



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

**External Examiners' Handbook**

**Undergraduate and Postgraduate  
Taught Programmes**

**2018/2019**

## CONTENTS

1	Introduction	2
2	Academic Structure of the University	3
	2.1 Colleges and Schools	3
	2.2 Academic Board Committees	4
	2.3 Student as Producer	5
3	The Role and Responsibilities of External Examiners	6
	3.1 Reviewing samples of student work	7
	3.2 Endorsement of assessment outcomes	7
	3.3 Attendance at Boards of Examiners	8
	3.4 Involvement in programme modifications	8
	3.5 Approving assessment tasks and examination papers	9
	3.6 Submission of annual reports	9
4	Boards of Examiners	11
	4.1 Subject Board of Examiners	11
	4.2 College Board of Examiners	12
5	Internal Procedures for Managing External Examiners Reports	13
6	Useful documents and web addresses	14
Appendix 1	Marking and grading of students' work in taught programmes	15
Appendix 2	Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners	20
Appendix 3	Management of information provided by External Examiner reports	24
Appendix 4	Notes on Claiming fees and expenses	26

## INTRODUCTION

The External Examiner system constitutes a central element in the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures. External Examiners make an invaluable contribution to the maintenance of standards, in particular providing comparison to standards in the sector as a whole.

This handbook is intended to support the University's External Examiners in their work. It provides information on the academic structure of the University explains the responsibilities of the External Examiner and describes the scope, terms of reference and constitution of the various Boards of Examiners and committees on which External Examiners may sit. It also describes various processes such as those for the nomination and appointment of External Examiners and the management of External Examiner reports.

The University provides External Examiner briefing sessions, which are normally held in November and April. All newly appointed examiners are sent an invitation to an event.

All External Examiners are required to provide the University with an annual report at the end of each cycle of assessment. These reports provide valuable insights into quality and standards of teaching and learning and the student experience. They are given serious consideration by the University.

Access to the online report is at the following links:

Off-site - <https://remote.lincoln.ac.uk>

On-site - <http://apms.lincoln.ac.uk>

External Examiners information, including the handbook and claim forms can be accessed at the following link:

<http://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

this link provides access to the University's Regulations including those relating to assessment and progression.

The Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships always welcomes suggestions or comments that might be incorporated in future editions of this handbook.

## **2. ACADEMIC STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders it was agreed by Academic Board in 2012 that the University of Lincoln would evolve its academic structure to facilitate a collegiate model and further encourage collaborative and cross-disciplinary working. This was achieved by moving from a structure of six Faculties to four Colleges which took effect from January 2013.

### **2.1 The University Colleges and Schools are:**

#### **College of Arts**

Lincoln School of Architecture and Built Environment

Lincoln School of Art and Design

Lincoln School of English and Journalism

Lincoln School of Film and Media

Lincoln School of Fine and Performing Arts

Lincoln School of History and Heritage

#### **College of Science**

School of Chemistry

School of Computer Science

School of Engineering

School of Life Sciences

Department of Agriculture

School of Mathematics and Physics

School of Pharmacy

School of Geography

National Centre for Food Manufacturing

#### **College of Social Science**

School of Health and Social Care

Centre for Professional Development

Lincoln Law School

School of Psychology

School of Education

School of Social and Political Sciences

School of Sport and Exercise Science

## **Lincoln International Business School**

Department of Accountancy, Finance  
and Economics

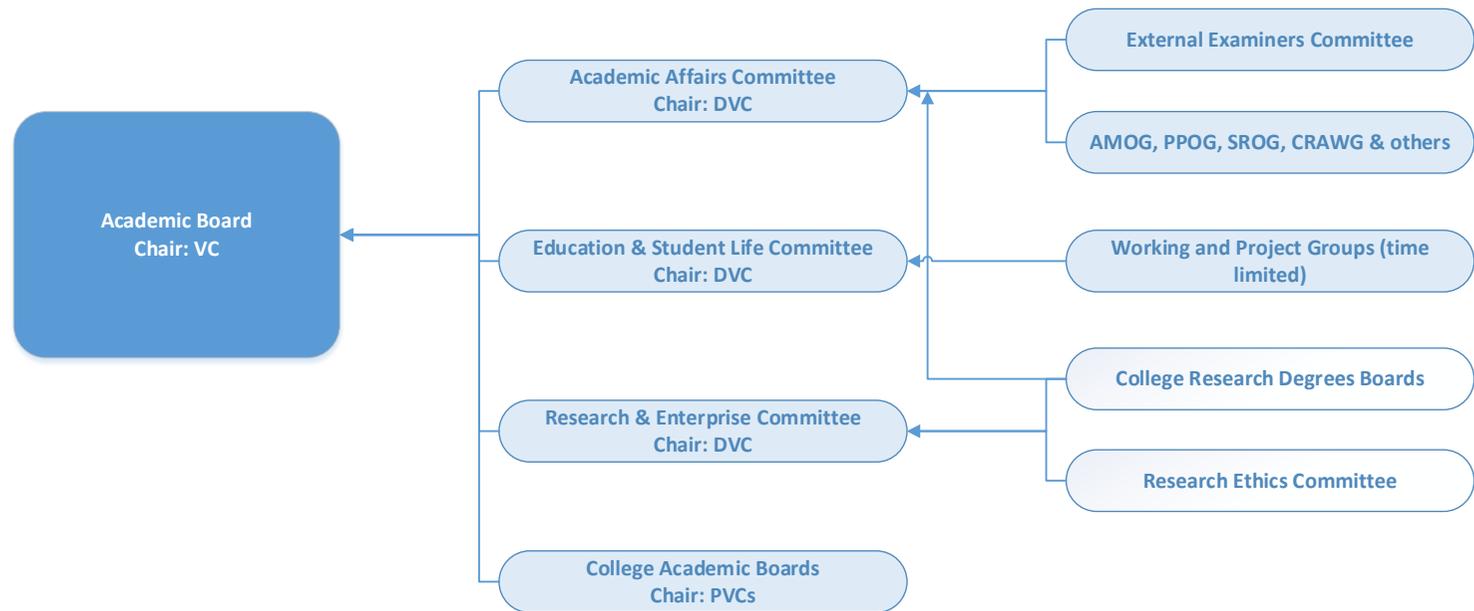
Department of Marketing and Tourism

Department of People and Organisation

Department of Strategy and Enterprise



### Academic Board Structure 2017-18



### **2.3 Student as Producer**

The University of Lincoln has established an international reputation for its progressive institutional-wide approach to teaching and learning.

