



**Arden University Quality Assurance Document**

**QA37 EXTERNAL EXAMINER HANDBOOK  
For Module External Examiners and Lead External Examiners**

**Version 9 – June 2024**

## 1. Overview of External Examiner Structure at Arden University

Arden University operates a two-tier External Examiner model consisting of Module External Examiners and Lead External Examiners. Module External Examiners are appointed with responsibility for modules within their area of subject specialism, whilst Lead External Examiners are appointed to quality assure a programme or group of programmes. Lead External Examiner appointments are an additional appointment for some of the Module External Examiners. The exact roles and responsibilities of the Module and Lead External Examiners shall be as follows:

Module External Examiner	Lead External Examiner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for 6-8 modules</li><li>• Assessment approval</li><li>• Sampling of assessed work</li><li>• Comment on module updates / modifications</li><li>• Submission of module sampling feedback/comments via online report</li><li>• Liaise with relevant academic teams on an ongoing basis with at least 2 virtual meetings with module teams / year</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for a group of Programmes</li><li>• Attend Subject Assessment Boards and Progression and Awards Boards where they represent Module External Examiners via their module sampling feedback</li><li>• Comment on programme updates / modifications</li><li>• Submit an Annual report commenting on academic standards and quality at both module and award level</li><li>• Liaise with students via an annual virtual student liaison meeting</li><li>• Liaise with relevant academic teams on an ongoing basis with at least 2 virtual meetings with programme teams / year</li></ul>

## 2. Appointment and re-appointment

All External Examiner appointments are made by the Academic Registrar.

External Examiners are drawn from such institutions, industry and professions as befit the particular programme content in order to provide for appropriate scrutiny.

External Examiner appointments are made in line with the national criteria for appointment published by the QAA in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and in accordance with Arden University Quality Assurance Document QA 43 – Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners.

Once your nomination has been approved by the Academic Registrar you will receive an External Examiner appointment pack.

The pack contains a formal contract letter, acceptance/bank details form; expenses claim form, a copy of Arden University's regulatory Framework, and relevant documentation for the programme/programmes of study for which you are responsible.

The contract letter will include:

- Details about the duration and tenure of your appointment.
- Details of briefing and induction.
- Your fee and payment details.
- Access details to Arden University's online systems.

The appointment will normally be for a term of 4 years (or two years in the case of recently retired academics) subject to annual review and satisfactory performance in accordance with the terms of Agreement and the Service Levels set out in your contract. Exceptionally the appointments may be extended for a further year to provide continuity. External Examiner appointments do not normally exceed five years in total.

It is the responsibility of Programme Team Leaders and/or Heads of School to ensure the timely nomination of External Examiners for both new and continuing programmes.

### 3. Contact details

Please keep us informed of any changes to your contact details by email, so we can keep in contact and pay you. Updates can be provided via email to the following address: [externalexamining@arden.ac.uk](mailto:externalexamining@arden.ac.uk)

### 4. Briefing, Induction and Support

All new External Examiners will be invited to an online briefing and induction session held via MS Teams.

A briefing is normally undertaken shortly after appointment by the Programme Team Leader and/or Head of School and a member of Quality. These are held on a one-to-one basis with each new External Examiner. An invitation will also be sent for the next scheduled online Arden University External Examiner Induction. The Induction meeting is held for a group of newly appointed External Examiners and is designed to cover topics outlined in the External Examiner Handbook and ensure the Examiner is able to familiarise him/herself with Arden University's assessment processes, regulations, delivery model, systems and Subject Assessment Board practices. Additional support is provided to Examiners throughout the period of their appointment by Head of Quality and his/her team.

Prior to, during and /or after the briefing you will be supplied with links to:

- A copy of approved programme and/or module specifications together with any other relevant documents.
- A copy of Arden University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
- Minutes of previous Programme Committees and Subject Assessment Board(s).
- Relevant sections of Arden University's Quality Assurance Schedule providing key dates for meeting of the Subject Assessment Board(s), approval of assessments, provision of access to student work, etc. for the current calendar year.
- Information about the External Examiner's role in relation to the examining team as a whole.
- Instructions in the use of any systems needed in the sampling of student work.
- Relevant documents from any PSRBs or external validation bodies, if applicable.
- A copy of predecessors' report(s) (if applicable).
- A link to the annual monitoring report of the relevant programme of study/route, if applicable.
- Sample assessments – pre-agreed samples of student work will be made available to allow sufficient time for scrutiny prior to each meeting of the Subject Assessment Board.

Details of the module(s), programme(s) and/or award(s) for which you will be responsible will be agreed with the Head of Quality during the course of your appointment and/or induction and may thereafter be reviewed and/or updated. From time to time, Arden University will provide External Examiners with any updates on assessment policy and procedures.

## 5. Arden University Regulatory Framework

Once registered as a member of Arden University's online systems you will have access to Arden University's Regulatory Framework and other documentation relevant to your appointment. The Regulatory framework and key policy documents can also be found on Arden University's [website](#).

## 6. Expectations of an External Examiner

Consistent with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education the expectations of an External Examiner are to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- Whether or not Arden University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements.
- Whether or not the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with Arden University's policies and regulations.
- Whether or not the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.
- Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiners.
- Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

You will be provided with the relevant feedback and report template(s) specifying all items for comment and a schedule for completion of reports.

Related links:

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance- External Expertise  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>  
UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance - Assessment  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment>

## 7. Duties of an External Examiner

As part of our emphasis on externality, External Examiners play a critical role in providing impartial and independent advice and providing informative comment on the academic standards made in our name and on student achievement in relation to those standards and, thus, providing meaningful contributing to the ongoing development of our higher educational provision.

