



External Examiner Handbook

University Academic Office

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to act as external examiner at Roehampton University. External examining is an integral part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes and we are committed to ensuring independent and appropriately qualified external scrutiny of our awards.

This Handbook provides information about your role and responsibilities as well as some additional contextual information to enable you to carry out your duties. It is intended as an interactive, online document as it contains a variety of useful links. As such, it should be used in conjunction with our dedicated [web page for external examiners](#) which offers access to all the relevant forms, templates and policies related to external examining.

We hope you find this document and our online resource useful and that you enjoy your tenure with us. We look forward to working with you.

University Contacts and Your Contact Details

Your main contact throughout the tenure will be the programme team representatives. Centrally, support for external examiners is provided by the Academic Office which is responsible for a range of activities, including the maintenance of academic regulations and the University's framework for quality assurance.

Any programme-specific queries should be directed to the programme team. Any general queries relating to the role of the external, the reporting process and payment should be addressed to the [Academic Office](#) (click on the link to send us an email), or you may also contact us via the telephone on +44 (0) 20 8392 3183.

Our preferred method of communication is email and we will make a note of your email address at the start of your tenure. Should your contact details change during this time, please remember to let us know so that we can update our records.

Brief Overview of Roehampton University

Roehampton University is located in south-west London. It has its roots in the traditions of the four constituent colleges – Whitelands, Southlands, Digby Stuart and Froebel College – all of which were founded in the 19th century as teacher training colleges, to address the need to educate poor and disadvantaged children.

In 1975, the four colleges joined to form the Roehampton Institute of Higher Education. Roehampton was formerly an equal partner in the now-dissolved Federal University of Surrey (along with the original University of Surrey). In August 2004, the University of Surrey Roehampton became Roehampton University.

The University's academic provision is organised into schools and departments:

- School of Arts comprises the subject areas of Dance, Drama, Theatre and Performance as well as Media, Culture and Language;
- School of Humanities comprises three subject areas: English and Creative Writing, History and Classics, and Religion, Theology, Culture and Philosophy;
- Roehampton University Business School;
- School of Education;
- Department of Life Sciences;
- Department of Psychology;
- Department of Social Sciences (incl. the Law School).

Prior to your first visit, you may find it useful to consult our website for more information on [how to get to Roehampton](#) by consulting our website and the [Campus map](#).

In addition to delivering programmes on-site, the University also works with a number of collaborative UK-based as well as international partners through a validation or franchise arrangement. While these programmes are typically delivered away from Roehampton, the role of the external examiner will not normally involve travelling abroad but visits to UK partners who deliver programmes validated by the University may apply.

Appointment

External examiners are nominated by the Programme Board and are approved by the Vice-Provost (Education), acting with the delegated authority of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.

Once your nomination has been approved, you will be contacted by the Academic Office and this initial communication will outline the main aspects of your role. This will include the confirmation of your right to work in the UK as our Human Resources Department are legally obliged to obtain proof – in accordance with the current Home Office regulations.

Your letter of appointment will be available in electronic or hard-copy format. It will state the academic programme(s) to which you will be attached for the duration of your tenure, indicate which programme-specific information you will receive from the academic department as well as the annual fees and payment details. You are kindly recommended to keep a copy of this letter on file.

External examiners are appointed for a period of four years. Extensions are typically granted only in exceptional cases for which the programme team are required to provide a rationale for the consideration of the Vice-Provost (Education). Extensions will not normally be made for longer than one academic year.

External examiner appointments are made at the start of the academic year and it is the responsibility of the nominating academic department to ensure that externals are in place at the beginning of the assessment cycle.

Induction

To introduce new external examiners to Roehampton, the University annually organises an induction event. This normally takes place in November – before the moderation duties start in earnest.

The Induction Day is facilitated by the Academic Office and you will receive an invitation in advance. It offers a session on the University policies and procedures related to external examining and – most importantly – provides an opportunity for programme teams to meet with you and discuss programme-specific issues, including the structure of the programme and the modules, assessment criteria, the virtual learning environment, moderation schedules and previous external examiner reports and responses.

The induction also features a brief introduction to Moodle, our virtual learning environment. As external examiner you will be given access to the programme(s) you will be moderating on this platform at the beginning of your tenure.

If you have been appointed to externally examine one of our collaborative programmes, a different moderation arrangement/resource may apply and you will be briefed on this accordingly.

The Role of External Examiner

The principal role of every external examiner at Roehampton – whether for on-site or collaborative programmes – is to sustain the academic integrity of the University's approved awards by testing the robustness of the assessment processes, ascertaining that students are treated fairly within these processes, and by reporting systematically and objectively to the University.

External examiners are required to make a set of core judgements which will assist the examining team in:

- verifying by reference to acceptable indicators (for example, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and subject benchmark statements) that the academic standard set for each award is appropriate to its level;
- confirming that, in measuring the standard of student achievement in each award, broad comparability with other institutions offering an award at the same level is achieved;
- determining that congruence between the stated learning outcomes of each programme and its assessment methods is maintained;
- ensuring that all aspects of the assessment process are conducted fairly, consistently and accurately in accordance with programme and university regulations.

Externals on all taught programmes undertake the following main duties at Levels 5, 6 and 7 (these do not apply at Level 4 except on Foundation Degree programmes:

- a) comment on all examination papers, titles of major coursework and practical assignments such as dissertations, extended essays or projects in advance of assessment;
- b) moderate a representative sample of internally marked work of a previously agreed size and in accordance with the University's assessment procedures – this can be carried out in batches, through mid-year moderation, or at the end of the assessment cycle;
- c) attend a minimum of two programme examinations boards per academic year (including the main board – June for U/G programmes, September/October for P/G programmes);
- d) observe students in their practice where appropriate – for initial teacher training placements and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) placements this is conducted in line with the requirements of the professional and regulatory bodies (for NMC programmes this includes practice visits to review and comment on practice assessment documentation and meet with students, practice supervisors and practice assessors). Observation of students also extends to viewing performances in the areas of dance and theatre;
- e) confirm agreement with the recommendations of the programme examinations board by signing the mark sheets presented at the board – if externals do not agree with the recommendations, they should inform the University's Academic Registrar of the reasons;
- f) annually report on standards of student performance and how they compare with the sector, the fairness of assessment methods, equity of treatment for students, the accuracy and consistency of internal marking (Roehampton report template is used for this);
- g) contribute to the ongoing development and enhancement of the provision through feedback and dialogue with the team;
- h) scrutinize documentation related to recognition of prior learning (NMC programmes only).

Please note that external examiners are not expected to attend the re-sit examinations boards.

Sampling and Moderating Work and Meeting with Students

External moderation typically focusses on student work at Levels 5 and 6 of U/G and Level 7 of P/G programmes although you may request to view work at Level 4 – for information only. It should be noted, however, that on Foundation Degree programmes, work at Level 4 is subject to moderation. As suggested above, your judgements will normally be based on a representative sample of assessments which will be agreed with the programme team. As a general guideline, external examiners see about 10% of a programme’s assessments, however, you can also choose to have access to a greater proportion of assessments or even all assessed work.

External examiners at Roehampton have, traditionally, not met with students as part of their role, except where this has been the expectation of an external regulatory or validating body. At present only programmes in initial teacher training and under the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) carry out meetings between students and externals as this is required by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the NMC respectively.

Accessing Work for Moderation

In common with the rest of the sector, Roehampton makes use of online external moderation. This is through the virtual learning environment [Moodle](#) (and Turnitin).

An account will be set up for you and you will be sent a username and password. These credentials will be valid for the duration of your appointment.

The passwords are generated automatically and typically consist of up to ten characters including letters, numbers and symbols. Upon receiving your login details, you are strongly recommended to register on the [Password Self-Service Portal](#) also known as URPass. Signing up for this service, which you can use at any time, allows you to quickly gain access in case of a lost or forgotten password. The above link includes an instructional video to assist with URPass registration.

Your primary contact regarding the content of individual programme Moodle pages will be the programme team. However, should you require specialist technical support the team will put you in touch with the appropriate department. A “Getting Started” guide for using Moodle is available [here](#).

As noted earlier, if you have been appointed to externally examine one of our collaborative ventures, a different moderation resource may apply and you will be briefed on this accordingly. Please also note that the moderation sample on collaborative programmes may be bigger than 10%, particularly in the case of newly-developed partnerships.

Structure of Examinations Boards

Roehampton University operates a two-tier board system and the involvement of programme external examiners is at the first stage of the process, at the Programme Examinations Board. The second and final stage of conferment is the Awards and Progression Board where the marks are fully ratified.

Within this structure, you will act as a member of the Programme Examinations Board which oversees the assessment on programme(s) and the modules under its purview. The Board is responsible for determining the final outcome of assessment, confirming the outcomes of mitigating circumstances applications and the recommendations for terminating the registration of students.

As part of your role you are expected to attend two examinations boards per academic year.

At the Board, you will receive composite lists of all marks contributing to a module and all module marks. You will, therefore, see the final outcomes for marks achieved on modules and will also be able to see individual students' marks (i.e. student profiles) if required.

You may be asked to provide oral feedback at the Programme Examinations Board and this can include, observations on the moderated sample, operational arrangements for moderation throughout the academic year and comments on the conduct of the board.

At the Awards and Progression Board, which considers the recommendations of the Programme Examinations Boards and confers academic awards, external representation is ensured through an overarching adviser, acting solely at this, final tier of the awarding process.

The Awards and Progression Board also determines the classification of degree awards after marks are confirmed at the Programme Examinations Board.

University Academic Regulations

The University operates separate sets of regulations for taught degrees and for research degrees. There are also separate regulations for professional doctorates as well as for Erasmus Mundus programmes.

To access the University's dedicated web page for Academic Regulations, click [here](#).

External Examiner Annual Report

Your feedback is very important to us. The template for the [external examiner annual report](#) (in the section “Annual Report and Response”) is divided into discrete sections which offer specific prompts for your consideration and you are encouraged to expand on these in detail.

Your report will be expected within four weeks of the final (main) Programme Examinations Board (June for UG programmes, September/October for PG programmes).

When you attend the interim Programme Examinations Boards earlier in the academic year, you are not required to complete the formal report template although the programme team will value your immediate feedback at this stage – either oral or in writing. However, when providing your annual report at the end of the year, you are asked to incorporate any observations relating to interim Boards into your final submission. This will provide the programme team with a better overview of your comments in accordance with the time frame of the assessment cycle.

The University routinely shares its external examiner reports with students through programme Moodle sites. As these reports are in the public domain and may be circulated more widely, you are kindly reminded that your report is not intended to identify individuals – staff or students (by name or ID number).

Once completed, your report should be submitted, via email, to the [Academic Office](#).

If you feel that you would like to bring any serious issue of a sensitive nature to the attention of the Vice-Chancellor, you may do so directly through a separate communication.

Consideration of Your Report

External examiner reports are circulated to programme and department/school representatives, as well as senior academic staff within the University and members of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, highlighting areas for further consideration.

The programme team are asked to provide a formal response within four weeks of receipt of the report and share it with you directly. If a more considered response is required, the programme may initially provide a provisional response, followed by a more comprehensive one later in the academic cycle.

Your report informs the ongoing monitoring of academic standards as well as the future development of the programme. It serves as an integral part of the annual review exercise which programme teams undertake at the end of the assessment cycle and is used to identify areas for further improvement as well as good practice.

If you feel that the response you have received does not adequately address your concerns, please contact the [Academic Office](#).

External Examining on Collaborative Programmes

As the validating institution in international as well as UK-based collaborative partnerships, the University holds the responsibility to appoint external examiners to such programmes. Some partnerships may have more than one intake of students in an academic year and therefore operate different schedules. These are monitored by link tutors, dedicated members of academic staff in schools/departments who oversee a range of aspects of academic delivery at a partner, including the processes of assessment. Link tutors are typically the first point of contact for external examiners on collaborative ventures but partner representatives may also contact externals throughout their tenure to agree moderation or other arrangements.

While University programmes use Moodle as their Virtual Learning Environment, some partnerships may use other platforms and access for external examiner moderation online is provided accordingly.

It should be noted that the external examiner role on international collaborative programmes does not include overseas travel as the management of the assessment process (including the meetings of the programme examinations boards) is conducted at Roehampton.

Despite some differences in assessment schedules and other aspects of delivery, external examining procedures for programmes offered through partnership arrangements are consistent with Roehampton's practices and therefore the information provided in this handbook applies to external examiners on collaborative programmes in the same way.

Payment

Fees

Your annual fee for external examining services is outlined in your letter of appointment and is typically payable following your submission of the report. To receive your payment, you will need to complete [the fees claim form](#) (in the section "Claiming Fees and Expenses"). This can be sent to us electronically, alongside your report. Our Finance Department process external examiner fee payments through the University payroll system and these are made on 26th of each month. If it is not possible to process your claim in the calendar month of your submission of the report, this will be done in the following month.

Expenses

The reimbursement of expenses is processed independently from the fees and claimed through a separate [expenses claim form](#) (in the section "Claiming Fees and Expenses"). The University has prescribed reimbursement rates and you are invited to consult our [guidance](#) on this. Please note that expenses claims need to be accompanied by appropriate receipts.

You are welcome to submit your expenses claim forms electronically. We are happy to receive any receipts related to your expenses as scanned copies. If you would prefer to send the claims forms in the post, please use the address indicated below.

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