The organising principle for enhancing teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln is Student as Producer. This means that research-engaged teaching is being embedded in the undergraduate curriculum across the University on all programmes and at all levels.

Research-engaged teaching is when students learn primarily by engagement in real research projects, or projects which replicate the process of research in their discipline. Engagement is created through active collaboration amongst and between students and academics, underpinned by the effective use of information resources.

Students are seen as being an important part of the research culture of the university and collaborators with academics and with each other in the production of knowledge and meaning.

In the QAA Institutional Review (2013) the University was commended for the way in which it enhances student learning opportunities, with Student as Producer identified as the key driver for the enhancement process. Other teaching and learning activities identified as areas of good practice included the systematic student engagement in quality assurance processes, the Getting Started programme: an online support system for new students, and the Lincoln Award, promoting student employability.

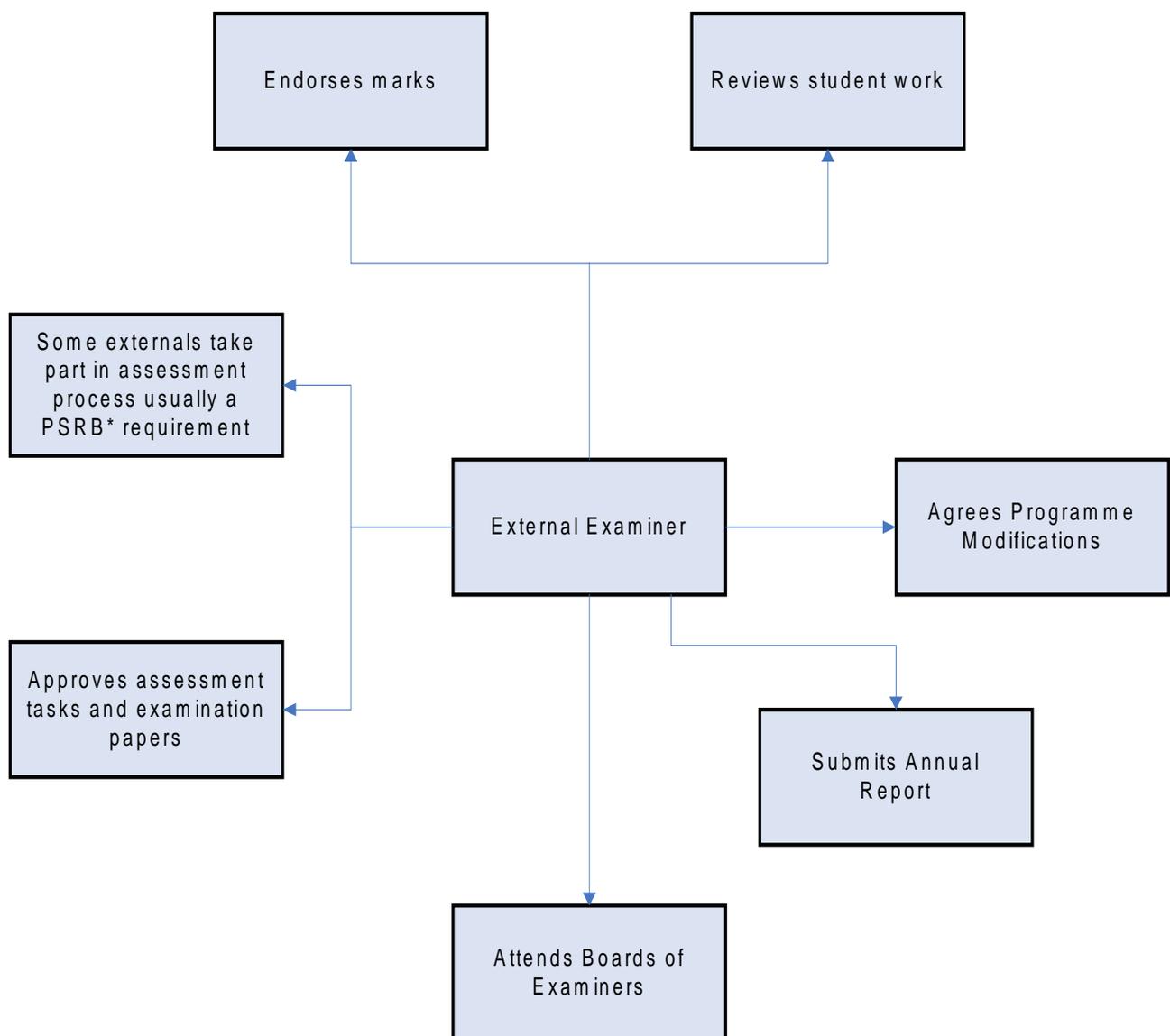
Student as Producer is being evaluated so that lessons can be learned during the process of implementation. As External Examiners you have a key role to play in this process, and will be asked to formally record your view on how Student as Producer is working when you write your External Examiners reports

### 3 THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS<sup>1</sup>

External Examiners play a central role in the maintenance of the standards of the University's awards and the currency of the curriculum. They perform this role through:

- the approval of assessment tasks and examination papers
- discussions with relevant academic staff
- the review of samples of student work on modules within the subject or programme
- the endorsement of marks to confirm that the marks are an agreed, fully moderated and externally examined set of results including Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals.
- the submission of annual reports
- attendance at appropriate boards of examiners
- agreement to programme modifications

**Figure 1: The External Examiner at the University of Lincoln**



\* Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body

<sup>1</sup> External Examiners on programmes with multiple intakes/cohorts should

### **3.1 Reviewing samples of student work**

*External examiners are not normally responsible for, or involved in, the assessment of individual students to the extent that they do not carry out marking of assessed work. However, to fulfil their role external examiners view student work, which ranges from reading essays or examination scripts to viewing performances (live or recorded) or artefacts. (QAA: UK Quality Code for HE, Chapter B7).*

External Examiners are nominated to be associated with certain modules within the subject or programme, usually at the time of appointment though this may be varied subsequently by the relevant School. In cases where there is only one External Examiner, they will be associated with all modules.

