# **University of Birmingham External Examiner Report Questions**

# **for Academic Year: 2023-24**

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This document lists the questions contained in the on-line external examiners report and provides guidance around each section. It may be useful to external examiners who would like to consider their answers in advance of completing the report, and for Schools to gauge the information and involvement they should be presenting to external examiners.

External Examiners will be sent a specific link to their on-line report prior to their reporting deadline. Word versions of the report will not be accepted unless specifically requested.

Standard deadlines for submission are:

* 10th July (for undergraduate programmes) or
* 9th November (for postgraduate taught programmes)

If external examiners have not received a link to their specific on-line report six weeks before their report deadline, or have any queries regarding the completion of their report, please contact externalexaminers@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

**Guidance –**

The report is an opportunity for the external examiner to be a critical friend to the School/Institution and identify our strengths, weaknesses, areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement.

It enables external examiner to provide feedback to the teaching team and institution on the overall judgement of student performance and the quality and standards of the programme.

The comparability of threshold academic standards between modules within a course and between different courses in different institutions. (If this is your first external examiner role you would compare these with your own institution).

The alignment of outcomes, how coherent the programme is and whether it achieves the standards appropriate to the programme.

The fairness and rigour of the assessment process.

Possibilities for enhancement

Reports are the heart of quality assurance. It is very important they are robust and strongly evidence-based to support claims for high quality and standards, and in programmes where there are issues to be addressed.

The wording of reports must be carefully chosen in the light of the multiple audiences: staff, students, University senior staff and relevant external bodies.

**Question 1 – Programme / Curriculum**

*(Reference:* [*Code of Practice on External Examining*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf), *section 3.*

*For question 1e,* [*Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks) *and OfS sector-recognised standards)*

**Guidance –**

Confirmation that the School/programme team has ensured you have all the information needed in order to fulfil your role as an external examiner, as set out in the Code of Practice on External Examining Taught Provision

Provide judgement and recommendations on subject content, learning outcomes, and standards of proficiency in the context of the relevant regulations, Subject Benchmarks and sector norms.

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| --- | --- |
| 1a | Did you receive programme handbook(s) including learning outcomes? |
| 1b | Did you receive module descriptions including learning outcomes? |
| 1c | Did you receive all of the assessment briefs/marking criteria that you were expecting to receive? |
| 1d | Overall, did you receive sufficient evidence to enable your role to be fulfilled? |
| 1e | Do the programme learning outcomes align with relevant level descriptors in the OfS sector-recognised standards, QAA FHEQ[[1]](#footnote-1) and any applicable subject benchmarks? |
| 1f | Using the subject benchmark as a guide[[2]](#footnote-2), where applicable, is equality, diversity, and inclusion evident in the programme(s) curriculum, assessment, course materials? |
| 1g | Overall, is/are the programme(s) coherent? |
| 1h | Are there any curriculum issues (in terms of currency or PSRB[[3]](#footnote-3) requirements, if applicable) that you wish to bring to the University’s attention? |
| 1i | If applicable to your external examiner portfolio, did you receive information to allow you to scrutinise the appropriate programmes in Dubai? |
| 1j | If applicable to your external examiner portfolio, did you receive information to allow you to scrutinise Apprenticeship programme(s)? This should include the Apprenticeship Standard and Apprenticeship Assessment Plan. |
| 1k | If applicable to your external examiner portfolio, does the teaching and learning fully cover the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the Apprenticeship Standard? |
|  | Please elaborate on your responses to the above questions (as appropriate).  |
| Comments |

**Question 2 – Assessment**

*(Reference:* [*Code of Practice on External Examining*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf) *Section 5.6)*

**Guidance –**

Schools/programme teams are to provide external examiners with all draft assessments and accompanying model answers / marking criteria at the beginning of each academic year.

External examiner to comment on the appropriateness, clarity and rigour of assessment design.

There is a question on how inappropriate or unauthorised use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is mitigated against in assessments – this may be handled by Schools in different ways and incorporate the University Principles on GAI. The School should make it clear how they are managing the use of GAI.

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| 2a | Did you receive all the necessary draft assessments[[4]](#footnote-4) for comment that you were expecting to receive? |
| 2b | Were the nature and level of the questions appropriate? |
| 2c | Were suitable arrangements made to provide feedback on your comments? |
| 2d | Are clear protocols or processes in place to help mitigate the effects of inappropriate or unauthorised use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) within summative assessments?*\*This may be evident through marking criteria/rubrics, School assessment strategy, information provided on assignment specifications. and/or guidance to staff and students.* *\*Please expand on your answer in the comments section* |
| 2e | If applicable to your external examiner portfolio, were the assessments in Dubai appropriate? (Please use the comments section below to comment on the comparability of any programmes that have an equivalent version delivered in Dubai and Edgbaston) |
| 2f | If applicable to your external examiner portfolio, is it clear where elements of assessment within modules are linked to the occupation and the End Point Assessment (using the Apprenticeship Assessment Plan)? |
|  | *Please elaborate on your responses to the above questions (as appropriate). We would also welcome comments on:** *the rigour and appropriateness of the methods of assessment used in relation to the levels of study and the stated learning outcomes;*
* *the comparability of assessment (e.g. method of assessment or assessment load) in modules of the same level,* *and if assessment is inclusive*
 |
| Comments |

**Question 3 – Marking and Moderation**

*(References:* [*Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment and feedback:*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-taught-prog-assessment-23-24.pdf) *Section 5*

*and* [*Code of Practice on External Examining:*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf) *Section 5)*

**Guidance –**

External examiners to scrutinise the marking and moderation procedures of the University, in order to ensure high academic standards, which are comparable with other universities in the sector.

