

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

**GUIDELINES
FOR
EXTERNAL
EXAMINERS
2017/18**

Guidelines for Examiners

Includes guidance on:

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Guidelines for Examiners

Introduction

These guidelines are provided to assist External Examiners and all University staff involved in marking, moderation and Programme Examination Boards. They outline the marking process, the role of the External Examiners and also the conduct of the Programme Examination Board, with an explanation of the general regulations.

The purposes of the external examining system are to ensure that:

All qualifications awarded are comparable in standard in different universities and institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom;

The system of assessment is fair and operated appropriately in the determination of marks awarded to students.

ASSESSMENT

1 Assessment Policy

Full details of the assessment policy and regulations are to be found on the External Examiners webpage at <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/about/external-examiners/appointment-and-guidance.aspx>

2 Modes of assessment

Assessments for each module are taken during the semester in which the module is completed. Programmes are required to align assessment with the stated learning outcomes and to regard assessment as an integral part of student learning.

3 Coursework hand-in dates

All pieces of coursework are required by set dates before the relevant examination period. Students receive advance notice of these dates. Work submitted after these dates will be given a zero grade unless the student has received approval for a late submission through a mechanism approved by the relevant School and supported by appropriate evidence.

4 Organisation of examinations

- 4.1 The administration of examinations is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar and they are organised by the Assessments Office. The examination schedule is published four weeks before the examinations and each student receives an individual examination timetable. Special arrangements can be made for candidates with a disability or condition that warrant such arrangements. Formal examinations are subject to invigilation at all times. Invigilators ensure that the published instructions to candidates are observed. Any deficiencies in the general arrangements or in the observance of the instructions is brought to the attention of the Chief Invigilator.

4.2 Written examination papers are, for the most part, unseen although some programmes do employ disclosed paper examinations.

5 Marking and moderation

5.1 Responsibility for marking

Only academic staff, who are members of the Programme Examination Board and/or the University's Examination Boards, will be responsible for the marks awarded to students. Where postgraduate students, part-time visiting lecturers, demonstrators and teaching assistants are employed, established and experienced members of staff shall systematically scrutinise and oversee any marking carried out by these members of staff.

5.2 Anonymous marking

All written assessment (e.g. coursework and examinations) is marked anonymously, i.e. the identity of the student is unknown to the marker. This is to ensure that the marking process is objective and bias is removed where possible.

5.3 Double marking

Programmes may determine that double (second) marking is to be applied universally, or according to 5.4 below. The purpose of double marking is to have an internal check on the marking process to ensure that the criteria are applied in a fair and consistent manner. This is particularly important where there are teams of markers for the same assignment.

5.4 With the agreement of the Programme Examination Board, double marking may be undertaken for a sample of scripts. At Level 4 the minimum sample should be all scripts which either marker considers a fail; at other levels a sample should include at least one script from each degree class. It is considered good practice, and may save time, to mark a small number of scripts and discuss them in order to agree parameters before the majority of scripts are marked.

5.5 Dissertations and major projects should always be double marked. Where dissertations or projects have been marked by several different members of staff, moderation should take place by means of a sample from all markers to ensure consistency and fairness.

5.6 Reconciling marks

Once both markers have completed the marking they should then meet and resolve any inconsistencies and reconcile the marks before provisional marks are given to the students. Where there is disagreement between markers, the general consistency of marking should be considered. If the first marker is too harsh or marked too generously for example, the marks for all students on the module should be re-scaled accordingly.

5.7 Sampling prior to marking the whole cohort

It is recommended that where there are teams of markers, they should meet to agree the marks for a few scripts at the beginning of the process in order to sort out any inconsistencies prior to marking the whole cohort. If this method of sampling is adopted, all fails should be checked once marking has been completed.

6 Dealing with extenuating circumstances

- 6.1 Candidates who are unable to take all or part of an examination or submit coursework, or who believe that their performance in coursework has been affected by extenuating circumstances must complete an Extenuating Circumstances form and submit, where appropriate, a medical certificate or other supporting evidence, to the Registry normally before the end of the examination period. This information is then provided to the Extenuating Circumstances Board before the meetings of the Programme Examination Board. The Extenuating Circumstances Board decides whether the students are allowed to resit without penalty. No additional marks are given to students who have extenuating circumstances.
- 6.2 Students who are ill or have other circumstances which mean that they cannot hand in coursework on time can apply for approval for a late submission through a mechanism approved by the relevant School and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.3 **Extenuating circumstances affecting students as a group**
Where students' performance as a group has been significantly affected by an error in the assessment process, a problem during an examination or some other such circumstance beyond their control they should either as a group or individually write to the Academic Registrar with documentary evidence where appropriate. Alternatively, the Programme Director may inform the Academic Registrar in writing of any known issue. The Programme Examination Board will determine the action to be taken on the advice of the Academic Registrar and the External Examiner.