External Examiners must be sent adequate samples of students' work by the University or Partner institution. The samples sent will cover all modules under the External Examiner's remit and will reflect:

- a representative range of work, sufficient for the examiner to make a judgement. The sample sent should include a sample of double marking
- all assessments within each module
- all centres where students have taken the particular module

External Examiners can call for additional samples or all submissions of student work to assist their deliberations. They are encouraged to have a dialogue with programme teams in order to understand assessment strategy and marks/grades awarded. To assist, copies of the assessments involved and their marking schemes should accompany the samples of work, together with complete lists of marks allocated to students and any material relating to the double marking process.

Where an External Examiner has concerns about the marking of the work of the cohort, s/he should express this as part of the post-assessment dialogue with module co-ordinators and programme teams. As a result of that dialogue, exceptionally, based on the samples of work and in agreement with the module co-ordinator, the marks of all students for an assessment or a module may be raised or lowered by a constant factor. External Examiners are not empowered to change an individual student's marks.

External Examiners may present any comments they have on the work they have sampled and on the marking at relevant Subject Boards of Examiners or, in summary, meetings of College Boards of Examiners and/or in their annual reports to the University.

### **3.2 Endorsement of assessment outcomes**

*Decisions about assessment outcomes are the collective decisions of examination boards to which external examiners contribute as board members. A key way in which the external examiner provides an expert view of the rigour and fairness of the assessment process is by endorsing, or not, the decisions of the board. Such endorsement indicates not that the external examiner agrees with every individual assessment decision, but that he/she is satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process. (QAA: UK Quality Code for HE, Chapter B7).*

When they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process, and that the marks allocated appropriately reflect the samples of student work they have reviewed, External Examiners are asked (physically or virtually) to endorse the module marks list or equivalent.

If, after discussions with the module team, and after reviewing a larger sample of student work, the External Examiner feels unable to endorse the outcomes of the assessment process, the Chair of the appropriate Subject Board of Examiners will be consulted. The Chair will give careful consideration to the External Examiner's concerns and will attempt to resolve the issues,

but the final decision rests with the Board of Examiners. If the final decision does not accord with the External Examiner's view, the Subject Board Chair will so inform the External Examiner and the decision will also be reported promptly to the Chair of the College Board of Examiners.

### **3.3 Attendance at Boards of Examiners**

#### **Undergraduate Programmes**

All External Examiners for undergraduate awards including CPD and WBL are members of the appropriate Subject Board of Examiners and College Board of Examiners. All External Examiners for taught postgraduate awards including CPD are members of the College Board of Examiners.

As the members of the **Subject Board of Examiners**, bringing a specifically external view, External Examiners advise on matters including:

- standards of marking, student performance and achievement
- the consideration of module reports and statistics, and any related issues including retention presented to the Board of Examiners
- differential performance across different cohorts and/or centres
- approval of assessment tasks for modules including reassessment
- review of the evidence of quality and the achievement of standards in all modules and programmes considered by the board.

As members of the **College Board of Examiners**, External Examiners advise on matters including:

- confirmation of entitlement of students to academic credit and progression
- entitlement of students to receive relevant awards and, where appropriate, the grade or classification of such award
- application of decisions made by University Extenuating Circumstances Panel or the University Academic Offences Committee. This relates to adverse circumstances affecting students' performance, or penalties to be applied for academic offences.
- the review of academic standards of relevant awards

#### **Postgraduate Programmes**

External Examiners for postgraduate programmes are members of the College Board of Examiners appropriate to their remit. In the case of postgraduate programmes College Boards of Examiners will also undertake the role equivalent to Subject Boards of Examiners, advising the College Board of Examiners in the same areas as described for undergraduate External Examiners.

External Examiners may discharge some of the above responsibilities, such as advising on the approval of assessment tasks, in between meetings of examination boards.

### **3.4 Involvement in programme modifications**

The responsibility for the process of approving modifications to validated programmes is devolved to College Academic Affairs Committees. These are logged by the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships.

External Examiners have an important role in this process and should be consulted about all proposed changes, have opportunity to scrutinise any documents and make comments in writing.

Further information relating to procedures for programme modifications is available from the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships.

### 3.5 Approving assessment tasks and examination papers

Prior to an academic session, the School will send External Examiners details of assessment tasks intended for use in the modules to which they have been appointed. Examination papers and assessment task details may be sent during the academic session as the need arises. The School or Partner institution is responsible for ensuring that this exchange takes place and that the External Examiner is given sufficient time to scrutinise and comment before assessment tasks or examination papers are required.

Comment by externals will be noted and acted upon by module co-ordinators in finalising their assessments. Examiners' comments should be in writing, and should as appropriate cover areas including appropriateness of task/question to the level, opportunity to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes, clarity of expression and innovation.

### 3.6 Submission of annual reports

All External Examiners are required to submit a report to the University on an annual basis. The University expects to receive these reports **within a month of the Board** (in order to ensure timely remuneration) in the case of Subject Examiners and other External Examiners where the annual round of assessment is completed within the conventional academic year. For other programmes, reports are also expected within a month of the final meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners.

External Examiner reports should be submitted on-line only External Examiners will be allocated a username and password at appointment and will be provided with guidance on how to submit the report at appointment. Submission of paper reports is no longer acceptable.

For anyone **on-site** at the University the report can be accessed at <https://apms.lincoln.ac.uk> and logging in with your normal university username (e.g. jbloggs) and password.

For anyone **off-site**, the report can be accessed securely from off campus by going to <https://remote.lincoln.ac.uk> in a web browser, logging on with a University username and password and choosing the APMS option.

If you have misplaced or have forgotten your username and password, please contact Justin Ramsay, Administrator to the External Examiners' Committee ([jramsay@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:jramsay@lincoln.ac.uk))

External Examiners should offer critical and constructive comment on:

- standards of student performance and marking
- application of Regulations relating to progression, and attainment and classification of awards
- the consideration of module reports and statistics, and any related issues
- the principles of Student as Producer and the extent of their embedment in programmes/modules\*
- differential performance across different cohorts and/or centres
- the appropriateness and standards of assessments being used to judge students' attainment of modules' learning outcomes
- whether programme/module content is relevant and up to date
- administrative arrangements for the assessment process

as appropriate to the individual External Examiner's remit.

