and-policies/. The standard annual time allowance for external moderation is 15 hours.

- Reviewing and approving the content, learning outcomes and assessment of negotiated learning modules leading to the award of Student Initiated Credit⁴⁹.
- Sampling the assessment of portfolios that accompany claims for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)⁵⁰.
- In their annual reports⁵¹:
 - Confirming that national threshold standards⁵² are being met or exceeded and that students have achieved the Intended Learning Outcomes for the award of credit and qualifications.
 - Beyond threshold attainment, providing advisory comment on the comparability of standards (grades and degree classifications) with other higher education programmes of the same subject/ level.
 - Providing advisory comment on the standard of marking and moderation and quality of written feedback for programme teams, departments and Faculties to act upon.
 - Providing advisory comment on assessment processes including the operation of assessment boards for the University to act upon.

In addition to samples of assessed student work and written feedback, programme teams supply their examiners with the relevant programme and module handbooks⁵³, coursework specifications, examination papers, marking criteria and a record of marks for each assessment item. **External moderation should not replicate internal marking and moderation**⁵⁴ but rather verify that the latter are operating fairly and consistently such that there is confidence that threshold academic standards are being achieved or exceeded by students and that above threshold, student outcomes (grades/ classifications) are comparable with providers of similar programmes. External examiners are provided with, or given access to⁵⁵, all of the internally moderated work⁵⁶ from each module as the basis for conducting their own sampling sufficient to establish that, in their judgement:

- **Internal moderation, and by extension first marking have been broadly effective and resulted in fair assessment decisions in line with the published marking criteria** – other than at the boundaries of grade classifications, a difference of opinion with internal markers/ moderators of + or -2 marks will not normally warrant specific comment.

⁴⁹ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 7 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/07-quality-assurance-of-assessment.pdf.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See also 'Reports', below.

⁵² As defined by the 'Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies' (QAA, 2014) and Subject Benchmark Statements www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

⁵³ See 'Guidelines for Programme and Module Handbooks' at www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/about/strategies-and-policies/

⁵⁴ For moderation sample sizes see 'Marking and Moderating Assessed Work' (EHU, 2013). www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/files/2013/01/MarkingModeratingAssessedWork.pdf.

⁵⁵ Including via the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment.

⁵⁶ While only internally moderated work is provided to external examiners as standard, other assessed work may be accessed on request to the Programme Leader.

- **Assessment feedback is of high quality, developmental and aligned with Intended Learning Outcomes and marking criteria and the grades awarded to students.**

Where examiners only visit the University for the assessment board the programme team arranges for them to receive or view students' work in good time beforehand. Any work likely to be the subject of discussion at a Module Assessment Board should be made available to the examiner in advance of the board having already been assessed by no fewer than two internal markers. Where there is a significant difference of judgement between first and second markers it is expected that programme teams should have taken steps to resolve this internally although examiners may request additional samples where any inconsistency persists.

External examiners of practice-based programmes, typically in Initial Teacher Education are requested to visit placement settings (schools) to meet with students and mentors for which additional time is allocated. Otherwise, there is no general expectation that examiners meet with students although they may do so on specific request to the Programme Leader. Faculties will determine the arrangements by which external examiners may engage directly with students, notifying these formally to EESC and the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)⁵⁷ and making sure that examiners are made aware of them.

Secondary role of External Examiners

In addition to their principal duties external examiners are also requested to assist programme teams and the University by being available to:

- Comment on the continuing currency of programmes and modules and any proposed modifications to them⁵⁸.
- Be consulted about any proposed changes to the assessment strategies or regulations for the provision to which they are assigned.
- Review curriculum mapping for any proposed external articulation route⁵⁹ delivering advanced entry to the programme/s within their remit.

Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model

With the exception of their annual report which is paid separately, all external examiner duties are paid at an hourly rate⁶⁰ in accordance with the time allocations defined below.

⁵⁷ Via the Faculty Academic Quality Statement – available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities> (EHU staff login required).

⁵⁸ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf. The standard annual time allowance for external examiners' comments on programme or module modifications is 3.75 hours.

⁵⁹ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 5 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/05-academic-partnerships.pdf.

⁶⁰ For current rates see 'External Examiners' Fees and Expenses Policy' at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Fees%2C+Workload+and+Expenses> (EHU staff login required).

Any claims that exceed the time allocated for the particular activity without the prior consent of the Director of Quality Assurance will usually not be accepted.

Fees and expenses should normally be claimed within 30 days of any external examiner duties undertaken.

Annual Reports:

- Writing and submission of the annual report is allocated 7.5 hours. This includes all preparatory activity including the production of any interim or module reports completed during the academic session/ year.
- Chief External Examiners are allocated an additional 7.5 hours for the production of their Chief External Examiner reports. This includes all activities undertaken as part of the preparation for this task.