7 Academic misconduct

- 7.1 A candidate against whom academic misconduct is alleged shall be sent a written statement setting out the grounds of the alleged misconduct, and shall be given the opportunity to defend himself/herself against the allegation.
- 7.2 The case against the candidate will be considered by a Panel acting on behalf of the Programme Examination Board and comprising the Chair and a member of the Academic Misconduct Panel as nominated by the Academic Board, both of whom are independent of the student's programme. Normally the Panel shall make recommendations to the appropriate University Examination Board, which shall consider what action, if any, to take.
- 7.3 If the candidate wishes to defend himself/herself against the allegation, he/she shall be given at least five days' notice in writing of the meeting of the Panel at which the allegation will be considered. He/she shall be permitted to attend to submit evidence on his/her behalf and to be accompanied by a supporter who is a fellow student or officer of the Students' Union.
- 7.4 The process and possible outcomes of the Academic Misconduct Panel can be found in the Academic Regulations (Section G, Part 30). Further details on the process can be obtained from the QS Office.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

8 Role of the External Examiner

8.1 The role of the External Examiner is to ensure the following three aspects of the University's provision:

The maintenance and consistency of standards with respect to the individual module;

The maintenance and comparability of standards with respect to the programme;

The consistency and fairness of treatment afforded to students from year to year, including conduct of Programme Examination Boards.

8.2 The External Examiner is a full member of the Programme Examination Board.

8.3 External Examiners are entitled to receive and comment upon the assessment of all Levels 4 to 7 modules which are subject to external moderation. They are entitled to see all answer scripts and coursework although may receive a sample as agreed between the External Examiner and the Programme Director.

8.4 Each University Examination Board (i.e. institutional-level as opposed to programme-level) has an External Examiner attached in order to monitor process and provide feedback. This External Examiner may be concurrently attached to a programme.

8.5 External Examiners should be provided with the relevant programme validation document, the University Academic Regulations, and the University Assessment Policy, to provide context for their duties.

9 Approval of assessment

9.1 External Examiners should receive and approve all draft examination papers and may consider draft coursework at the request of the Programme Team. Where there is more than one External Examiner for a programme, an External Examiner will usually receive only the papers for the modules for which they are responsible.

9.2 External Examiners have the right to be present at and to be involved in the conduct of any viva voce examination, presentations or performances.

10 Sample of coursework and examination scripts for External Examining

10.1 The size of the sample to be scrutinised with the External Examiner should be agreed with them in advance. External Examiners do have the right to access all examination scripts/coursework and some may prefer to do so immediately prior to the Programme Examination Board rather than having them sent to them for scrutiny in advance. Any sample should, however, contain those that have been double marked. The sample should contain a range from the top, middle and bottom and first class or distinction marks, fail marks and borderline pass/fail marks.

10.2 Scrutiny of the sample

When looking at the sample, External Examiners do not act as a second marker. Their role is to ensure that the marking is consistent as follows:

If they consider that the marker has been too harsh, the marks for all students, not just the sample, should be scaled upwards;

If they consider that the marking is too lenient, all marks should be moved down;

If they consider that the marking is erratic, they should discuss how to rectify the situation with the Programme Director.

10.3 External Examiners should not make changes to the marks for individual students.

11 Attendance at the Programme Examination Board

11.1 External Examiners are full members of the Programme Examination Board and should be present at the meetings. If they are unable to attend they should submit their views in writing.

11.2 To show their approval of the proceedings, External Examiners should sign an approval form and the marksheets for the module(s) for which they are responsible. Regarding situations where agreement cannot be reached, please see section 14.4.

12 Advice to the programme team

The External Examiner has a role in the continued development of a programme by giving advice on an annual basis – for instance, as to where improvements may be made to the assessment and/or content of modules. Their approval is also important in supporting revalidations, and the introduction of new modules and programme/module changes which do not require revalidation. Any queries or issues raised by External Examiners, or suggestions/recommendations made by them, must receive a formal response by the Programme.

PROGRAMME EXAMINATION BOARDS

Composition of the Programme Examination Board

13.1 Each subject or programme of study which leads to or contributes to an award of St Mary's University has a Programme Examination Board. The Board comprises all academic staff in the programme, the Programme Director and the External Examiner(s). A secretary must be appointed and each programme also has an Examination Co-ordinator who is responsible for collating the marks and liaising with the Examinations Office. The attendance in person of at least one External Examiner is required where marks are ratified. Attendance is not required for the resit board.