The report is a public document, available to the Subject/Programme Committee (including student members) and to internal and external quality assessors and *must not* identify individuals. It is of

course most helpful if any issues are raised directly with the programme team, to allow them to be addressed as quickly as possible.

The Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships is responsible for confirming that an External Examiner's report is adequate for the quality assurance purposes it is intended to fulfil. If, after reference back, no satisfactory report is received or if no report is received by the due date, the Officer to External Examiner Committee in conjunction with the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships will implement the follow up procedure approved by the External Examiners' Committee. Ultimately, this can lead to a recommendation that the individual External Examiner's contract be terminated.

### 3.7 Programmes with Multiple Intakes

External Examiners on programmes with multiple intakes/cohorts will:

- for each cohort and location approve all the assessment tasks where the nature of assessment changes;
- for each cohort and location, scrutinise assessment outputs (mark averages, distribution and summary statistics) and, if it is considered necessary, scrutinise samples of student work;
- for at least one cohort in any single academic year, review samples of marked examinations scripts and coursework.
- provide a judgement on the comparability of the quality and standards of provision and performance across all relevant locations and cohorts

## **4 BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

The University of Lincoln operates a two-tiered system of examining which gives an opportunity for all External Examiners to be involved in considering profiles of marks. The two Boards are:

- Subject Board of Examiners
- College Board of Examiners.

Boards of Examiners have responsibility for maintaining and enhancing academic standards in the subject or programme for which they are responsible, and there are a number of different Boards whose precise remit varies as described below.

A University Academic Offences Committee operates with a university-wide remit to consider academic offences allegations. Although External Examiners do not sit on this committee, they sit on the College Board of Examiners which is responsible for considering recommendations made about penalties for academic offences.

A University panel meets monthly to consider extenuating circumstances claims. Although External Examiners do not sit on this panel, they sit on the College Board of Examiners which is responsible for applying any decisions made on extenuating circumstances.

### **4.1 Subject Board of Examiners**

#### **Terms of reference**

- To ensure that the University's requirements and the requirements of any other external body for the approval of marks and grades have been satisfied<sup>2</sup>.
- To review the evidence of quality and the achievement of standards in all modules falling within its competence and, in this regard, to adopt appropriate measures where necessary.
- To ratify the marks awarded, and where appropriate agreed by an External Examiner, in respect of relevant modules.
- To consider and, where appropriate, ensure that effect is given to opinions and advice of External Examiners.
- To approve all assessments, including re-assessments, for all modules falling within its competence, having regard for the validated assessment regime for each module.
- To approve the arrangements for the setting, the conduct and the marking of all examinations and other assessments, including re-sit examinations and re-assessments, for all modules falling within its competence.
- To advise the Chair of the relevant College Board of Examiners, where appropriate, of matters that have come to its attention through the discharge of its responsibilities.

#### **Membership**

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to, for example, requirements for double-marking, second-marking and moderation.

Chair:	The Senior Academic appointed Head of School with responsibility for the subject, or another Senior Academic nominated by the relevant Head of College.
Secretary:	Appointed by Registry.
Other members:	All staff of the University who teach or assess modules falling within the Board's competence  Staff of partner institutions who have module coordination responsibilities for modules falling within the Board's competence.  External Examiners appointed to a subject or a module or cognate group of modules falling within the Board's competence.

## 4.2 College Board of Examiners

### Terms of Reference

- To ensure that the University's regulations on assessment and the regulations governing awards within the Board's competence are applied.
- To oversee the review and maintenance of the academic standards of the programmes for which the College is responsible.
- To determine whether or not students are entitled to have awards conferred, and to decide the classification or grade of those awards, as appropriate, taking into account the recommendations of the College Research Degree Board.
- To confirm the entitlement to progression of all students registered on a relevant programme.
- To confirm the entitlement of any student claiming academic credit for any part of a relevant programme.
- To apply a decision that a student's performance has been affected by adverse circumstances.
- To take decisions on the penalty to be applied in cases where academic offences are proved.
- To consider, and where appropriate ensure that effect is given to the opinions and advice of the External Examiners.
- To approve the examinations and other forms of assessment, including re-assessment, for the relevant programmes where this is not the responsibility of a Subject Board of Examiners<sup>3</sup>.
- To confirm the administrative arrangements for the assessment and re-assessment of students registered on a relevant programme where this is not the responsibility of a Subject Board of Examiners
- To establish progress panels to keep under review the progress being made by students registered on a relevant programme.
- To advise the Chair of the Academic Board, where appropriate, of matters that have come to its attention through the discharge of its responsibilities.

### Membership

Chair:	The Head of College (or in exceptional circumstances a Head of School or a Head of another College as nominated by the Head of College and approved beforehand by the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee)
Secretary:	Appointed by Registry
Other members:	External Examiners appointed to the College/Schools' programmes. External Examiners shall only attend the part of the Board where items relating to the conferment of awards are considered.

<sup>3</sup> Subject Boards of Examiners undertake this responsibility in respect of undergraduate awards, HN provision and non-tariff and work-based study at undergraduate level.

Senior Academics of the College/School, Programme or Course Leaders,  
and individuals responsible for the academic counselling of students<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Under present arrangements, these would be Personal Tutors.

## **5 INTERNAL PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS**

### **Roles of the External Examiners' Committee and the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships**

All External Examiner reports should be submitted online only. The Officer to the External Examiner Committee will ensure appropriate dissemination of all reports within the University and partner institutions.

On receipt of a report, the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships will undertake a prompt initial check to confirm the report forms a satisfactory basis for the quality assurance processes, and authorise payment of the External Examiner's fee if all is in order. Reports which do not satisfy the initial check will be referred back to the External Examiner with a request to remedy any defects or omissions.

These reports should be sufficiently full to offer the programme team useful information for programme development and improvement. These are reported to a range of University committees. The Office of Quality, Standards and Partnership prepares overview reports each year that identify examples of good practices and areas for development highlighted in External Examiner reports across all Schools.

### **The Deputy Vice Chancellor**

The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Development) reads all External Examiner reports. If a serious issue is raised in a report, s/he will require action from the College, a partner institution or centre as appropriate, in addition to the responses required below.

Any of the University's External Examiners may write direct to the Head of Academic Quality or to the Deputy Vice Chancellor if they have grave concerns about an issue relating to the subject/award for which they have been appointed external examiner and feel that they have exhausted all other possible lines of communication.

### **College Boards of Studies**

The core responsibility for responding to issues raised in an External Examiner's report lies with the College Board of Studies responsible for the subject or programme. In discharging this responsibility, the relevant Board will be required to undertake certain tasks. These are to:

- To determine the overall academic shape and development of the College
- To oversee the development of research, curriculum, teaching and learning and the student experience across the College
- To oversee School development and ensure cross-College and School collaboration and cross-disciplinary working
- To ensure the taught programmes and research within the College are maintained to the highest academic standard and quality
- To ensure the continued enhancement of the student experience
- To consider annual reports from the College Research Committee, College Academic Affairs Committee, College Research Degrees Board and College Education and Students Committee and make recommendations as appropriate.

These procedures ensure that issues which may be raised in External Examiners' reports are considered and where appropriate, acted upon by the College.

Monitoring of actions taken is carried out at College and University level and External Examiners should always receive written responses to issues which they raise in their reports.

## 6 USEFUL DOCUMENTS AND WEB ADDRESSES

The following documents, some of which are cited in the text of this Handbook are available to support External Examiners in their work:

From the Secretariat Blog:

<http://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk>

- Undergraduate Regulations
- Foundation Degree Awards
- Graduate Diploma/Certificate Awards
- Higher National Programme Awards
- Integrated Masters Degrees
- Taught Postgraduate Regulations
- Research Degree Regulations for MA/MSc by Research, MPhil and PhD
- Professional Doctorate Regulations
- Short Courses and Individual Modules at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Level
- Variations to Regulations



## **POLICY ON MARKING AND GRADING OF STUDENTS' ASSESSED WORK IN TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

### 1. Introduction.

All formal assessments which contribute to a student's progression through or attainment of an award of the University are formally marked or graded. The marks or grades awarded will reflect the traditions and practices of individual cognate subject areas and will be influenced by any relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. This document delineates University policy on the marking and grading of students' work, as a framework within which all assessors work.

This policy relates to taught programmes, that is, undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, and taught elements of taught doctoral awards.

### 2. General Principles.

All validated and accredited taught programmes of the University consist of units, which in turn have explicit learning outcomes. A function of formal assessment within a unit is to enable students to demonstrate that they have attained the learning outcomes of the unit.

Not all formal assessments will be related to all learning outcomes of the unit. Taken together, however, the set of assessments within a unit will enable students to demonstrate the attainment of all its learning outcomes.

Each formal assessment will have a set of assessment criteria, which describe what the student is expected to do in order to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

All units will be marked<sup>5</sup> either as pass/fail and/or as a numerical value in the range 0% to 100%.

Attainment of learning outcomes is essentially a threshold statement, and where a unit is graded as pass/fail, "pass" indicates that the student has achieved the threshold.

Where an assessment is marked in the 0% to 100% range, a bare pass mark of 40% indicates threshold achievement of those of the unit's learning outcomes being assessed, measured against the assessment's criteria. A mark over 40% is an indication of the extent to which the threshold has been exceeded.

*Assessment feedback should normally be written and supplemented where appropriate with oral comments. In normal circumstances, feedback should be returned to students within 15 working days of the published submission deadline, i.e. students submitting work before the published deadline should not have an expectation that early submission will result in earlier return of work.*

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<sup>5</sup> In the case of Higher National Awards, numerical marks will be used, with table (appendix 1) relating grades of Pass, Merit, Distinction to ranges of marks.

*Where feedback will not be provided within 15 working days for good reason, e.g. in circumstances where a student has been granted an extension of time, illness of module co-ordinator etc., students should be informed of the timescale for feedback.*

3. Undergraduate Programmes. (Programmes at qualification levels C, I and H of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Marking and grading within undergraduate level programmes are guided by the conventions of British higher education in respect of degree classifications:

**Undergraduate Honours Degree Classification:**

First Class Honours	70% or over	A
Upper Second Class Honours	60% or over	B
Lower Second Class Honours	50% or over	C
Third Class Honours	40% or over	D
Ordinary Degree	300 credits with normally 180 credits at Levels 2 and 3 with at least 60 credits at Level 3	

If the overall aggregate mark falls within 1% of the boundary of the next highest classification (e.g. 69.1% to 69.9%) the Board of Examiners shall automatically promote the candidate to the higher classification.

Where units are marked on a pass/fail basis, "pass" indicates the equivalent of at least 40%, and that the student has achieved the threshold of attaining the learning outcomes of the unit.

Where units are marked as a numerical value, the following guidance to the qualities which assessors should look for apply:

**90-100%:** a range of marks consistent with a first where the work is exceptional in all areas;

**80-89%:** a range of marks consistent with a first where the work is exceptional in most areas.

**70-79%:** a range of marks consistent with a first. Work which shows excellent content, organisation and presentation, reasoning and originality; evidence of independent reading and thinking and a clear and authoritative grasp of theoretical positions; ability to sustain an argument, to think analytically and/or critically and to synthesise material effectively.

**60-69%:** a range of marks consistent with an upper second. Well-organised and lucid coverage of the main points in an answer; intelligent interpretation and confident use of evidence, examples and references; clear evidence of critical judgement in selecting, ordering and analysing content; demonstrates some ability to synthesise material and to construct responses, which reveal insight and may offer some originality.

**50-59%:** a range of marks consistent with lower second; shows a grasp of the main issues and uses relevant materials in a generally business-like approach, restricted evidence of additional reading; possible unevenness in structure of answers and failure to understand the more subtle points: some critical analysis and a modest degree of insight should be present.

**40-49%:** a range of marks which is consistent with third class; demonstrates limited understanding with no enrichment of the basic course material presented in classes; superficial lines of argument and muddled presentation; little or no attempt to relate issues to a broader framework; lower end of the range equates to a minimum or threshold pass.

**35-39%:** achieves many of the learning outcomes required for a mark of 40% but falls short in one or more areas; not a pass grade but may be sufficient to merit progression to the next level.