Moderation:

- External examiners are allocated 15 hours per academic session/ year to review internally moderated student work. If during their engagement examiners accept additional moderation responsibilities at the request of the University which significantly increase their workload, the Director of Quality Assurance may authorise an additional 3.75 hours' allowance for moderation activity.

Where moderation is undertaken in 'real-time', e.g. of live performances, Observed Structured Clinical Examinations or observed teaching practice in schools, external examiners may claim additional hours dependent on the precise length of the activity.

Attendance at Assessment Boards and Induction activities:

- Attendance at assessment and award boards may be claimed in hours dependent on the precise length of the activity.
- Up to 7.5 hours may be claimed per academic session/ year for attendance at the University's External Examiners' Induction event.

Other duties:

- Up to 7.5 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for mentoring a new external examiner at the formal request of the University.
- Up to 3.75 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for external verification of draft coursework briefs and examination papers contributing to a student's final award, typically at FHEQ level 5 and above.
- Up to 3.75 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for providing written comments on proposals for new modules, or for module or programme modifications.

REPORTS

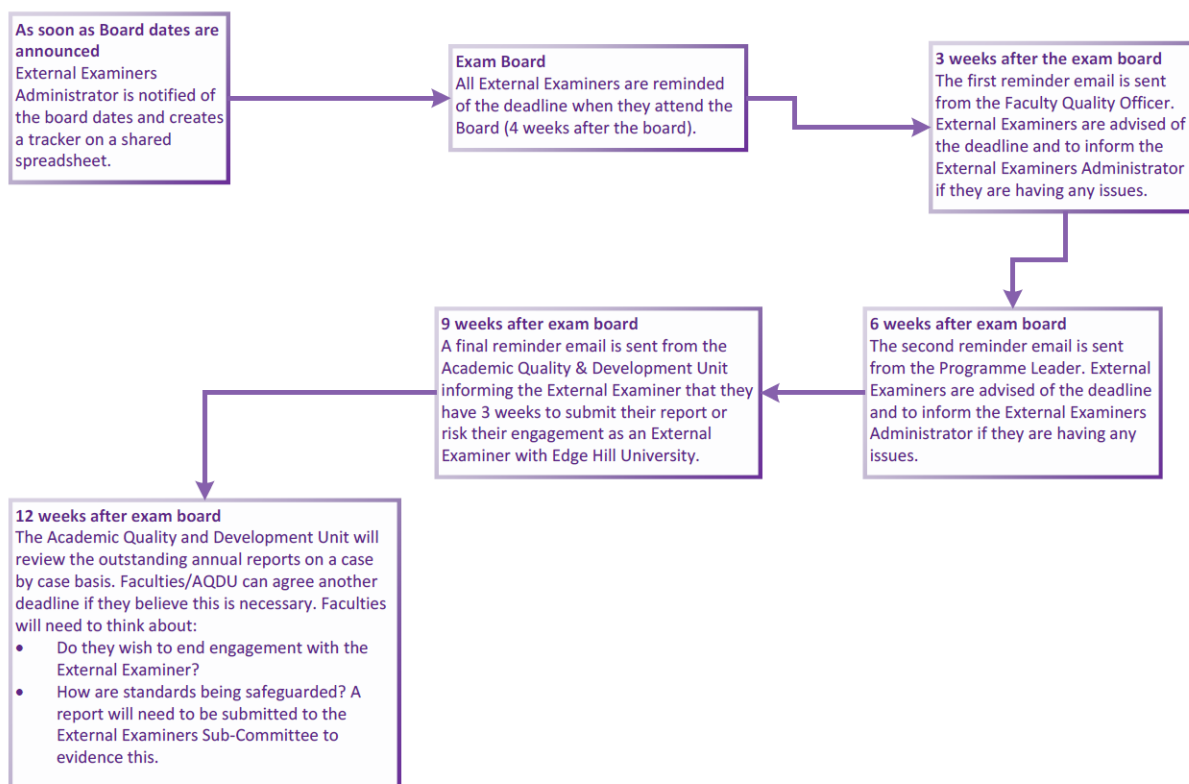
External examiners' reports are an important source of direct evidence of academic standards, as well as indirect evidence of the quality of teaching, and Edge Hill University gives full and serious consideration to them. External examiners complete an online annual report⁶¹ on the provision for which they are responsible in which they confirm that the standards set for modules and programmes are appropriate and are being achieved by students, and that assessment is being carried out rigorously and fairly. Faculties must ensure that new examiners always receive their predecessor's final report accompanied by the relevant departmental response when commencing their term of office.

External examiners specify and comment on any modules that in their judgement would benefit from early review and modification/ re-validation. Where programmes are delivered at more than one site, e.g. at different Edge Hill campuses or by multiple partner organisations, examiners differentiate these explicitly to identify any standards-related issues or good practice pertaining to the specific instance of delivery. Where an examiner's duties are spread across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, separate annual reports are submitted for which additional payments are made.

