University Centre Leeds

Higher Education

Assessment and Moderation Handbook

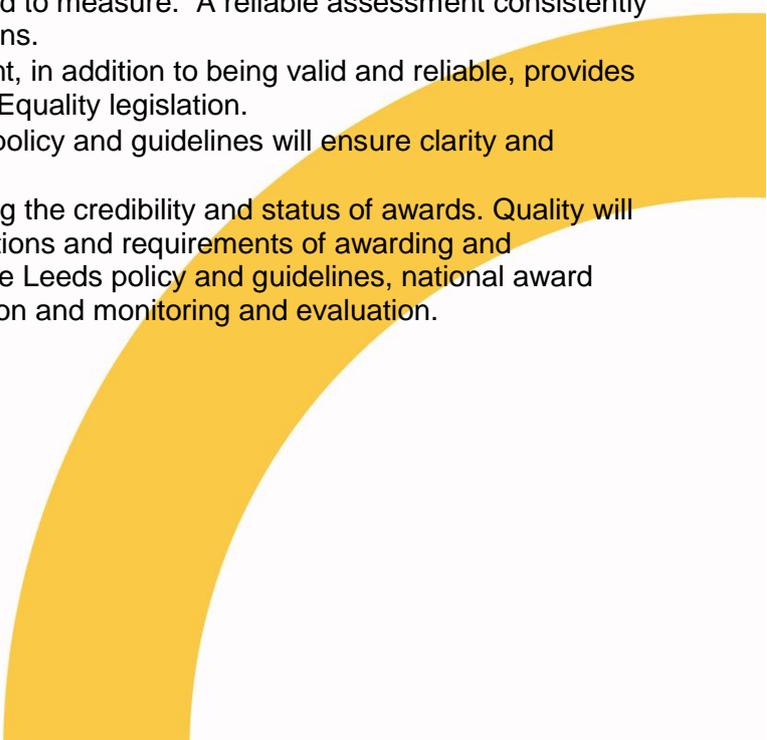**Contents**

1. ASSESSMENT

1.1 Introduction

Assessment measures achievement of the outcomes of learning in terms of knowledge and skills and understanding. The purpose of assessment is to:
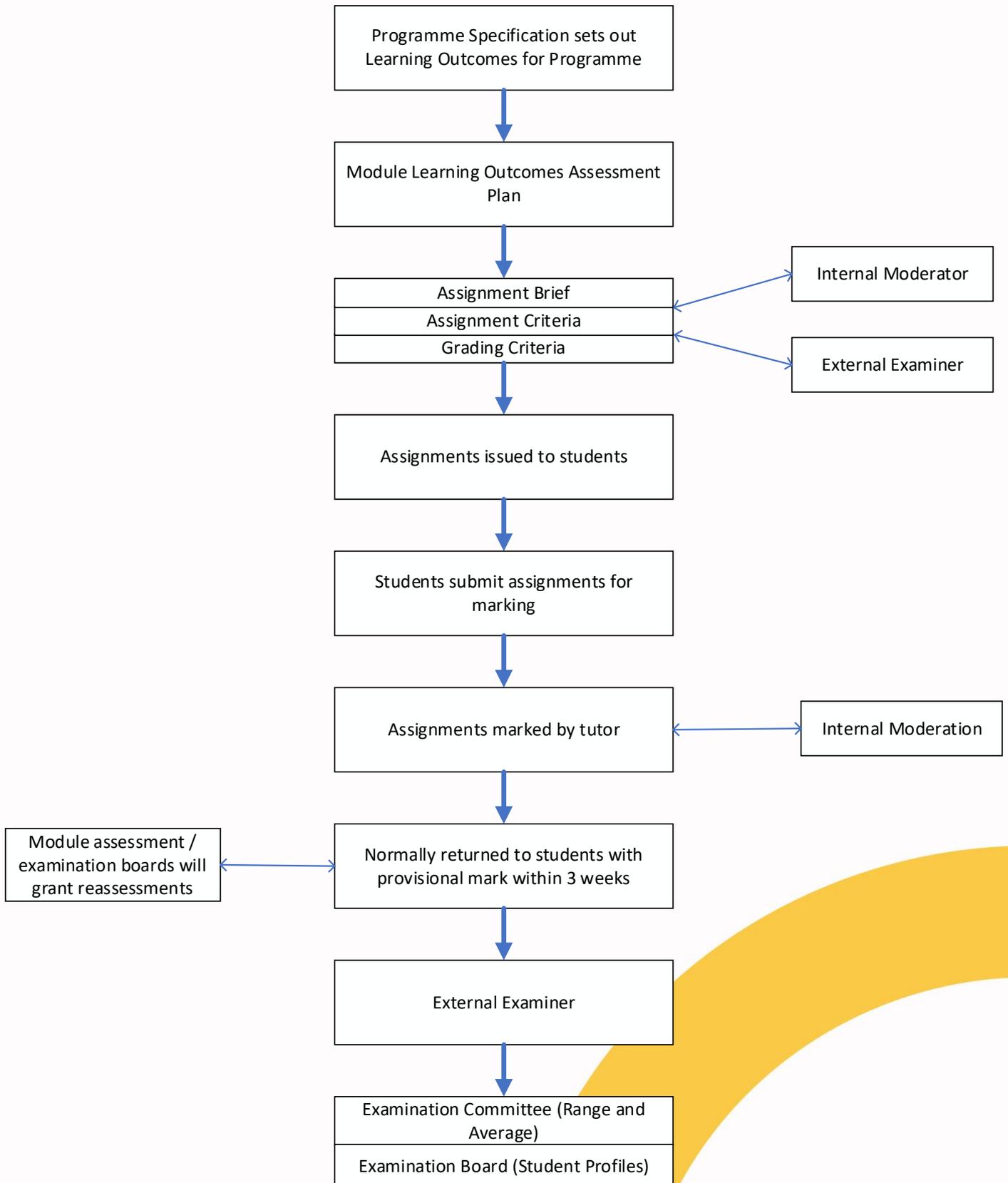
- determine if a potential student is ready to start a particular course of learning; (diagnostic assessment)
- provide guidance on how well students are progressing (formative assessment)
- determine eligibility for final grading of module or awards (summative assessment).

The design and implementation of robust assessment processes are fundamental if effective quality assurance processes and the ongoing maintenance of academic standards are to be achieved without undue variance. In order to facilitate this, the following procedures have been designed and implemented.

1.2 The Principles of Assessment

The principles, procedures and processes of assessment should be explicit, valid and reliable. The key principles that underpin the HE assessment policy are:

- **Validity -** Validity ensures assessment measures what it claims to measure.
- **Reliability/Consistency –** Reliability refers to the accuracy with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure. A reliable assessment consistently gives the same results under similar conditions.
- **Fairness and inclusivity -** A fair assessment, in addition to being valid and reliable, provides equity of opportunity for learners in line with Equality legislation.
- **Transparency -** A transparent assessment policy and guidelines will ensure clarity and understanding by all relevant stakeholders.
- **Quality -** Quality is a key principle in ensuring the credibility and status of awards. Quality will be assured through adherence to the regulations and requirements of awarding and professional bodies and the University Centre Leeds policy and guidelines, national award standards, programme approval and validation and monitoring and evaluation.

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Luminate EDUCATION GROUP

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Programme Specification sets out
Learning Outcomes for Programme
        ↓
Module Learning Outcomes Assessment
Plan
        ↓
Assignment Brief                    →  Internal Moderator
Assignment Criteria                 ←
Grading Criteria                    ←  External Examiner
        ↓
Assignments issued to students
        ↓
Students submit assignments for
marking
        ↓
Assignments marked by tutor         ↔  Internal Moderation
        ↓
Module assessment /   ↔  Normally returned to students with
examination boards will   provisional mark within 3 weeks
grant reassessments
        ↓
External Examiner
        ↓
Examination Committee (Range and
Average)
Examination Board (Student Profiles)
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1.4 Writing of Assessments

For each module of study you are encouraged to include two assessment tasks which can be allocated different assessment dates. This spreads the burden of assessment for the students and provides you with an early opportunity to provide feedback to students. You must ensure that all the learning outcomes for the module are assessed, but they only need to be assessed once.

You are provided with a set of generic grading criteria which you are required to contextualise in relation to the module. This should provide the students with a clear picture as to how they need to proceed with a piece of work in order to achieve their target grades.

For each module a module handbook is produced, containing contact details of the tutors, the module specification, a scheme of work, details of the assessment requirements and the grading criteria using the standard module handbook template *(Appendix 1)*

Assessment activities need to be reviewed each year. Teams should discuss and review both the nature and timing of the assessments and put forward any required modifications to assessment schedules to the Annual Planning Event. Consideration will be taken in respect of the spread and nature of assessments, ensuring that students aren't overburdened or disadvantaged in any way. Here it is key that the Principles of Assessment are considered.

N.B. Assessment tasks should, wherever possible, be re-written each year in order to remain contemporary and reduce the potential for academic malpractice.

All assessment should be designed and planned to ensure that it is integral to the student learning experience and teams should ensure that:

- The module specification is aligned to the principles of assessment and is used appropriately in linking the student learning outcomes with assessment criteria for the module/award;
- The number of assessments and relevant weightings are consistent and comparable across elements contributing to a module/award;
- Assessment tasks are relevant to the module and award, promote deep learning and stimulate student interest and motivation;
- A variety of assessment methods are included, as appropriate to the award and level, to increase motivation and ensure that equality and diversity issues are addressed;
- Learners are made aware at the start of their course of the number and frequency of assessments, with planned dates;
- Assessment briefs are prepared according to the given format and are consistent with awarding body standards;
- Moderation of assessment briefs (both internal and external *) takes place prior to publication to the students;
- Examination requirements conform to the guidelines and requirements for setting examination papers and the conduct of examinations;
- All partners providing work place learning and placement opportunities are fully aware of their related and specific responsibilities, that the learning opportunities are appropriate and that appropriate and timely information is available;
- Appropriate guidance is available for the organisation of group assessments;
- Adaptation to meet the specific needs of students with additional support needs is facilitated, where appropriate.

1.5 Conduct of assessment

All assessment will be conducted with rigour and fairness and due regard for security. Assessment will be conducted through:

- Providing clear information relating to RPL/RPEL procedures, and implementing these effectively;
- Ensuring that the scheduling and amount of assessment is consistent across University Centre Leeds;
- Ensuring that processes for the development, implementation and review of programmes are implemented so that assessment for a programme/award provides effective and appropriate measurement of the achievement of students of the intended learning outcomes and that they effectively support learning;
- Providing assessments that allow learners to achieve at an appropriate level and provide opportunities for the more able learners to stretch themselves;
- Designing assignment briefs and other assessment materials that clearly identify learning outcomes to be achieved and the criteria that will be used to measure achievement;
- Providing written assignment briefs for projects and assessments that are fully discussed with the learner group before assessment takes place;
- Providing module handbooks which contain all the relevant information pertaining to the assessment and grading of the individual modules;
- Providing students with appropriate and timely information relating to their work place and placement learning;
- Ensuring appropriate support and guidance will be made available to students engaged in work place learning;
- Providing information and guidance about plagiarism and other related regulatory requirements

1.6 Submission of assessment

The course and module handbooks will contain details relating to:

- Arrangements for the distribution, submission and collection of assessed work including confirmation of the authenticity of students work;
- Clear guidelines regarding draft submissions *(Appendix 2)*
- Late submission arrangements and regulations;
- The process and procedures for claiming extenuating circumstances.

1.7 Marking and Grading

University Centre Leeds requires that for all modules/awards;

- There are clear criteria for the marking and grading of assessments which are made known to the student;
- Robust mechanisms are in place for marking and for the moderation of marks;
- There are clear criteria for the aggregation of marks and grades in line with the requirements of the relevant assessment regulations;
- Assessment regulations are implemented fairly and consistently in relation to reassessment, progression, final awards and classifications;
- All marks/grades are formally recorded prior to being released to the learner;
- Summative marks/grades/competences are only confirmed to the learner after the full internal and external moderation and assessment board processes have taken place;
- Information is provided to students to explain how assessments are marked;

The process for appeal against assessment decisions lies with the awarding body as outlined in the appropriate regulations. Students will be made aware of this in the Programme Handbook.

1.8 Feedback to Students on Performance

Appropriate and timely feedback is provided to students on all assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement.

There are two stages to the feedback process:

- As soon as possible students should be provided with verbal general feedback related to aspects noted by the assessor. This is usually provided in the next taught session and is made in general terms and not directed at individual students.
- Written feedback should be provided to students using the Assessment Feedback form *(Appendix 4)* or through Turnitin.

Work should normally be returned to students within a 3 week period – following internal moderation.

When providing feedback to students it is important to note the following:

- Comments on the positive aspects of the work produced should be included;
- Annotations within the text should also be included as these provide context to the feedback. These are particularly useful to students and they have fed back that they like to see these;
- Ensure that the language used is reflective of the grade being awarded (a student could become very confused if all comments relate to excellent work, but they then receive a grade of 45%);
- Be specific about the areas for improvement. This should include aspects that they may have missed out in addition to feedback that will help them to achieve higher grades in future.
- Ensure that even students achieving the highest grades are clear about what they could do to improve further in future pieces.
- Confirm achievement of Learning Outcomes

1.9 Recording documentation and publication of assessment results

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University Centre Leeds requires that all assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically. The decisions of relevant examination boards and committees will be

University Centre Leeds Validated Provision

University Centre Leeds requires that all assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically. The decisions of relevant examination boards and committees will be published within 10 working days following the examination boards.

Awarding body documentation will be completed in a timely fashion (normally within 5 working days of assessment board decisions) and forwarded to awarding bodies as appropriate.

1.10 Monitoring and review of assessment

All assessment strategies and their implementation will be reviewed annually through an Annual Planning process. University Centre Leeds policy is that all approved awards contain the full range of assessment for the award and specify how the marks obtained shall be used to calculate an overall aggregate (expressed as a percentage)

The range of assessment methods should be appropriate to the subject area. All assessment is intended to demonstrate that the learning outcomes for a module on an award have been achieved and should be applied with rigour, reasonable steps having been taken to ensure that the work assessed is that of the candidate.

University Centre Leeds takes responsibility for securing, monitoring, administering and reviewing work based learning on a regular basis to assure effectiveness, comparability and consistency.

1.11 Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies

University Centre Leeds requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies and, where appropriate, professional bodies

1.12 Staff Training

University Centre Leeds adopts a clear policy with regards to the approval of new teaching staff, which includes approval through both HEDO and the awarding body. Checks are made to ensure the new staff member has the correct qualifications to teach on HE programmes.

Prior to commencement of teaching all staff who are new to teaching HE at UC Leeds are required to attend a staff training session, to introduce them to the way HE is managed at UC Leeds, the assessment regulations, quality assurance mechanisms and assessment processes.

Staff are also allocated a mentor to support them through their first year, who will also carry out an initial teaching observation within the first 6 weeks of teaching.

Ongoing training will also be provided in relation to the full range of regulatory requirements.

1.13 Staff Development

Staff development is an important part of our overall approach to quality and is important for quality enhancement. We have extensive policies relating to all aspects of staffing, but of particular relevance to quality are the following points:

- all staff are expected to undertake staff development in relation to pedagogy, subject knowledge and skills and professional practice;

- in addition, new members of academic staff are required to complete a review of their needs in teaching at higher education levels;

- Luminate Education Groups' staff appraisal system is designed not only to evaluate but also to support and develop staff capabilities;

- all staff engaged in Higher Education take part in the designated staff development award which integrates specific staff development topics and individual needs identified through appraisal and corporate objectives;

2. INTERNAL MODERATION

2.1 Introduction

The Internal Moderation process is a critical element in monitoring student progress and confirming that highly effective assessment and administrative procedures are in place to ensure that students achieve their goal.

University Centre Leeds requires all Higher Education programmes to follow a robust quality assurance system to regularly review and evaluate assessment practices and decisions so that students are not intentionally discriminated against.

It is important to recognise that the process of Internal Moderation is a collaborative activity that demonstrates a transparency and commitment to **continuous quality improvement** to all stakeholders including the students, the external examiners, the awarding bodies and the team of tutors and moderators for the programme.

The moderation process is carried out at all course levels and covers all types of summative assessment activity, including presentations, practical assessments, interviews, debates etc.

Internal Moderators should note any action that needs to be taken prior to release to students and should then monitor to ensure completion of these.

