



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS OF TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.1	Procedure and Guidelines for External Examiners of Taught Courses	Education Enhancement	Senate April 2014	September 2014
1.2	Minor refresh	Education Enhancement	QAC and ESC October 2019	October 2019
1.3	Removing references to SharePoint, updating links and clarifying how reports are shared with students.	Quality Enhancement and Assurance	QAC March 2024	March 2024

Version 1.3

the place of useful learning

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INTRODUCTION

1. External Examiners are a key element of Strathclyde's quality assurance and enhancement process. The University aims to ensure that high quality teaching, learning and assessment are maintained and further developed through the involvement of the External Examiners in the assessment process.
2. The University's External Examining system is aligned with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (issued in May 2018) in terms of expectations around Standards and Quality Practices, and reflects advice and guidance around External Expertise. The University's programmes also take account of relevant national subject benchmarking information and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
3. All taught first degrees and postgraduate programmes have one or more External Examiners. Appointments are approved by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) on behalf of Senate on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty Board of Study in accordance with Ordinance 3.4.3.
4. External Examiners can be appointed at programme level or at subject level. In many cases, examiners who are appointed at programme level also act at subject level for an appropriate number of modules. This two-level system was a response to the widespread introduction of modular programme provision; it deals with the difficulties that would otherwise present themselves where students may be taking modules from across more than one department or programme.
5. A summary of the External Examining process at Strathclyde is attached as Annex 1.

ROLES

6. The following table sets out a list of roles/groups involved with the management of External Examining, and their responsibilities:

Role	Function	Authority
External Examiner	An external discipline-specific expert appointed to provide an external perspective on the quality assurance processes in place for the delivery of programmes.	Provides external perspective on academic and standards for discipline-specific programme activity.
Education Enhancement	The Directorate that oversees the management of the External Examining function at Strathclyde, specifically the Quality Enhancement and Assurance team.	Co-ordinates the operational aspects of the External Examining nomination, appointment and reporting processes undertaken via the online external examiner reporting system.
Programme Director	Member of academic staff with overall responsibility for a module or programme	Responsible for initiating nominations or extensions to appointments for External Examiners and ongoing relationship management during term of appointment

Head of Department / School	Departmental-level leader tasked with considering suitability of External Examiners nominations in the first instance	Responsible for Departmental- level endorsement of External Examiner nominations
Executive Dean (or nominee)	Faculty-level leader tasked with referring External Examiners nominations to QAC for approval	Responsibility for Faculty-level endorsement of External Examiner nominations
Quality Assurance Committee	University-level committee with responsibility for oversight of all academic quality assurance matters	Decision-making compliance committee, approving External Examiner appointments on behalf of Senate
Departmental / Programme Administrators	Administrative support staff based at departmental or programme team level	Provide administrative support for programme teams and assist in providing documentation to External Examiners and processing annual fee payments and expenses

7. External Examiners provide the University with an objective point of reference, and report annually on:

- a) whether the academic standards set by the University are being maintained and whether the University's students are achieving the required standard;
- b) whether the assessment process measuring student achievement is rigorous, consistent and fair to the students and has been fairly conducted within the University's regulations, policies and guidelines;
- c) the comparability of academic standards and student achievement with those in similar institutions with which they are familiar;
- d) whether the aims and objectives of the programme(s) are appropriate in terms of academic and professional subject matter, with reference as applicable to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, subject benchmark statements, the qualifications framework and the requirements of professional and statutory bodies;
- e) whether the assessments enable learners to demonstrate the achievement of the intended Learning Outcomes and whether the curriculum remains current and supports students in the acquisition and development of key skills.

8. Through their activities, the External Examiners assist the University in:

- a) the comparison of academic standards across the awards and modules of the University curriculum; and
- b) the identification and dissemination of good practice.

9. External Examiners are expected to be involved with assessment processes for all years of a programme. Faculties and Departments will consider with their External Examiners how this involvement might best be achieved.