Examiners confirm that sufficient information and evidence was made available to them to fulfil their role and that issues raised by them in previous reports, including those of their immediate predecessors, have been responded to. Examiners refrain from identifying individual Edge Hill students and staff in their reports, however references to staff roles e.g. 'the Programme Leader' are acceptable. Barring mitigating circumstances which should be discussed in advance with the External Examiners Administrator (AQDU), examiners submit their reports within four weeks of the relevant assessment board. Where following appropriate reminders an external examiner's report has not been received within 12 weeks of the relevant assessment board, alternative arrangements for (repeat) moderation will be made⁶².

⁶¹ The link to the online external examiner report form is at www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/external-examiners/annual-report/.

⁶² See also 'Ending an External Examiner's Engagement', below.

Fig.2 'Edge Hill University Annual Report Escalation Process'

Programme teams are required to provide formal and timely responses to external examiners' reports outlining any action to be taken as a result of their recommendations (or the reasons for not taking action). Faculties ensure that responses are accurate and of appropriate quality and reflect current University policy on assessment.

Responses to external examiner reports are considered for approval at the next available Faculty Board (or delegated committee). Approved responses are dispatched to examiners within seven business days or, in the event of referral back to the host department, seven days following Faculty Chair's Action. Where significant time is expected between receipt of an examiner's report and the response via the Faculty Board or relevant committee, Faculties contact examiners to advise them of the estimated wait-time⁶³.

Institutional overviews of External Examiner reports

The Academic Quality & Development Unit (Director of Quality Assurance and Head of Quality Operations) produce an initial overview of key issues from external examiner reports for the early consideration of Faculties and EESC⁶⁴; Faculty Associate Deans subsequently

⁶³ See UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on External Expertise (QAA, 2018: 5).

⁶⁴ At its November meeting

produce more detailed evaluations⁶⁵ which also describe the good practice surfaced by examiners. Overview reports bring to the attention of EESC and, through its minutes, AQEC any recurring or potentially systemic issues around assessment practice or regulation that may require consideration at University level, e.g. through the Regulations Review Sub-Committee (RRSC)⁶⁶.

‘CAUSES FOR CONCERN’ PROCEDURES

External examiners are asked to refer any standards-related concerns to the Programme Leader and/ or Head of Department in the first instance with the aim of finding a resolution. However, examiners also have the right to escalate any continued serious concerns to the Vice-Chancellor, if necessary through a confidential written report to which a considered and timely response will be provided. Where internal University procedures have been exhausted and examiners remain concerned about an actual or potential failure in standards they may invoke the QAA’s Concerns scheme⁶⁷. In the case of PSRB-regulated programmes, examiners use their knowledge and understanding of professional codes and standards to inform any decision on escalation to the relevant professional body.

ENDING AN EXTERNAL EXAMINER’S ENGAGEMENT

Edge Hill University is committed to the maintenance of academic quality and standards and therefore reserves the right to make alternative arrangements for the external examination of its awards. Exceptionally, a Faculty may seek to end its engagement with an external examiner through a formal written recommendation to the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary (AQEC chair). While neither exhaustive nor prescriptive the following are indicative of reasons for ending an external examiner’s engagement:

- Failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair the integrity of the examination process and their own independence as external examiner.
- Persistent failure to attend meetings, respond to communications and/ or present the required reports by the stated deadline without prior agreement, and/ or the submission of identical reports and/ or failure to return students’ work following moderation.
- Persistent and deliberate failure to use the relevant national academic and/ or professional benchmarks to support judgements on academic standards and Edge Hill students’ attainment of them.

⁶⁵ Using Form EE1 ‘Faculty Summary of External Examiner Reports and Department Responses’, available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Template+Documents> (EHU staff login required). Faculty summaries are received by EESC in February/ March.

⁶⁶ For RRSC’s constitution and terms of reference see Quality Management Handbook Chapter 8 www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/quality-management-handbook/.

⁶⁷ www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/qaa-concerns-scheme.pdf?sfvrsn=c13dfd81_6.

- For clinical and other professional programmes, failure to maintain professional body membership or professional registration where this is a requirement of being an external examiner, or disbarment from professional practice which may impair the integrity of the examination process or the individual's standing as an external examiner.

Such matters will normally be dealt with in accordance with the University's Human Resources policies and procedures details of which may be found on the Edge Hill staff intranet⁶⁸. Where the proposal to end engagement is approved, the examiner is notified in writing of the University's decision which is noted by the Academic Board⁶⁹ and their name removed from the External Examiners Register.

Occasionally, a programme may be closed before the end of the external examiner's period of engagement and in such cases the individual will be formally notified⁷⁰ and AQEC informed as part of the process for Programme Closure⁷¹. Any external examiner may choose to end their engagement with the University by writing to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary to advise of their intention.

⁶⁸ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C+Policies+and+Documents> (EHU staff login required).

⁶⁹ Via the AQEC minutes.

⁷⁰ By the External Examiners Administrator acting on advice from the relevant Faculty.

⁷¹ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf.