



New College
of the Humanities

Postgraduate External Examiners Handbook

ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-19

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WELCOME

Welcome to New College of the Humanities.

We hope that your period of tenure as an External Examiner for the College and Swansea University will be a successful and valuable experience.

The procedures regarding External Examining at the College have been developed in line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education - Chapter B7: External Examining.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide relevant information to you about the College and its examination processes, and to provide you with support and guidance for carrying out your role, supplementary to that provided by the University.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- [Swansea University External Examiner guidance](#)

Should you have any queries at any point during your period of appointment, please do not hesitate to contact the Registrar or relevant Head of Faculty (please see the [Who to Contact for Support](#) section of this handbook).

NEW COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES

Founded in 2011, New College of the Humanities (College) offers a unique liberal arts-inspired undergraduate curriculum taught to small groups and through the one-to-one tutorial system that is the gold standard of a humanities education.

In 2015, *The Times* described NCH as offering 'bespoke higher education' and as being positioned 'at the forefront of a new era, the academic equivalent of space travel', with our one-to-one tutorial system giving the College 'the edge on even Oxbridge's one-to-two tutorial system in one crucial way'.

FOUNDING VALUES OF THE COLLEGE

The College's mission is to foster a collegial environment in which learning, debate and the sharing of ideas is central, and in which all members of the College treat one another as partners in the quest for knowledge and intellectual enlargement. The students are embarked on courses of systematic study; the academic staff advise, assist and challenge; the joint venture is not a matter of *de haut en bas* but of co-operation. Encouragement of students to think across the boundaries of disciplines and to see the connection between what we study and our experience of life at large – these are some of the desiderata to place at the heart of College life.

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

The College has four postgraduate programmes approved by Swansea University:

- MA Communicating Economic Policy
- MA Historical Research and Public History
- MSc Global Politics
- MA Philosophy

For this academic year, 2018-19, MA Philosophy, MA Historical Research and Public History, and MA Communicating Economic Policy are being delivered.

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

Swansea University has the vision and ambition to be a beacon for pioneering collaboration and to come in the top 30 of UK universities, which it did in REF 2014, when it came 26th.

The College has a collaborative partnership with Swansea University since April 2016 and the University currently validates all the College's postgraduate degrees.

THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE IN THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF COURSE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

As the awarding body of the postgraduate degrees, the University retains responsibility for the selection and appointment of the College's postgraduate External Examiners. It has been agreed with the University that the College proposes potential External Examiners for nomination for final approval by the University. In all cases, the University will be the institution to issue a contract to External Examiners and to pay them.

The University prepares External Examiners to undertake their role. On appointment, External Examiners receive a contract, a letter detailing requirements and expectations, a copy of the University's Regulations and the Quality Handbook from the University. In addition, the University holds an annual training day for new and continuing External Examiners.

The College provides supplementary preparation for External Examiners. In addition to this handbook, an opportunity to visit the College and an External Examiners' Induction session is scheduled annually to introduce External Examiners to the College, its staff and students, to provide information about any specialist forms of assessment and to ensure that processes regarding External Examining are reviewed and clarified as appropriate.

THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE REGARDING EXAMINATION BOARD AND PROGRESSION AND AWARDS BOARDS

The University is responsible for making progression decisions relating to all students on collaborative provision courses.

The College holds an Assessment Board prior to submitting the student marks to Swansea University. Postgraduate External Examiners are invited to attend this Assessment Board. If the External Examiner is unable to attend in person, arrangement for video conferencing can be organised or a written report can be submitted to the Board.

Once the College has reviewed and agreed the student marks, they are submitted to Swansea University. The University operates a two-tiered Examination Board procedure - College/School level and University level. These Board meetings are held at Swansea University. If you are required to attend, the University will let you know.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' NCH INDUCTION PACK AND DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

Upon appointment, and for each year of your tenure as appropriate, the College will provide you with an Induction Pack that includes relevant documentation as follows:

- External Examiners' Handbook & Referenced Documents
- Programme Documentation including:
 - The relevant Programme Specifications
 - The relevant Course Descriptors
 - The last Annual Monitoring Report, where available
- Relevant Assessment Information including:
 - The assessment schedule for the relevant courses, including dates when exam scripts and coursework will be available for moderation
 - Assessment tasks
 - Related grading schemes, model answers, etc. as appropriate
- Boards of Examiners Information including:
 - Minutes of the most recent Course Assessment Board Meeting
 - Dates of forthcoming Course Assessment Board Meetings
- Previous External Examiner Reports, normally for the last two years, where available

Should you require any further copies of the above or wish to request any additional information, please contact the College's Registrar: rosalind.barrs@nchlondon.ac.uk

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' INDUCTION DAY PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

In addition to the University's induction for External Examiners, the College also organises an External Examiners' Induction session to which newly appointed and existing External Examiners are invited to attend.