10. The precise duties and responsibilities of External Examiners are a matter of agreement between the individual Programme Director or Head of Department/ School and the External Examiner(s) for each programme. They may be asked to undertake any or all of the following tasks:
 - a) Review programme specifications;
 - b) Scrutinise programme materials and assessment procedures;
 - c) Consider and comment on, as appropriate, proposals for the content of assessments to ensure that they are appropriate to the learning outcomes of the module to be assessed, that clear assessment criteria are provided and that assessments are of an appropriate standard;
 - d) Moderate the achievement of students against the standards set by the University and/or professional and statutory bodies for all modules;
 - e) Notify the University of any suspected cases of cheating, collusion or plagiarism in students' work and assist in the investigation of suspected cases as necessary;
 - f) Work as a member of a team of External Examiners and undertake the mentoring of new External Examiners as necessary;
 - g) Attend Boards of Examiners to which they have been appointed to ensure that the University undertakes progression and recommendation of awards in accord with its agreed regulations and procedures;
 - h) Ensure that the standard of any award which is recommended by the Board of Examiners of which they are a member is comparable to the standard of similar awards in other UK institutions of which they have experience and is in line with the national context;
 - i) Ensure that all students are treated in an equitable manner and in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures;
 - j) Certify by signing the final lists of marks and awards agreed by the Board of Examiners that the student assessment processes have been carried out in accordance with the programme assessment procedures and the conventions of the University;
 - k) Be involved in oral examinations as necessary;
 - l) Offer suggestions and advice on the academic development of a module, programme or subject area;
 - m) Provide informative comment and recommendations on observed areas of good practice and innovation in relation to learning, teaching and assessment and opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.
11. All External Examiners will be required to submit a written annual report using the online submission form on the online external examiner system.
12. The External Examiners for each taught programme should normally be *ex-officio* members of the Board of Examiners for that programme.
13. The views and comments of External Examiners should be made known to the Boards of Examiners. Where an External Examiner is not able to attend a meeting of a Board of Examiners,

the Head of Department/ School or Programme Director should seek the views and comments from the External Examiner in advance and in writing.

CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

14. External Examiner nominations should normally meet the following criteria: The nominee should be either
 - a) a senior member of the academic staff in the appropriate discipline of another higher education institution, defined by either rank of post held or in terms of standing, experience or scholarship; or
 - b) a recognised authority in the appropriate discipline, employed outside higher education whose experience of appropriate academic standards can be demonstrated; or
 - c) a recognised and experienced practitioner within industry or a professional or statutory body who has appropriate experience of an academic environment to enable them to fulfil the role adequately.
15. The nominee should have knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality and normally have recent external examining experience in the subject area concerned. Where this is not the case, the recommendation should normally be supported by evidence of extensive internal examining experience at the appropriate level otherwise the proposed appointment should be made as part of an experienced team of External Examiners.
16. An External Examiner **shall not**
 - a) be a member of the University staff, nor have been employed by the University, nor have been a student of the University during the three year period immediately prior to appointment;
 - b) be a member of staff at an institution with which the University has a collaborative partnership in the award in question, nor have been employed or engaged in any capacity in that institution during the three year period immediately prior to appointment;
 - c) normally have any contact with the University or students of the University that might compromise their impartiality; where, because there are few experts in a particular subject area, such links are unavoidable, the potential conflict of interest must be declared to the Faculty, and QAC by the Head of Department/ School at the time of nomination;
 - d) normally hold more than two other External Examiner appointments concurrently;
 - e) be appointed under reciprocal arrangements between programmes/departments/faculties in the University and another institution – that is, External Examiners cannot be appointed from a subject area in an institution where a member of staff of the University of Strathclyde is currently an External Examiner;
 - f) normally be appointed to a module/programme/subject area which already has an External Examiner from the same institution and department unless an exceptional case can be made.