**30-34%:** a fail; may achieve some learning outcomes but falls short in most areas; shows considerable lack of understanding of basic course material and little evidence of research.

**0-29%:** a fail; basic factual errors of considerable magnitude showing little understanding of basic course material; falls substantially short of the learning outcomes for compensation.

Further, whilst it is scarce for more than 5% of candidates to receive first class awards, there are years and cohorts where there may be considerably more than 5% or no such awards, and assessors are encouraged to use the full range of marks. In particular, individual assessments or units which satisfy the criteria for a first class mark should not automatically be given a mark of 69 or 70: there should be gradations of performance even within this category.

Boards of Examiners are required to monitor the quality and standards of students' performance in assessment, at both unit and award levels, depending on the boards' remits. Quantitative indicators which should be employed in such monitoring include the proportions of marks or classifications in various categories. In addition to the numbers of first class marks/degrees indicated above, it is anticipated that the majority of students will receive marks in the range 55% to 65%, with perhaps a concentration in the mid to high 50s.

4. Postgraduate Programmes. (Programmes at qualification levels M and D of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Research elements of taught doctoral awards are assessed on a pass/refer basis. The assessment policy and criteria for such awards/elements are documented elsewhere.

The remainder of this section relates to taught postgraduate programmes and their units, and to taught units on taught doctoral awards.

Where units are marked on a pass/fail basis, "pass" indicates the equivalent of at least 50%, and that the student has achieved the threshold of attaining the learning outcomes of the unit.

Where units are marked as a numerical value, the following guidance to the qualities which assessors should look for apply:

Overall result		Marking Criteria
Distinction 70%+		Excellent work that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ display a full understanding of area of research and mastery of a significant body of data</li> <li>○ use full range of sources, used selectively to support argument</li> <li>○ provide a coherent and strong argument</li> <li>○ display originality in analysis and subtlety of interpretation</li> <li>○ be exceptionally well written and presented</li> <li>○ present the possibility of publication.</li> </ul>
	70-79%	High quality throughout with an excellent understanding of the subject.
	80-89%	Showing insight and potential for publication with some revisions.
	90%+	Exceptional insight and of publishable quality.

<p>Good Pass 60-69</p>	<p>60-64% 65-69%</p>	<p>The work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o display effective use of main materials, going beyond the standard secondary sources</li> <li>o present coherent and concise argument of complex concepts</li> <li>o present independent and critical evaluation of a range of theories</li> <li>o show some evidence of originality</li> <li>o be written and presented to good academic standards.</li> </ul> <p>Well developed argument and evaluation.</p> <p>Approaching excellence in some areas.</p>
<p>Pass 50-59%</p>	<p>50-54% 55-59%</p>	<p>The work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o display a sound knowledge of principal materials relevant to area of study</li> <li>o present a logical structure, though this may not be fully thought through</li> <li>o display some capacity to critically reflect or analyse</li> <li>o be unlikely to show evidence of originality</li> <li>o be presented and written to adequate academic standards.</li> </ul> <p>Generally accurate and sound understanding of area of study.</p> <p>Approached good pass standard in several areas.</p>
<p>Fail &lt;50</p>	<p>40-49% 30-39% &lt;30%</p>	<p>Many of the basic materials will be present but the work will be lacking in other areas, such as,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o key information sources and content which will be limited</li> <li>o unsophisticated use of key sources</li> <li>o poorly structured and sustained argument displaying limited knowledge</li> <li>o conceptual understanding, as exemplified in critical evaluation is poor.</li> <li>o defects in presentation</li> </ul> <p>Overall knowledge limited and poorly presented.</p> <p>Very poor knowledge of subject and weak understanding of issues.</p> <p>Deeply flawed, containing fundamental mistakes.</p>

**Postgraduate Diploma:** On the basis of prior knowledge and/or skills gained at first degree or through appropriate employment experience students should demonstrate advanced understanding of their field of study.

**Taught Masters Degree:** In addition to the requirements of a Postgraduate Diploma students should demonstrate an ability to work independently at an advanced level. A masters thesis will outline the nature of the problem and justify its choice for study; demonstrate an understanding of relevant literature; demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to their research and select and manage appropriate methodology; analyse data and problems; show an appreciation of theoretical/operational/managerial issues inherent in the research; synthesise the data and demonstrate conclusions; be well presented.

As and where permitted by University and individual award regulations, Boards of Examiners may award distinctions to students who pass a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters award. The criteria for the award of a distinction are defined in the Regulations.

A student shall be awarded a Masters degree with distinction if the overall average mark for the assessed elements that comprise the final Masters stage, the final 60 credits, of the programme is 70% or above.

A candidate who has been reassessed in any assessment of the programme shall not normally be regarded as eligible for the award of a distinction.

Boards of Examiners are required to monitor the quality and standards of students' performance in assessment, at both unit and award levels. Quantitative indicators which should be employed in such monitoring include the proportions of unit/award marks at fail, pass and (where applicable) distinction levels.

#### Assessment and Grading of Higher National Programmes

##### Grading of individual assessment items on Higher National awards

Percentage	Descriptor	Higher National Grade
0-39%	Unsatisfactory	Fail (or Refer where regulations permit)
40-49%	Satisfactory	Pass
50-59%	Threshold Merit Standard	Merit
60-69%	Good Merit Standard	Merit
70-100%	Excellent	Distinction

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER COMMITTEE

### APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS – 2018/2019

#### Introduction

This guidance has been developed by the External Examiner Committee to assist schools with nominating appropriate candidates for appointment as external examiners at the University. This document also outlines the key points that schools should be aware of following appointment, which may affect the tenure of their external examiners.

Before it will approve any appointment, the External Examiner Committee requires that all proposals are able to satisfy appropriate criteria to assure academic standards within subjects and programmes. Following appointment, the Committee will expect to be notified of all material changes in the circumstances of any external examiners.