The aim of the Induction Session is to provide all External Examiners with:

- An opportunity to visit the College and meet newly appointed External Examiners, relevant College staff and students
- An opportunity to meet Heads of Faculty to discuss specific programmes and courses
- General information about the College, including recent activities and new developments
- Further information about the roles, responsibilities and value of External Examiners at the College
- Information regarding Assessment Boards at the College, including the three-tier examination board process for all taught courses, how Assessment Boards operate at the College, and forthcoming dates of Course Assessment Boards
- An overview of relevant College policies and procedures
- An opportunity to ask any questions and request additional information as appropriate

An indicative agenda for the External Examiners' Induction Session is provided below:

1. Arrival & Coffee for all External Examiners
2. Welcome to the College: Recent Activities and New Developments, *Registrar*
3. Roles, Responsibilities and the Value of External Examiners at the College, *Registrar*
4. Assessment Boards at the College: The Three-Tier Process, *Registrar*
5. Assessment at the College: Policies, Procedures & Practice, *Registrar*
6. Meetings with Faculty to include:
 - 6.1. An overview of the Programmes and their constituent courses
 - 6.2. Marking Criteria & Marking Schemes
 - 6.3. The logistics of External Examining
 - 6.3.1. Confirming key contacts;
 - 6.3.2. Confirming receipt of relevant documentation;
 - 6.3.3. Confirming where and when to send relevant documentation;
 - 6.3.4. Confirming criteria for selecting samples of examination scripts/assignments for consideration.
7. Any questions
8. Close

THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER AND EXTERNAL EXAMINING

External Examiners play a fundamental role in assuring the College's academic standards by providing an external perspective on student performance and on the conduct of the assessment process at the College.

External examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining nationally comparable standards within autonomous higher education institutions. The main purposes of external examining are:

- to verify that academic standards are appropriate for the award and its component parts by reference to published national subject benchmarks, the FQHE, programme specifications and other relevant information;
- to help providers ensure that the assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the learning outcomes of the programme/course;
- to verify that providers' assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line with their policies and regulations;
- to help the College to assure and maintain academic standards in line with Swansea University and its awards.

Regular roles of External Examiners at the College include the following:

- Reviewing examination papers and marking criteria, and coursework assignments and project titles as appropriate;

- Reviewing samples of students' work and reporting on the marking standards;
- Completing an annual report to evaluate whether the College's academic standards are comparable with those in other UK HE institutions, and whether the standards of student performance are comparable with the standards of students on comparable courses in other institutions;
- Attending Course Assessment Boards at the College.

In addition, the College will consult its External Examiners on:

- Changes to programmes and/or courses through appropriate programme and course modifications processes;
- Programme or course development.

Further details regarding the principles, roles and responsibilities of External Examiners and External Examining may be found in the University's Quality Handbook Chapter 5: External Examining of Taught Courses and the College's Academic Quality Framework Section 14: External Examining & Moderation of Taught Courses.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Your primary responsibilities as an External Examiner are to verify that the academic standards of the University's awards, as indicated by students' attainment in assessment, have been set and maintained at the level prevailing in other higher education bodies in the United Kingdom, and that the process of assessment is fair, rigorous and conducted according to the appropriate academic regulations.

In order to carry out these responsibilities, you should be able, individually or collectively, to:

- Judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with the course, the staff or any of the students.
- Calibrate the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere.
- Approve the form and content of proposed end of course assessment tasks that count towards an award.
- Be consulted on the details of assessment (such as mode and weighting) and be given the opportunity to comment on the approved assessment regulations which will directly affect students on the course.
- Consider a sample of graded scripts from each course for which you are contracted, in order to confirm that the scripts have been graded in accordance with the criteria stated, to the proper standard, fairly and accurately. Samples will normally comprise grades corresponding to the highest available category of the award, borderlines, fails and all referral work.
- Exercise your right to moderate the marks awarded by internal examiners, and adjust the overall range of grades if warranted.

- Ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with the University's regulations.
- Attend all meetings of Course Assessment Boards at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made and ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means according with the University's regulations and normal practice in higher education.
- Report back to the College and University on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them.
- Submit an annual report for postgraduate courses.
- Be competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher education level.
- Be an expert in the field of study concerned.
- Be impartial in judgment.
- Be properly briefed in your role, the relevant course and the College's and University's regulations.

EXAMINATION BOARDS

The College and University combine together to operate a three-tier examination board process for all postgraduate programmes:

FIRST TIER EXAMINATION BOARD: ASSESSMENT BOARD

The first tier of examination boards is that of the Assessment Board. This is an internal board held by the College, prior to the University exam board procedure. The Assessment Board's Terms of Reference are:

1. To monitor course and programme performance;
2. To review the individual course assessment data and identify courses with anomalous grade ranges and/or low progression rates, and to explore the rationale for the outlying course(s);
3. To review any Extenuating Circumstances submitted by students to make recommendations to the College for further student support, without compromising the confidentiality or revealing the nature of the circumstance;
4. To consider any academic misconduct cases and identify any pattern of academic misconduct within the courses.

The Master chairs this meeting with the Registrar, Head of Quality Assurance, Heads of Faculty and internal assessors in attendance.

For information on Swansea University examination board structure, please click [here](#).

APPEALS AGAINST UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION BOARD DECISIONS

Students can appeal the decision of a University Progression and Awards Board. Students appeal directly to Swansea University. Further information on Academic Appeals can be found [here](#).

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

In accordance with the Validation Agreement, the University manages all extenuating circumstances. Further information can be found [here](#).

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

All students are required to comply with the College's and University's Regulations. These are made available to students through the College's website and are reviewed with students during the examination preparation sessions delivered by the Student and Academic Services Team. These regulations provide students with clear instructions about:

- Attending examinations.
- Examination room regulations for written examinations.
- In-course assessment regulations – coursework and assignment submission.
- Assistance to students with Specific and Non-Specific Learning Difficulties.
- Extenuating Circumstances.

REVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS

The College operates an internal peer review procedure to ensure that the assessments are set at the required level and enable students to meet the learning outcomes. The peer review also checks for grammar and spelling.

Once the assessments have been peer reviewed, you will be sent the assessments to ensure that they are appropriate for the sector.

This process happens prior to their being published to the students, which provides the peer reviewer and External Examiner an opportunity to provide feedback and for the assessments to be modified accordingly.

EXTERNAL MODERATION

External Examiners are asked to moderate the marking of internal markers to ensure that marking is accurate, consistent, fair, equitable, reliable, transparent and in line with national standards for the provision.

External Examiners are not expected to mark work themselves and must not be asked to arbitrate or moderate disagreements between internal markers/moderators, or be used as a third marker. Any disagreements must be resolved between the marker, Peer Reviewer and Moderator.

Where the external moderation of assessment raises substantial queries concerning the standards or consistency of marking, the External Examiner has the right to recommend to the Assessment Board a change to element marks and where appropriate course marks.

The External Examiner(s) cannot recommend that any individual mark be changed in isolation, unless the work of every student for that assessment has been reviewed, to ensure that no student is unfairly advantaged/disadvantaged.

All assessment submissions, examination scripts and coursework assignments go through the following procedure:

1. All assessment submissions are marked by the internal marker.
2. 10% or 5 (whichever is the greater) submissions are internally moderated.
3. The same sample that has been internally moderated is then sent to the SU Link Tutor. The Link Tutor has the responsibility of checking that the internal moderation has been conducted. The Link Tutor completes the Internal Moderation Record.
4. The External Examiner will receive, either electronically or in hard copy by request:
 - 5.1. Sample coursework or examination scripts
 - 5.2. Internal Moderation Record
 - 5.3. Marks sheet
 - 5.4. Coursework Assessment Brief or Examination Paper
 - 5.5. Course Descriptor
 - 5.6. Grade Marking Scale
 - 5.7. External Examiner Sample Feedback Form – See [Appendix 1](#) (this form is to record your comments in preparation for your verbal report at the College’s Assessment Board).