IDENTIFICATION, NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

17. The number of External Examiners required is likely to vary between programmes according to the number of students, the level and nature of the programme, the complexity of assessed material being examined and other factors such as the inclusion of placements and other special activities.
18. The Programme Director or the Head of Department/ School concerned is responsible for the identification of appropriate External Examiners in accordance with a recognised UK-wide set of criteria as outlined in the person specification recommended in the UKQCHE Chapter B7 and must ensure that:
 - a) potential External Examiners are provided with information about the module/programme/subject for which they will have responsibility; and
 - b) the proposal meets the criteria for appointment as specified by the University and the Faculty and that all the required supporting documentation is provided with the on-line nomination form.
19. Advance HE (AHE) provides information and support on external examining via its [Knowledge Hub](#) including a [Fundamentals of External Examining Handbook](#). In addition, Advance HE provides discipline specific support through a number of subject centres some of which provide targeted support for examining in their area and others have established a register of external examiners where vacant posts can be advertised and to which staff can add their details as an available examiner.
20. A Joint Information Systems Committee discussion list (JISCmail) is available for people involved in supporting external examining within higher education institutions. JISCmail is the UK's National Academic Mailing List Service and provides a number of mailing lists to benefit learning, teaching and research communities. The External Examiners list provides a forum for seeking appropriate staff to fill vacant external examiner positions, as well as more general discussion regarding the examining process.
21. For quality assurance purposes, the Head of Department or School/Programme Director will ask the prospective External Examiner to provide a short (not more than 1 page) statement of their relevant experience in the subject area and of external examining. This statement should include the following information and be uploaded with the on-line nomination form:
 - qualifications;
 - area of academic expertise;
 - institutional position
22. Information about contractual arrangements including payment of fees and expenses and detail of general responsibilities/duties in order to enable External Examiners to assess their willingness to act and their ability to perform their duties effectively is available on the External Examining System.
23. The Programme Director or Head of Department/ School submits the nomination for the appointment of External Examiners via the online External Examining System to the Executive Dean of the Faculty using the form available online to be signed off prior to presentation to QAC for final approval.

24. Departments are encouraged to ensure that the nomination process is initiated in good time to ensure that appointments can be confirmed by 1 October start date.
25. The Programme Director or Head of Department / School is responsible for ensuring that there is appropriate External Examiner cover for all awards offered.
26. QAC, on the recommendation of the appropriate Executive Dean, approves the appointment of External Examiners for all taught degrees offered by the University. Appointment is conditional on verification of eligibility to work in the UK in accordance with Home Office requirements.
27. Following appointment, a DS-username and password will be issued to the External Examiner to enable them to access the University's electronic systems including MyPlace. They are required to accept their appointment at the earliest opportunity and to familiarise themselves with the relevant documentation. It is the responsibility of academic Departments/Schools to provide them with access to the appropriate MyPlace modules.
28. The letter of appointment found on the External Examining System makes clear to the External Examiner that remuneration is conditional upon completion of all duties including the timely submission to the University of the annual report.
29. Following appointment, all External Examiners will be provided with briefing material as specified in Paragraphs 43-45. Links to relevant University Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are listed under Paragraph 60. Information relating to the module/programme/subject to which the External Examiner has been appointed will be provided directly by the Department/ School.
30. The Quality Enhancement and Assurance team within Education Enhancement is responsible for maintaining a central register of all External Examiner appointments.
31. Where an External Examiner is appointed with no previous experience of the role and/or is appointed from outside higher education, the Faculty is responsible for ensuring that the External Examiner is supported into their role as appropriate. The University will provide induction information via the External Examining System.
32. Heads of Department and/or Programme Directors must ensure that External Examiners have timely access to all information they require or request.

PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT AND EXTENSIONS TO THE PERIOD OF OFFICE AND/OR REMIT

33. External Examiners are appointed for two years in the first instance with, subject to the approval of QAC, the possibility of a further two-year extension. Only in exceptional circumstances will an examiner's period of appointment be extended beyond this four-year period (one year only for a maximum period of five years in total).
34. With the agreement of the External Examiner and subject to the approval of QAC, an External Examiner's appointment may be extended to cover additional modules/programmes/subjects to the end of their existing term of office.
35. The Head of Department or Programme Director is responsible for the submission of nominations for extensions to the period of office and/or remit via the Sharepoint system and subsequent approval by the QAC.