To that end, it is the responsibility of External Examiners to review and report on standards and quality at either module level (Module External Examiner) OR module and award level (Lead External Examiner).

Lead External Examiners will be appointed to attend Subject Assessment Board and Progression and Award Board, as required by Arden University's Regulatory Framework. The Head of Quality is responsible for ensuring that sufficient External Examiners are nominated for appointment to these Boards. A minimum of one Lead External Examiner is appointed to each Subject Assessment Board.

Your role will require you to undertake the following duties:

Module External Examiner:

- Review and approve the module assessments compiled by the Internal Examiners, in line with pre-agreed quarterly timeframes set out annually in the Arden University Academic Calendar. Your endorsement of these will be sought in advance of the release of those assessments to students.
- Review samples of assessed student work, the size and composition of which will be agreed in advance with the Head of Quality. Student work along with comments from markers and internal moderators will be made available to you via the online systems normally at least five days prior to the meeting of the Subject Assessment Board. You may request additional (or all) student work, if you wish.
- Review the assessed work according to a scope agreed in advance of the assessment period and as set out in QA 21 Policy on Internal and External Moderation.
- Report to the Head of Quality or nominated Senior Quality Coordinator any issues that require resolution in advance of a meeting of the Subject Assessment Board, including, for example, in cases where you feel unable to endorse assessment decisions.
- Submit a Sampling Feedback form for each period where assessed work is reviewed. Sampling feedback should include comments and make clear reference (where appropriate) to performance of students studying on different study modes (distance learning, blended learning, apprenticeships, partnerships) and at different study centres.
- Perform such other special duties as may be agreed.

Lead External Examiner:

- Be a member of the Subject Assessment Board and Progression and Awards Board and attend scheduled meetings in line with the Academic Calendar.
- Endorse assessment outcomes and formally report such endorsement to the boards for formal minuting. In the case of an External Examiner being unable to endorse such decisions then they reserve the right to make independent representation to the Vice Chancellor of Arden University (Head of the institution).
- Endorse award outcomes and student achievement decisions of the Awards Board(s) and formally report such endorsement to the boards for formal minuting.
- Contribute to enhancement and development of the programme through discussion with and feedback to the programme team.
- Report on the level and standard of the award, the standard of student performance and the soundness and fairness of processes for the assessment, and other items as specified in the reporting template(s). Initial comments to be considered at meetings of Subject Assessment Board(s) and Progression and Awards Board(s).
- Submit an Annual report to the Head of Quality at Arden University in accordance with the Quality Assurance Schedule. Please note that reports will be published to students and it is therefore advised not to make reference to individual students or staff members in the report. Where such reference is made, Arden University reserves the right to edit such detail prior to publication. Please note that as part of the Lead External Examiner Annual Reporting, External Examiners will be provided with programme level data to enable them to provide comment and feedback on standards and achievements at award level. This data will be separated out by study mode (distance, blended, apprenticeship, and partnership, as appropriate) and it is important that all Lead External Examiners provide feedback by study mode as part of their report.
- Perform such other special duties as may be agreed.

- In the event of any serious concern, you have a right to raise such matters directly with Prof Carl Lygo Vice-Chancellor of Arden University, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. In the event of 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 the head of the institution, you may invoke QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

## 8. External Examiner's Feedback and Reports

After each assessment period, following the completion of sampling, you are required to provide feedback using the template provided. Your feedback will be available for discussion at the Subject Assessment Board and subsequent Programme Committees.

Lead External Examiners are also required to complete a formal annual report in accordance with the Quality Schedule (see further detail in section 7). Annual Reports will be available for discussion at the Subject Assessment Board/Progression and Awards Board and by the Programme Committee, Students Quality and Standards Committee, staff, students and may be requested by certain external organisations, including professional and statutory bodies. It may also be supplied to an incoming External Examiner.

## 9. Conflict of Interest

During the appointment process, every effort will be made to identify and resolve any potential conflict of interest. If External Examiners have any concerns in this regard, they should raise them with the Head of Quality at the earliest opportunity. Where a conflict of interest arises during a term of office which cannot be resolved, normal practice would be for the External Examiner to resign. However, as a last resort an institution may terminate an appointment to protect the independence of its external examining arrangements in line with termination procedures described below.

## 10. Termination, interruption of appointment, and premature termination

If you wish to interrupt your appointment for a defined period of time or are unable to fulfil your duties as an External Examiner, we ask that you put this in writing to the appropriate programme contact and the Head of Quality at Arden University.

In line with the terms of your appointment, Arden University may terminate appointments at any time on any of the following grounds:

- Discontinuation of the provision for which the External Examiner was appointed.
- Irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the External Examiner and Arden University.
- Persistent unavailability/inability to perform duties (e.g. non-submission of reports within a reasonable timescale, provision of incomplete reports, and/or failure to attend a Subject Assessment Board without good reason).
- New conflict of interest following a change of circumstance of the Examiner.
- Other grounds, as applicable, put forward by the Head of School.

Termination decisions require the approval of the Students, Quality and Standards Committee.

Neither the raising of well-founded concerns about academic standards, nor the submission of a confidential report to the CEO, is a valid ground for termination.

Policy Name:	External Examiner Handbook
Policy Reference:	QA37
Approval Authority:	Students, Quality & Standards Committee
Last Approved:	June 2024
Responsible SMT Lead:	Academic Registrar
Responsible Department:	Academic Affairs
Policy Contact:	Joanne Walker, Head of Quality ( <a href="mailto:jwalker@arden.ac.uk">jwalker@arden.ac.uk</a> )
Review Frequency:	3 years