#### Appointment of External Examiners for Taught Programmes

##### General principles

- Heads of School should be seeking a replacement external examiner 18 months prior to the end of the existing external examiner's tenure. In cases where a replacement is difficult to find, or in niche subject areas, we would expect this task to begin 24 months prior to the end of the existing external examiner's tenure
- Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that all external examiners are in place before the beginning of the academic year and should ensure that all modules requiring an external examiner are covered, including Partner institution programmes for which their School is responsible.
- Undergraduate examiners may be appointed to subjects, programmes or modules, depending on local school requirements. Appointment forms should therefore state, for example, BA (Hons) xxx and BA (Hons) xxx and xxx', and should clearly identify the modules for which the examiner is to be responsible.
- External examiners need to be appointed to newly validated programmes at level one.
- Examiners may be appointed to more than one subject/programme where there is commonality and small numbers of students, provided that this does not result in an overload. A separate report will be required for each individual subject / programme.
- There should normally be at least two external examiners for each undergraduate subject area. Rather than increasing the workloads of individuals to unacceptable levels it is advisable to appoint additional examiners.
- It is considered good practice that where more than one examiner is appointed to a programme, it can be helpful to phase examiner appointments to enable the mentoring of new examiners.
- An induction event is held for all newly appointed examiners. Examiners who are appointed as practitioners will be given guidance on academic matters and the academy from an experienced member of existing academic staff.
- Joint honours should have a specific External Examiner appointed to each subject area. Therefore when appointing External Examiners to new joint programmes, this needs to be taken into account.
- Secretariat through the External Examiners Committee will ensure that all external examiners provide appropriate evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK prior to their engagement with the University.

## Key points on the appointment process

The following points should be considered when putting forward a proposal:

- there is consonance between the individual's sphere of academic/professional expertise (where relevant) and the subject area to be examined
- the candidate has appropriate experience and academic/professional standing
- the candidate is able to make an effective contribution to the assessment process, and to provide objective advice on assessment and related matters
- there should be evidence of the candidate's scholarly profile and research activity
- an external cannot be succeeded by another examiner from the same institution until five years have elapsed.
- if the prospective external examiner were either a former external examiner, student, Visiting Fellow or staff member of the university, a minimum period of five years has elapsed prior to the individual's appointment. This requirement will also apply to candidates who have held honorary positions with the University.
- when appointing retired externals they must be fully engaged with the HE context and have current skills. Consideration should also be given to the strength of the applicant in terms of experience and professional body activity.
- no reciprocal appointments are being instituted with schools of other institutions
- of the external examiners appointed to a programme, no more than one should be from the same department of the same institution..
- if part of a subject examining team, external examiners should be based in differing institutions,
- a prospective candidate has no more than two substantial current external examiner appointments at any one time
- any potential intellectual property issues, for example from the need for commercial confidentiality, should be resolved prior to appointment
- the appointment has been approved by the College Academic Affairs Committee or delegated body
  
- External examiners should not be appointed if they are:
  - a governor
  - a near relative or a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
  - an examiner on a cognate course in the institution
  - anyone closely associated with the sponsorship or students on the course or with placements or training
  - anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
  - anyone in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
  - anyone involved in collaborative research activities with a member of staff
  
- If a candidate does not have previous experience, they may still be nominated, with supporting evidence as to their suitability for the role. The nature of existing support provided by more experienced external examiners attached to the programme should also be provided to the External Examiner Committee.

## Appointment of Examiners for Research Theses and Examination Boards

The External Examiner Committee will appoint according to the Research Degree Regulations:

- The Internal Examiner shall be either:
  - a member of staff of the University; or

- a member of staff of the student's Collaborating Establishment
- A person who has supervised the student or who has acted as an adviser to the student shall not be appointed as an Examiner.
- Where the student and the Internal Examiner are both on the permanent staff of the same establishment, a second External Examiner shall be appointed. A student being examined who is employed by the University on a fixed term contract as a research assistant is exempt from this requirement.
- Examiners shall be experienced in research in the general area of the student's thesis and, where practicable, have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined.
- At least one External Examiner shall have substantial experience (normally three or more previous examinations) of examining research degree students at the appropriate level.
- An External Examiner shall be independent both of the University and of the Collaborating Establishment and shall not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser. An External Examiner shall normally not be either a supervisor of another student or an External Examiner on a taught course in the same school at the University.
- Former members of staff of the University shall not normally be approved as External Examiners until five years after the termination of their employment with the University.
- The External Examiner Committee shall ensure that the same External Examiner is not approved so frequently that his or her familiarity with the school might prejudice objective judgement.
- No student for a research degree shall act as an Examiner.

### **Duration of Appointment**

- The normal length of appointment is four years. The Committee expects that schools will source external examiners in good time to allow a smooth transition between one examiner and another.
- An examiner may request to temporarily interrupt their tenure (for example due to ill health). The contract will be suspended to allow the examiner to serve a full tenure of four years. The proposed interruption should not be more than two years.
- If a programme is suspended by the University, the examiner's tenure will also be suspended for the same period so that the total tenure served remains at four years.
- The University reserves the right to end the tenure of an examiner's contract if a programme is deleted from the portfolio.
- An external examiner who wishes to resign before the expiry of their normal period of office is required to write formally to the Head of the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships, giving sufficient notice for the appointment of a replacement.
- Occasionally it may be necessary to extend an appointment for a particular reason. This is exceptional, and will only be permitted for up to one year.
- Failure to locate a suitable replacement is not a rationale for continuing with the same Examiner
- An application to extend the duties of an external examiner must be accompanied by a full explanation of the grounds for the request. Failure to provide this information will result in a refusal of the application for extension.
- Fees are paid centrally, and school staff are not authorised to offer additional fees. If a school wishes to pay an examiner a higher fee, this can be done provided the amount is met from school budgets
- Once appointed, it is possible for an external examiner's circumstances to change; for example, a change of post or institution. Such changes of circumstance may give rise to potential conflicts of interest. It is important that the school notifies the External Examiner Committee of such changes, so that any potential conflict of interest may be addressed. Schools should complete a Change of Circumstances form. These are available from the Officer to the External Examiner Committee.