2.2 Moderation of Assignment Briefs

Course teams are required to review assessments each year and design new assessment tasks. Following this process they are required to:

- Internally moderate the assignment brief *(Appendix 3)*
- Send the assignment briefs to the External Examiner for approval

2.3 Moderation of Student Work - Sampling Plan

For each programme a sampling plan should be produced each year to ensure that the following coverage will be achieved:

- All assessment components
- All students
- All tutors
- All work awarded a fail
- All work graded at 70% or above

Other factors that may increase sampling activity could include:

- The introduction of new modules
- The experience of, and number of, tutors
- Whether or not the assessment technique is new or familiar to the tutors
- The inclusion of PSRB requirements
- Concerns raised previously by External Examiners

Internal moderators complete Internal Moderation form *(Appendix 4)* detailing the grade they would award for the piece of work. Where there are discrepancies in the grades awarded between the tutor and the internal moderator a discussion will take place and a grade agreed. This grade is then recorded on the assignment feedback sheet. In the instance of the tutor and moderator being unable to agree the grade then a 2nd moderator must be used. In the instance of the difference in grades awarded by the tutor and moderator crossing grade boundaries then the whole cohort of student work must be remarked.

Please note – where a grade is changed following a discussion between the tutor and the internal moderator only the agreed grade should be shown on the student feedback sheet.

Where awards are offered across campus' cross-moderation must be undertaken to monitor consistency of standards and share good practice.

2.4 Concealed Double Marking

The following should be concealed double marked:

- All dissertations or equivalent projects involving 40 credits or more

Following double marking, the first and double markers meet and compare their judgements on the grade awarded and the feedback to be given. If there are no significant differences then they will agree the grade and content of the feedback to be given to the student. The module tutor (first marker) will then make any necessary alterations to the feedback and the student will only receive one set of feedback which is signed by the module tutor.

3. EXTERNAL MODERATION

3.1 Introduction

In common with awarding institutions and partner HEIs, University Centre Leeds recognises in every instance the functions of the External Examining process as defined by the QAA. External Examining processes assist in ensuring that:

- Threshold academic standards of each award and its component parts is set and maintained at the appropriate level;
- Standards of student performance are properly judged against the appropriate level
- Academic standards and the quality of the student experience are properly judged against relevant external reference points such as the components of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education including the framework for higher education qualifications, and/or the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB);

- Assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the intended outcomes of the programme, and is rigorous, fairly operated and in line with the awarding body's regulations and policies
- University Centre Leeds is able to compare the standards of programmes it delivers with those of other higher education or similar institutions, though their content may vary;
- Good practice is captured and disseminated

All awards will have at least one external examiner appointed to it in line with the regulations outlined in the Assessment & Moderation Policy or those of the awarding body, where appropriate. The roles and responsibilities of external examiners are outlined in the External Examiner Handbook *(Appendix 6)* and will be fully implemented by University Centre Leeds. University Centre Leeds also appoints a lead external examiner to ensure that the principles of fairness and equity are consistently applied in boards in the application of the academic regulations.

All awards will respond proactively to external examiners and their reports, and any issues will be identified through annual monitoring and review.

3.2 Appointment of External Examiners

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The processes for appointment, determination of the period of tenure, roles, responsibilities and reporting mechanisms are defined and regulated by the relevant awarding institution and/ or partner HEI. Programme teams within University Centre Leeds should in every instance refer to the awarding institution/ partner HEI's regulations or policies appertaining to external examiners for further information.

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The appointment, period of tenure and External Examiner's role is defined and regulated by University Centre Leeds in accordance with QAA requirements. Nominations for the appointment of External Examiners reports must be forwarded to the HE Registrar using the External Examiner Nomination Form *(Appendix 5)*

The nomination for the appointment of an External Examiner will be considered and approved by the Academic Board. This 'approvals process' includes consideration of appropriate documentation/ evidence in support of the nomination. All decisions must be based upon principles of integrity and objectivity and judged against University Centre Leeds's criteria for the approval of External Examiners. The External Examiner is appointed for a 4-year tenure.

Any nomination for an External Examiner appointment must be able to satisfy the following criteria:

- Academic and where appropriate other professional expertise, experience and qualifications appropriate to the award being examined, with both level and the subject(s) of those qualifications generally matching those to be examined;
- The ability to command 'respect' which may be demonstrated through academic expertise and/or professional achievement;
- Expertise and experience in assessment at the appropriate level. If the nominee has no previous external examining experience, s/he will be expected to have extensive internal examining or other relevant experience;
- Is 'Impartial' which may be demonstrated through no prior involvement with University Centre Leeds during the last four years;
- Employed at a different institution from the outgoing external examiner;
- Able to satisfy any requirements laid down by relevant professional, statutory or regulatory bodies where appropriate:

Externals Examiners with limited experience will be provided with mentoring support by one of University Centre Leeds experienced External Examiners.