36. An External Examiner cannot normally be reappointed within three years of a previous appointment. The maximum number of reappointments normally permitted is one.
37. The period of appointment will normally begin on 1 October and end on 30 September. Exceptionally, periods of appointment may begin on a different date, for example where for good reason it is necessary to replace an External Examiner part way through the session (e.g. in the case of illness or unexpected absence).
38. A start date of 1 October enables the new appointees to familiarise themselves with the University and the module/programme/subject to which they have been appointed and to comment on draft assessment papers prior to assessments being undertaken and moderation of scripts being carried out.
39. In the interests of transparency and to support the involvement of students in quality management processes, details including the name, position and institution of respective External Examiners will be made available within programme material provided to students. However, it will be made clear to students that it is inappropriate for them to make direct contact with External Examiners, particularly regarding their individual performance in assessment, as other avenues are open to them.

RESIGNATION OF OFFICE

40. Where an External Examiner resigns from office prior to the expiry of the appointed term, the Department / School is responsible for obtaining written confirmation of the resignation, and for progressing the nomination of a replacement External Examiner. A minimum notice period of three months is required.
41. An External Examiner's formal resignation should be accepted with no expectation of a resumption of duties. A period of no less than three years must elapse before re-appointment can be considered. Departments should attempt to utilise alternative External Examiners to provide cover, where appropriate, or initiate the nomination and approval process.
42. Where a replacement External Examiner is not available at short notice, Departments / Schools should notify the Vice Dean Academic of the Faculty, who will progress the matter with the Convenor of the Quality Assurance Committee and Education Enhancement.

EARLY TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT

43. The appointment of an External Examiner may be terminated by the University before the completion of the period of office. Early termination may occur in the following circumstances:
 - a) Serious illness, or other circumstances, that give cause for the University to decide that the External Examiner is unable to fulfil the duties of the post;
 - b) Changes in the award structure which render the appointment no longer applicable;
 - c) Non-fulfilment of External Examiner duties, including non receipt of the annual report or incomplete annual report;
 - d) Unprofessional conduct by the External Examiner;

- e) Irretrievable breakdown of the relationship with the Programme Team such as to disadvantage students on the module/programme/subject;
 - f) A conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved satisfactorily
44. If an External Examiner fails to carry out agreed duties, the Head of Department / School may recommend to the Senate that the appointment be terminated, giving details of the grounds for any such recommendation. A decision of QAC to discontinue the appointment of an External Examiner shall be final. The decision will be reported to the appropriate Faculty Board of Study.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

45. The following **Briefing Information** is to be provided on acceptance of appointment. General administration information available on the External Examining System provides links to the following:

- Important Information for new External Examiner Appointments
- The University's Academic Policies and Procedures
- Campus Location Map
- Undertaken Duties form to be completed for fee payment
- The University Calendar of Dates
- Faculty and Professional Services Websites
- External Links (QAA, SQA, Scottish Government, UKVI, Universities UK)
- The University's Regulatory Framework

46. The following **Local Information** is to be provided by the Programme Director or Head of Department (or nominee)

Policies/Procedures/Regulations

- Boards of Examiners Operating Procedures
- Programme Regulations
- Programme Specifications
- Module Descriptors
- Student Handbook

General Administration

- Departmental Contact Information;
- Instructions for the method of delivery and return of draft examination papers and assessment scripts;
- Specific dates and times for assessment approval/submission/marketing/Boards of Examiners etc;
- Latest Annual Report from the previous External Examiner and Departmental response;
- All External Examiners should be given clear and timely guidance from departments regarding their expectations for External Examiners for meeting with staff and students in accordance with accepted practice within respective Faculties; and
- Where there is an expectation that External Examiners meet with staff and students, appropriate opportunities will be facilitated by departments and the purpose of the meetings articulated in advance.

47. The following **Assessment Information** is to be sent with Draft Examination Papers or with Scripts for Moderation by the Programme Director or Head of Department or Nominee (as appropriate to the nature of the assessment and the timing within the academic cycle)

- Relevant marking schemes or model answers
- Marking profiles and full records of moderation process
- Information or guidance provided to students
- Agreed sample size
- First and second marker comments (where double marked)
- Full mark schedules

Note: Where it is not possible to send full mark sheets at the time of moderation (for example in the case of large cohorts where scripts for moderation often having to be dispatched before all of the marking has been completed), full mark sheets should be submitted as soon as possible after the sample has been sent and before the External Examiner writes his or her annual report. This information is important to give the External Examiner a feel for student performance in modules and how representative the sample submitted for moderation is of the student body as a whole.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S ANNUAL REPORT

48. Monitoring and follow-up are an integral part of the quality assurance and enhancement process at Strathclyde. External Examiner reports are a key element of this process.
49. External Examiners are asked to complete a report for each of the modules/programmes/subjects for which they act as External Examiner using the on-line report form available online. This requires External Examiners to make structured, evaluative comments on the quality of academic standards on each programme which will be scrutinised at a number of different levels within the University which seeks to assure itself that any appropriate follow-up action is taken.
50. The completed report form and departmental response should be submitted **by the deadlines below** to ensure that appropriate quality assurance processes can be completed in good time.

Reports	Submission Deadline	Response Deadline
Undergraduate	31 October	19 December
Postgraduate Taught	19 December	19 February

51. Upon receipt of the External Examiner's report, an automatic notification is sent to the relevant Vice-Dean and Programme/Departmental contact for action as necessary. Reports are also made available to any partner institution.
52. In accordance with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the Head of Department/Programme Director is required to respond to the comments made by the External Examiner in their report each year. The relevant Vice-Dean and the External Examiner will receive an automatic notification that the Departmental response to the report is available to view. Where any issue or recommendation arising from the report requires a period of further

discussion and consultation, the External Examiner can expect to be kept informed of developments by the Programme Director or Head of Department (or nominee).

53. The Vice-Dean (Academic) reports any serious issues raised within these reports to the Senior Officer with responsibility for Learning and Teaching and alerts the appropriate Head of Department/Programme Director to his/her concerns.
54. Annual summaries of External Examiner reports will be considered by the relevant Faculty Academic Committee.
55. The main issues raised in the reports are also discussed by the QAC. This process allows for common issues of concern across the University to be highlighted, and also supports the dissemination of good practice identified in reports.
56. Summaries of External Examiners' reports will be made available to students as appropriate, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly and separately to the Principal, reflecting the general principles of engaging students in quality management processes. This will be facilitated via existing Student-Staff Liaison Committee mechanisms, Faculty Academic Committees or by listing on Myplace.
57. In accordance with the UK Quality Code for HE, External Examiners have a right to raise any matter of serious concern with our Principal, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report.
58. Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to Principal, they may invoke [QAA's Concerns Scheme](#) or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body. Recourse to the scheme will only take place in cases where internal mechanisms for following up concerns have been exhausted. The scheme's focus is explicitly on systemic failings in a higher education provider's management of standards or quality. Therefore, the scheme must not be used for one-off cases of ineffective practice, or to raise a personal grievance or issues relating to an External Examiner's appointment.

PAYMENT OF FEES AND EXPENSES

59. An Expenses Claim form (which can be found on the Finance Directorate [website](#)) should be sent to the Department/School who will process the claim. Payment of External Examiners' fees will only be processed once the annual report has been submitted. The [Undertaken Duties](#) form should also be sent to the Department/School who will insert the fee and process via the University's Supplementary Payment System. Please note that P60s are not routinely issued to External Examiners; however, these can be provided on request by the Finance Office.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

60. With effect from 1 January 2005, recorded information held by the University can be requested under Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The University will not

publish individual External Examiner's reports but will instead publish a summary of issues arising from reports (see paragraph 54).