## Proposal for extension of appointment

The QAA Code of Practice states that 'it would normally be considered exceptional to reappoint an external examiner for a second complete term of office without a break, although sometimes it may be necessary to extend an appointment for up to one year'

Only in exceptional cases, therefore, are proposals for extensions of appointments approved. Circumstances in which such proposals may be approved include:

- the extension of an external examiner's tenure will enable continuity where all other members of subject external examiner team, are newly appointed
- at short notice a member of the examining team has to resign from or suspend external examiner duties
- where a course is to be deleted within a year

## External Examiners for Partner Institutions

- College/schools should liaise closely with Partner institutions for the appointments process. Appointments may be suggested by the partner institution, but any proposals put forward from the college/school must be approved by the College Academic Affairs Committee prior to submission to the External Examiner Committee.
- External examiners for Higher National Programmes and Foundation Degrees are appointed and remunerated using the standard University processes.
- When nominating examiners for appointment to Foundation Degrees, schools should source candidates with experience of work-based learning, as this will be helpful to the examiners in carrying out their duties.

When appointing or extending the service of external examiners, current forms should be used. These are available from the Officer to the External Examiner Committee or from portal: <http://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

A CV **will not** be accepted in place of the properly completed forms, but can be attached for additional information. The form is designed to provide relevant information so that the Committee is able to make a properly informed decision on an appointment. Therefore, unsigned or incomplete forms that do not provide sufficient information will be returned immediately to schools.

## Termination of Contract

Examiners should be advised that their contracts may be terminated at the discretion of the External Examiner Committee. Grounds may include if an examiner does not fulfil their obligations in relation to attendance at examination boards, or if they fail to produce an annual report or similar.

Any queries on this guidance may be directed to Chloe Bowman [cbowman@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:cbowman@lincoln.ac.uk) in the Secretariat in the first instance.

## **Management of information provided by External Examiner reports**

### **Principles**

The University has a duty to ensure that its responsibility for the standards and quality of programmes are discharged through effective and scrupulous use of External Examiners and their reports. It does this through:

- Ensuring all External Examiners submit a report
- Establishing that reports are fit for purpose, ie provide enough information to assist Colleges with the quality assurance of their programmes
- Wide distribution of the reports to staff
- Consideration of reports throughout the institution, including senior levels of the University
- Full discussion of reports at subject/programme level, involving student representatives as appropriate
- Consistent use of External Examiners in examination boards
- Timely and detailed responses to comments raised by External Examiners

The management of information contained in External Examiner reports is a shared responsibility across the University, so that maximum benefit can be gained from this important resource. The roles of the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships (OQSP), Committees of the Academic Board, Colleges and the Vice Chancellor's Office are summarised below.

### **Processes**

External Examiners are required to submit their reports within one month of the main assessment board, which is normally in June for undergraduates and November for postgraduates. There will also be re-sit boards, but it is most useful to have External Examiners' reports promptly after the main assessment points of the year. Colleges should discuss reports at the earliest opportunity to enable timely responses. This is usually in September, with annual monitoring reports being considered by the Quality Audit and Academic Affairs Committees in November of each year.

## **Responsibilities in the management of External Examiner reports**

### **External Examiners' Committee**

- Acknowledges all reports through the Officer
- Following approval by OQSP for quality assurance purposes and the DVC (Teaching, Quality and the Student Experience) the Officer forwards reports to Schools for dissemination
- Considers an annual overview report of all External Examiner reports

### **Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships**

- Checks each report and approves as fit for the purposes of quality assurance
- Returns inadequate reports to Examiners
- Authorises payment of fees
- Identifies issues requiring an early response, and contacts the Head of School, following up College responses
- Co-ordinates institutional responses to examiners
- Provides an overview report to both the External Examiners' Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee

- Provides External Examiner briefing sessions, using these to advise Examiners on completion of their reports and their roles and responsibilities.

### **Colleges**

- Circulate reports to Heads of College, Heads of School, Programme teams, and any other relevant College staff
- Forward reports to Partner institutions
- Consider reports in detail at relevant subject committees
- Consider summaries of reports at quality committees
- Draft responses to all Examiners
- Complete annual monitoring reports that identify issues and develop action plans to address them
- Confirm that responses to External Examiners have been made, through the annual monitoring process
- Report on issues raised and responses given to College Boards of Studies
- Forward annual monitoring reports to Annual Monitoring Oversight Group
- Consider verbal reports from examiners on quality assurance issues relating to individual modules at Subject Boards of Examiners

### **Vice Chancellor's Office**

- DVC (Student Development) reads and comments on all reports
- Responds to Examiners where appropriate
- Requires a response from Colleges where appropriate

For more detailed information on the specific role of External Examiners, please refer to the External Examiner Handbook. This can be found on the portal:

<http://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

The QAA Code of Practice for External Examining, Chapter B7, can be found at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B7.aspx>

## Notes on Claiming Fees and Expenses

### **Fees**

The annual fee is payable upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report that contains enough information for quality assurance and enhancement purposes. In order that a payroll record can be created new External Examiners should complete the fee claim which is included in the 'pack' of information sent at appointment. Once a payroll record has been created, online submission of the report will activate fee payment.

### **Expenses**

Reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of duties can be claimed, and are paid on receipt of an expenses claim form with receipts where appropriate.

Payment will be made directly to the Bank/Building Society account.

#### Travel allowances by Car, Rail or Air

- External Examiners are requested to use the most economical method of transport available.
- Public transport should be used where practically possible; this should be second class or economy public transport rates; ie bus/rail. Air fares may be reimbursed with the prior arrangement of the University of Lincoln if it can be proved it is cheaper to travel by air.
- The mileage rate is 45p per mile for a maximum 100 miles. Journeys over 100 miles will only be reimbursed with the prior approval of the University of Lincoln.

#### Subsistence Allowances

- If accommodation has been arranged for you by the University, the hotel bill will be sent directly to the University.
- Guidelines for subsistence claims are as follows:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Maximum Rate/Night</b>
Central London	£120
Cities	£100
All Other Locations	£90

<b>Journey Duration</b>	
Up to 4 hours	£5
4 to 10 hours	£10
Over 10 hours	Maximum daily allowance £20

- Meals and non-alcoholic drinks will be reimbursed on production of receipts.
- Other allowable expenditure includes postage of scripts etc and telephone calls.
- Access to wi fi for business purposes will be paid on production of appropriate receipts.

#### Receipts

All claims must be supported by valid VAT receipts as far as is practicable (excluding mileage).

**Our auditors have advised that receipts are required for subsistence items over £5.00, and may require us to reduce claims considered to be excessive.**