Where an External Examiner fails to attend a board of examiners without the prior approval of the HE Registrar, provides false information, fails to produce written reports or fails to act in accordance with the roles and responsibilities outlined below or in accordance with the QAA Quality Code, University Centre Leeds reserves the right, with four weeks notification, to withhold payment of fees or terminate the appointment.

3.3 Communication with External Examiners

Following approval External Examiners appointed for University Centre Leeds programmes will receive confirmation of their appointment from the HE Registrar along with a welcome pack containing the following information:

- A copy of a contract letter confirming the award(s) to be examined, the length of tenure and the annual fee to be paid. The External Examiner is required to sign and return this copy of the contract letter to signify acceptance of the post. If a signed copy is not received, it will be assumed that the External Examiner does not wish to accept the post and arrangements will be made to find an alternative External Examiner;
- Documentation which is required to be completed for HR and payroll purposes (which needs to be returned together with the signed copy of the contract letter).
- Welcome letter providing relevant contact information;
- The External Examiner Handbook;
- A copy of any external PSRB requirements (if applicable);
- Dates for forthcoming examination and assessment boards;
- An invitation to engage with the University Centre Leeds External Examiner training, including access to the External Examiner Google page, where copies of the University Centre Leeds Academic Regulations and all documentation associated with the role can be found.

The Programme Manager will then provide the External Examiner with the following:

- A copy of the Programme Student Handbook;
- Copies of the Programme and Module Specifications;
- Copies of the current module assessments;
- A copy of the previous External Examiner's Report (if applicable);
- A copy of the programme assessment schedule for the year.

In addition to this the Programme Manager will also confirm the External Examiner's availability for Boards and enter into discussions regarding the sampling of student work.

3.4 External Examiners and Assessment Procedures

The External Examiner's role in relation to assessment is defined by the awarding institution and/ or partner HEI.

For University Centre Leeds's provision, External Examiners and staff must comply with the expected roles and responsibilities as outlined in the External Examiners Handbook. *(Appendix 8)*

In every instance it is the right of the External Examiner to see and approve the form and content of all summative assessment tasks/ briefs in accordance with programme regulations and before

assessment tasks/briefs are published to the student. Prepared examination papers must in every instance be seen and approved by an External Examiner before release to any student.

The External Examiner should be provided with access to all student work so that they can select their sample. This should also include assessment and internal moderation records, exam board spreadsheets and tutor module reviews.

External Examiners must be invited to, and are expected to, attend, where practical, all relevant Examination Boards and must be given sufficient notice of the dates of boards.

3.5 External Examiner Reports

All External Examiner reports *(Appendix 7)* must be submitted to the relevant University, in accordance with their regulatory procedures.

For University Centre Leeds awards, all External Examiner reports must be submitted to the HE Registrar. If in any instance the External Examiner's report is sent directly to the programme team, this must be forwarded to the HE Registrar without delay.

All External Examiner's reports will then be checked by the HE Registrar prior to being forwarded to the relevant Programme Manager for their response. *(Appendix 7)*

The HE Registrar will carry out an institutional analysis of all reports and associated actions which will be reported on via the Annual Review report. Institutional governance of themes and trends arising from External Examiners' reports will be reported and considered at the HE HoDs meeting and reported to the HE Academic Board.

3.6 External Examiner Reports and Quality Enhancement

External Examiners' reports will be circulated to the Programme Manager who will then ensure that it is fully discussed at programme team meetings which will normally be before the start of the next academic year to facilitate full consideration in planning.

External Examiners' reports will anonymised and published on the VLE and student groups will be made aware of how to access these through induction activities and via their Programme Handbook. In addition to this the reports will be discussed, and updates provided, at Award Committee meetings in November.

The name and institution of External Examiners will be detailed in Programme and Module Handbooks.

Programme Managers must respond to all External Examiner's using the template provided *(Appendix 8)* within 20 working days of receipt of the report. Responses must then be forwarded to the HE Registrar who will then forward to the External Examiner.

External Examiners' reports must also be discussed with PSRBs in instances where External Examiners' comments/reports may be requested or are relevant.

External Examiners reports must in every instance be used to share good practice with other programme teams or departments. This may occur through several routes but is likely to occur through the dissemination of good practice via Programme Manager's and HE HoDs Meetings.

Appendixs

Appendix 1	UCL Module Handbook Template	1 UCL Module Handbook Template.pdf
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