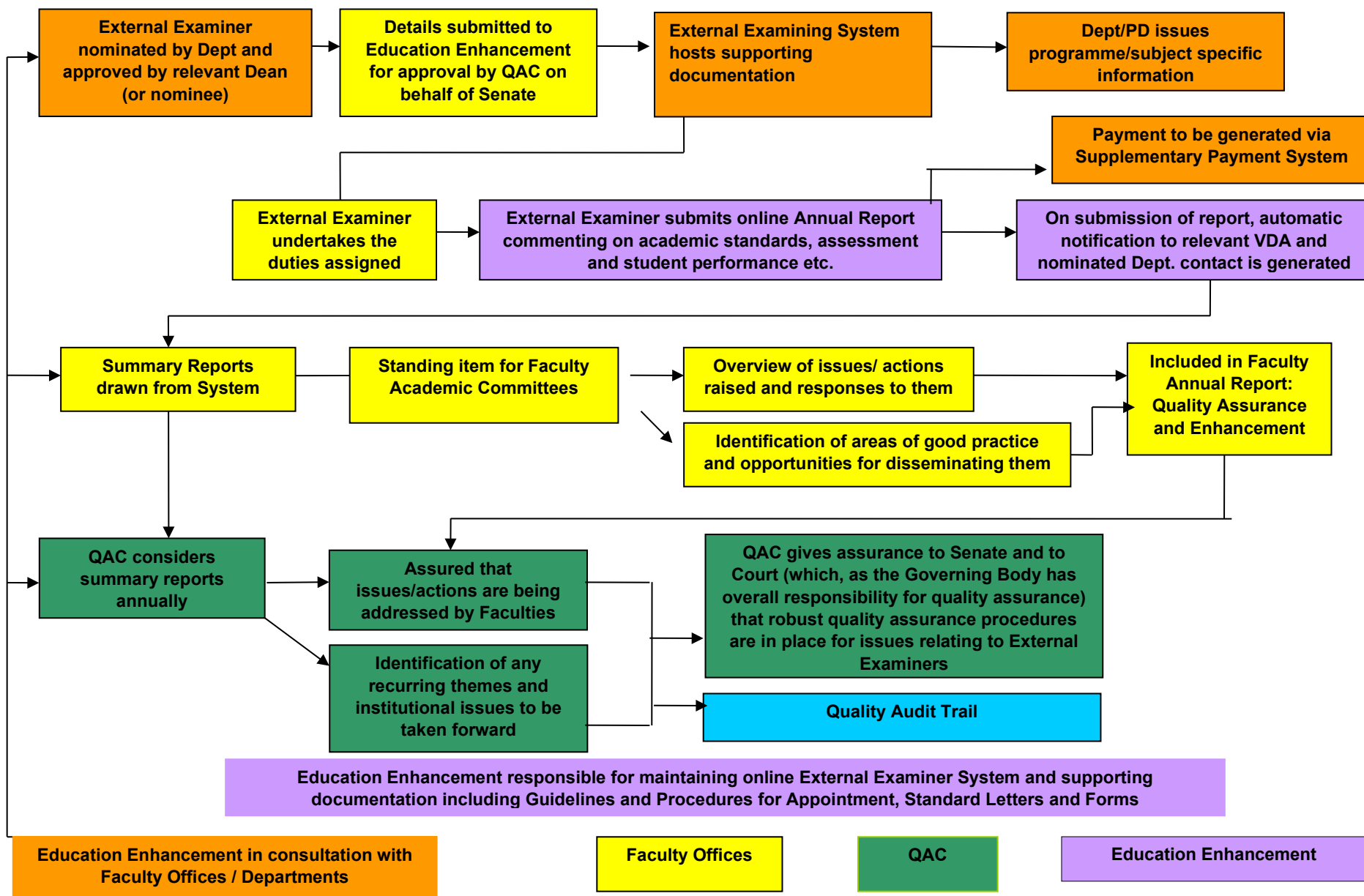
DATA PROTECTION

61. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an EU legal framework for data protection. The Regulation introduces greater protections for personal data and brings data protection law into the digital age. The GDPR details obligations for organisations that collect, use, share and store personal data. Further information can be found at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/dataprotection/>