13.2 The Programme Board is chaired by an experienced member of staff of the University who should normally be from a different School to that in which the subject/programme is located.

13.3 The quorum for the Programme Examination Board is 50% of members.

Programme Examination Board meetings

14.1 The Programme Examination Board is responsible for approving marks of all assessment of its sponsored modules including allowing resits for individual students.

14.2 Each Programme Examination Board makes recommendations to the appropriate University Examination Board on the following issues:

Termination recommendations for any student who has failed compulsory programme requirements and has no further right of resit;

Students who have as a group been disadvantaged through errors or some other circumstance beyond their control under Section G, Item 27 of the Academic Regulations.

Any other recommendations about individual students that the Board deems appropriate.

- 14.3 A significant number of undergraduate students at St Mary's University undertake Joint Honours programmes and students on Single Honours programmes may take inter-disciplinary modules from other programmes. It is therefore not possible for any one Programme Examination Board to establish the degree classification for candidates (as the final mark on which the classification is based comes from more than one Examination Board). Honours classification is therefore undertaken at the appropriate University Examination Board (to each of which is attached an External Examiner who acts in an oversight role).
- 14.4 Programme Examination Boards should make every effort to reach a decision by consensus. If it proves necessary to vote on any matter, it shall be determined by majority; each member present shall have one vote and in the case of equality the chair shall have an additional casting vote. The views of the External Examiner(s) should carry particular weight in cases of dispute and External Examiners have the right to refuse to sign a mark sheet if they believe that a Board has made a wrong decision. If an External Examiner is unable to sign a mark sheet this shall be reported to the Academic Registrar and, if necessary, to the Chair of the University's Examination Boards.
- 14.5 For further information on Programme Examination Boards, please see Section G, Part 9 of the Academic Regulations.

UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS BOARDS

15 Role and composition of the University Examinations Boards

- 15.1 Decisions on the overall assessment of students are the responsibility of the appropriate University Examinations Board. The University Examination Boards will determine awards, approve Programme Examination Board recommendations for programme progression or programme termination as appropriate, and consider recommendations from Academic Misconduct Panels. The University Boards comprise a Chair or Deputy Chair appointed by the Principal, the University External Examiner and the Programme Directors of the constituent programmes. The quorum for the Board is 50% of eligible members. Programme Examination Co-ordinators, the Academic Registrar, the Examinations Officer and the Academic Secretary will normally be in attendance.

16 University Undergraduate Examination Board

- 16.1 The University Undergraduate Board meets three times a year: in February, June and July. The volume and nature of business will depend on the time of the year, as follows:
- 16.2 June
This is the main University Board which approves degree classifications.
- 16.3 July

This Board considers the results from the resits. It is the Board at which progression decisions are made for those students who have failed modules, and it approves recommendations for suspension and termination of programmes.

February

This board will only:

consider final awards for students who have completed the requirements for their degrees;
review failure for students suspended the previous year;
review failure for students who were allowed to progress with insufficient credit.

17 University Foundation Degree Examination Board

17.1 The Board meets twice a year: in July and December.

18 University Postgraduate Examination Board

18.1 There is normally one University Postgraduate Examination Board a year, although a second may be held in June/July if required.

19 University PGCE Examination Board

19.1 The Board meets twice a year: in July and December.

19.2 July

The Board receives the results for the award of the PGCE for successful full-time candidates, including the Primary Catholic Partnership SCITT.

19.3 December

The Board receives the results for the award of the PGCE for successful part-time Primary candidates and full-time students resitting from the previous academic year.

20 Informing students of results

20.1 Undergraduate students: the majority of students will receive their marks at the start of the second semester. The marks will have been ratified by the Programme Examination Board. For second semester and resit results students will be informed of the ratified results as soon as possible after the University Examination Board.

20.2 PGCE students receive their results at the end of the second semester as soon as possible after the University Examination Board.

20.3 Postgraduate students receive their results after the University Postgraduate Examination Board at the end of November.

For full details on the procedures and consequences of non-submission of work, module failure, resitting, penalisation of marks, internal module compensation, extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and programme termination, please see Section G, Parts 14-32 of the Academic Regulations.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The following section offers information on the role of the External Examiner at St Mary's University. External Examiner nominations are put forward by the Programme Team and approved by the Teaching and Learning Quality and Enhancement Committee (TLQE), for a maximum period of four years.

21 Guidelines for External Examiners

- 21.1 All External Examiners receive these Guidelines for External Examiners on appointment. This document, as well as other documentation relevant to the post of External Examiner, are available on the University website at <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/about/external-examiners/appointment-and-guidance.aspx>

The password for accessing these guidelines and other documentation is: "externalexaminer"

Copies of these documents are also available on request from:

Quality & Standards Office
St Mary's University
Waldegrave Road
Twickenham, TW1 4SX
gateam@stmarys.ac.uk

21.2 Letter of Appointment

The letter of appointment will detail the following:

- The programme(s) of study and/or module(s) for the appointment;
- The period of appointment and the starting date;
- The annual fee and the position with regard to the deduction of tax;
- The requirements of the annual written report, to be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office.