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS’ ANNUAL REPORTS

As an External Examiner, you are required to submit an External Examiner’s Annual Report to Swansea University. The University manages the reports and they will be able to give you the dates and submission requirements.

In addition, an External Examiner will be required, at the end of their appointment, to provide a summative report of the period of their appointment.

THE PURPOSES OF THE ANNUAL REPORT

The main purpose of the Annual Report is to enable the University to consider and determine whether the College’s programmes are meeting their stated objectives and to ensure that any necessary improvements are made, either immediately or at the next review of the programme as appropriate.

The Annual Report also informs the College’s annual monitoring and reporting processes. Annual monitoring and reporting forms a key part of the College’s cycle of assuring and enhancing the academic standards and quality of its programmes and courses. Each Head of Faculty completes an Annual Monitoring Report (NCH’s internal procedure) and Programme Review Report (Swansea University’s procedure) annually involving input from External Examiners through the Annual Report.

WHO SEES THE ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Reports are made available to the relevant University staff. They are also made available to the College's Master, Heads of Faculty, faculty and Quality Team. In addition they are made available to students through Moodle, the College's virtual learning environment.

WHO RESPONDS TO THE ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Faculty, in collaboration with the Course Leaders and faculty, will write a letter, responding to your key points and informing you of any actions that have been agreed by the faculty.

The response to External Examiner Annual Reports will record actions planned to be taken in response to your recommendations as well as recording areas of good practice that you have identified. It is the responsibility of the Heads of Faculty to ensure that each action is monitored and completed, and to disseminate the areas of good practice for wider consideration and adoption as appropriate.

The completed responses to External Examiner Annual Reports are submitted to Academic Board for consideration and monitoring of any outcomes.

RAISING A CONCERN

If you have cause to raise a concern about any matter relating to the standards and performance, particularly if it is considered that the assessments are being conducted in a way which jeopardises the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the University, you should write to Swansea University.

If you have cause to raise a concern about the behaviour or performance of a member of staff at the College, you should put this in writing to the Master of the College.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR SUPPORT

GENERAL QUERIES AND SUPPORT FROM THE COLLEGE

If you have any general queries about your role as an External Examiner or require copies of documentation mentioned in this handbook, please contact the Registrar, Ms Rosalind Barrs: rosalind.barrs@nchlondon.ac.uk

PROGRAMME SPECIFIC QUERIES AND SUPPORT FROM THE COLLEGE

If you have any queries about the courses for which you are an External Examiner, please contact the relevant Head of Faculty:

Faculty	Name	Email address
Economics	Dr Marianna Koli	marianna.koli@nchlondon.ac.uk
History	Dr Lars Kjaer	lars.kjaer@nchlondon.ac.uk
Philosophy	Dr Naomi Goulder	naomi.goulder@nchlondon.ac.uk
Politics and International Relations	Dr Diana Bozhilova	diana.bozhilova@nchlondon.ac.uk

APPENDIX 1 – EXTERNAL EXAMINER SAMPLE FEEDBACK FORM

COURSE DETAILS

Name of External Examiner:

Course code and title:

Course element (with weighting):

FEEDBACK

Please comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of assessment, including any recommendations for enhancement.

Please confirm that you have seen samples of completed work for this course: YES / NO

Please confirm that you are satisfied that standards have been met, i.e. in your view, based on the work samples that you have seen, has work been assessed in line with the national standards for the subject and level?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Do you have any further comments which you would like to be considered at the College's Assessment Board?

RETURN OF PHOTOCOPIED SCRIPTS

If you are attending the College's Assessment Board on xx June 20xx, please bring any paper sample scripts with you.

If you are unable to attend the College's Assessment Board on xx June 20xx, please may we ask you to securely dispose of the sample, i.e. by shredding or using a confidential waste system at your home institution.

Please delete any electronic copies of samples from your desk top and/or laptop computers, as well as deleting the relevant emails.

Title	Postgraduate External Examiners Handbook	Author	Head of Quality Assurance
Location	NCH Academic Handbook	Approved by	Academic Board
Version	2	Last updated	October 2018
Publication date	November 2018	Review date	August 2019
Related policies	Assessment Policy ; Assessment Regulations ; Grade Marking Scale ; Extenuating Circumstances ; Academic Appeals Policy .		
External Reference Points	UK Quality Code Chapter B7: External Examining		