RELEVANT LINKS

62. Reference should be made to relevant University [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) as listed below:
- University Awards Framework (as contained in the University [Guidelines for Programme and Module Approval](#))
 - [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#)
 - [Policy on Compensation Scheme](#)
 - [Guidance on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Courses](#)
 - [General and Course Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degrees](#)
 - [Policy on Moderation and Double Marking](#)
 - [Policy and Procedure for late Submission of Coursework](#)

External Examining Process Chart





Annex 2

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR NEW EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENTS

You will already have received confirmation from the University of your appointment as an External Examiner, subject to your compliance with the conditions outlined below*. Thank you for your willingness to act in this capacity. Your role as External Examiner is a key element of the University's quality assurance and monitoring framework and your assistance is greatly valued.

The University's External Examining system is aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in terms of expectations around Standards and Quality Practices, and reflects advice and guidance around External Expertise. The University's programmes also take account of relevant national subject benchmark information and qualifications frameworks and it is against this background that we invite you to make your evaluation of the programme. The Head of Department/School or Programme Director will contact you directly, if they have not already done so, to explain more about the examining process for this programme and to provide you with programme regulations and/or handbooks and/or any other relevant information. The Department will be your main channel of communication and you should feel free to contact them if you have queries or require additional information. Key information about the University (including how to find us along with campus maps) and our quality assurance procedures is available on the [University of Strathclyde's External Examining System](#).¹ The University's [Policy and Procedures on Assessment and Feedback](#) and [Procedure and Guidelines for External Examiners of Taught Programmes](#) include information about the roles/activities of both External Examiners and Boards of Examiners. They also include information about data protection issues and other issues relating to student assessment that you may find helpful.

All External Examiners are asked to return their annual report using the online External Examiner System report form (available on the [University of Strathclyde's External Examining System](#)¹) as soon as possible after the end of session meeting of the Board of Examiners and not later than **31 October** (UG) or **19 December** (PG) each year. The University IT Department will send log-in details for the SharePoint site directly to your email address in due course. In accordance with the UK Quality Code for HE, you have a right to raise any matter of serious concern with our Principal, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report.

*The University is under obligation to comply with the UK Border Agency regulations regarding the eligibility to work in the UK. External Examiners that are paid a fee fall into this category. The University is therefore legally required to copy and retain documentation that provides proof of a person's Right to Work in the UK *before* work is offered in order to satisfy any audits in which the UKBA may require us to participate. In order to provide the required evidence of Eligibility to Work in the UK, you are required to present their [documentation](#) to the relevant departmental administrator **as soon as possible** or ask your main employer to take a verified copy of your [documentation](#) and forward that to us or utilise the Post Office's [Document Verification Service](#).

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The University has implemented a new process for paying annual fees. An Undertaken Duty claim must now be completed for the vast majority of *adhoc* work carried out on behalf of the University by non-staff members for which, in the main, Eligibility to Work in the UK and HMRC regulations apply. The Undertaken Duties, Fee and Expenses Claim forms are available from the Finance website at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/finance/financialservices/payroll/undertakenduties/>. The University will meet reasonable expenses incurred and pay an annual fee (following receipt of the annual report).

Please note that claims for payment through the Undertaken Duty route **will only be processed if verified evidence of the right to work in the UK is recorded**. Further information on evidencing the Right to Work in the UK and Permitted Paid Engagements can be found on the Human Resources website, <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/hr/right2work/>

If you have any queries, please contact external-examiners@strath.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

external-examiners@strath.ac.uk

on behalf of Catherine Milligan
Director of Education Enhancement

¹ <https://externalexaminers.strath.ac.uk/>