- 21.3 On appointment, External Examiners will also be sent a **Starter Information Form**, which must be returned to the QS Office. The details provided on the form will enable External Examiners to be paid through the University's payroll system. In signing and returning the Starter Information Form, the External Examiner is agreeing to the terms of the appointment as outlined in the appointment letter and the Guidelines for Examiners.
- 21.4 Each External Examiner, prior to commencement of their tenure as part of the appointment process is required to evidence eligibility to work in the UK. Instructions in how to submit this evidence will be detailed in the appointment email and instructions.

22 Programme Specific Information

- 22.1 More detailed information, including the programme handbook and validation document, will be provided direct to the External Examiner by the Programme Team.

It is also vital that the External Examiner is given the dates of all relevant exam board meetings and any others visits they are expected to make. If an External Examiner does not receive the above information on request from the Programme they should contact the QS Office. External Examiners are urged to book travel well in advance, on receipt of the relevant dates, in order to minimise costs as fares will usually rise significantly close to the date of travel.

23 Advice

- 23.1 Advice regarding examination procedures, the appointment of External Examiners, etc should be sought from the Quality and Standards Office at gateam@stmarys.ac.uk.

24 Visiting the University

- 24.1 External Examiners will generally find it useful to visit the University during their first year, in advance of the assessments which they are being asked to moderate. They may wish to meet staff and students, to discuss the programme(s) and/or modules in question to understand better the School and/or programme strategies for both teaching and learning and assessment. Such visits should be arranged directly with the relevant Programme Director.

25 Nomination and Appointment Procedures

- 25.1 In line with the QAA code of practice, the University has defined policies and regulations governing the appointment of External Examiners, and premature termination of their contract. Full details of the nomination procedures can be found in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, of which these guidelines form an appendix. The statement of eligibility and nomination forms are available from the Quality and Standards Office.

26 External Examiners' reports

- 26.1 Annual written reports from External Examiners are an important feature of the University's quality assurance procedures. For all programmes, both undergraduate and postgraduate, the report is required after the meeting of the Programme Examination Board, held at the end of the second semester/academic year. Reports should be submitted annually by deadlines specified by the Quality and Standards Office, within three weeks of the final meeting of the Programme Examination Board.

The prescribed report form may be downloaded through the website and password stipulated above under point 21.1 of these guidelines.

The completed report forms should be sent to the QS Office. The reports are read by the Academic Registrar and the Pro Vice Chancellor responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, and are forwarded to the relevant Associate Deans Student Experience and Programme Directors.

- 26.2 The report forms an appendix to the annual monitoring report (Programme Review). The programme is required to show in their statement how they are addressing any issues raised in the report.
- 26.3 External Examiners' reports form part of revalidation documents and may be viewed by QAA reviewers and OFSTED inspectors. All reports must be made accessible to

all students of the programme in question. It may in rare cases be necessary to redact the reports for them to be viewed by students. The reports form a standing item on the agenda of the semester 1 Programme Board (staff-student) meeting.

27 Payment of Fees

- 27.1 The University processes fees payable to External Examiners once the annual written report has been received. The fee for external examining comprises a number of elements, depending on the specific remit of the examiner. These elements may include:

Basic fee including attendance at the final Examination Board plus;
Moderation, including project /dissertation modules;
Allowance for attendance at additional meetings of Programme Examination Boards;
Attendance at assessed performance, displays or other moderation-related visits.

27.2 Variation of fees from year to year

An examiner should receive the same fee for each year of the appointment except for the fee for the actual number of days attendance. Inevitably, one or two modules may be introduced or may not run owing to too few students selecting them. Only if there are major changes in circumstances will a revised contract be offered to an examiner.

28 Payment of Expenses

- 28.1 All claims for reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenses should be submitted via PeopleNet using the online iTrends system.
- 28.2 The reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses will, ordinarily, be made as and when they occur.

Travel and subsistence expenses may be claimed, together with fees, at the end of the academic year following submission of the annual written report. For travel, standard class rail and economy class air fares will be reimbursed. The University Finance Policy does not permit reimbursement of alcoholic beverages.

At the start of the academic year programmes must, as mentioned above, provide External Examiners with all dates of exam board meetings and other expected visits for which the examiner will need to book travel. The Examiner will need this in order to book their travel as far ahead as possible and thus minimise costs.