External examiners do not determine marks for individual students but consider, and provide feedback on, the consistency and accuracy of marking across a cohort. This is achieved through reviewing the marking within each module, and between modules of the same level.

* External examiners are to be provided with samples of marked student work from across the full mark range.
* There should be a clear indication of how a mark has been arrived at.
* There should be evidence of the moderation process (e.g. markers’ comments).
* Markers’ comments should map on to the relevant marking criteria and reflect the mark awarded.

There should be evidence and clarity of how marking criteria meet the OfS’ B Condition to demonstrate assessment of English language proficiency both at a provider level and at a subject level, and also demonstrate how the learning outcomes are marked in alignment the with relevant level descriptors in the OfS sector-recognised standards.

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| 3a | Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts for your scrutiny? |
| 3b | Did you consider the standard of marking and moderation procedures to be appropriate and consistently applied?  |
| 3c | Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? |
| 3d | Were the marking criteria used suitable?  |
| 3e | Do marking criteria refer (either implicitly or explicitly) to English Language proficiency and do they align to Degree Classification Descriptors (School, programme, and/or University-level)?*\*Please expand on your answer in the comments section* |
| 3f | If applicable, were the supplied model answers and/or other information appropriate? |
| 3g | Please elaborate on your responses to the above questions (as appropriate). |
| Comments |

**Question 4 - Award**

*(The University’s* [*Code of Practice on External Examining*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf) *(section 6) requires all external examiners to*

*have attended the relevant Board of Examiners’ meeting(s) as agreed with the School.)*

**Guidance –**

All external examiners to be full members of the relevant Board of Examiners (BoE) meetings and to attend.

If external examiners are unable to attend a BoE meeting this should be agreed well in advance so that an alternative mechanism can be put in place with you to obtain your agreement on the results and decisions made.

External examiner, at the BoE meeting, is to endorse the results and awards made and should be requested to sign a mark/award list or similar to evidence endorsement.

Help ensure academic standards and student achievement are comparable with other UK Higher Education Institutions of which the Examiner has experience.

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| 4a | Were you invited to attend the relevant (in-person or virtual) Board of Examiners’ meeting(s)? |
| 4b | Were you able to attend the meeting(s)? |
| 4c | If you attended, was/were the meeting(s) conducted to your satisfaction? |
| 4d | If you were unable to attend in-person or virtually, were you consulted via other means? |
| 4e | Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board of Examiners, including the degree classifications awarded for each student (following a review of each student’s marks distribution)? |
|  | Section 4 Comments (on the equity of procedures)*Please elaborate on your responses to the above questions (as appropriate). We would also welcome comments on the equity of procedures at the Board of Examiners’ meeting(s) in relation to the following:** *consideration of candidates affected by extenuating circumstances;*
* *matters of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism cases);*
* *borderline candidates.*
 |
| Comments |
|  | Section 4 Comments (on academic standards and the achievements of students)*Please comment on:* * *the overall academic standards and the achievements of students (e.g. proportion of 1st/2(i)/2(ii), etc. for UG programmes, or proportion of Pass/Merit/Distinction awards for PGT programmes);*
* *whether academic standards have been maintained;*
* *if there are any significant differences in the achievement of students from the previous year, and in comparison with other higher education institutions of which you have experience.*
 |
| Comments |
|  | Section 4 Comments (Dubai or Apprenticeships – comments on comparability across different cohorts)*If you also examine an equivalent programme(s) delivered at our University of Birmingham Campus in Dubai, or as an Apprenticeship, please comment on the comparability of quality, standards and achievements across the different cohorts.* |
| Comments |

**Question 5 – Students**

*(The University’s* [*Code of Practice on External Examining*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf) *(section 9) states that external examiners should be provided with the opportunity, normally once per academic year, to meet groups of students informally to gather their views of the programme. It is expected that external examiners will accept these invitations to meet with students. These meetings should ideally take place in confidence between external examiners and students (i.e. no academic staff in attendance) and may take place at any point in the academic session, possibly incorporated with other visits to campus/meetings with students.)*

**Guidance –**

External examiners are to meet with representative groups of students in order to discuss their experiences of the programme of study, so you can provide useful feedback to the School.

Your School should offer you this opportunity and please feel free to request such a meeting if one is not offered to you during the academic session.

These meetings are to be in confidence between the external examiner and the students and may take place at any point in the academic session – it may be incorporated with another planned visit or discussion.

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| 5a | In the context of section 9 of the Code of Practice on External Examining mentioned above, did you meet with a representative group of students during this academic session?*Please choose the most applicable answer.* *(This includes students from the Dubai campus and Apprenticeship programme(s) where applicable.)* |
| 5b | If you were able to attend the (in-person or virtual) meeting, how many students were present?  |
|  | Section 5 Comments (in context of the student experience)Please comment on any issues arising from this meeting (or any other issue related to the student experience arising from another source) you wish to communicate to the School. Please make it clear which provision each item noted is referring to (e.g., if it is specific to apprenticeships, Dubai etc.)This may include comment on the following (*not exhaustive*): |
| * Assessment scheduling / load
* Feedback on assessment
* Academic tutorial support
* Curriculum issues (e.g. module choice and equality of access)
* Equality, diversity, and inclusivity of the curriculum, assessment, and materials
* Support from the University (and support in the workplace, where applicable)
 | * The experiences of:

- Distance learning students- International or direct entry students- Joint honours or major/minor students- Students on collaborative programmes- Students on a placement- Students at the Dubai campus- Students on Apprenticeship programmes |
| Comments |

**Question 6 - Enhancement of Provision**

*(Reference:* [*Code of Practice on External Examining*](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/documents/public/cohort-legislation-2023-24/cop-external-examining-taught-provision-23-24.pdf)*, section 4)*

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| 6a | Are there any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment that would be worth bringing to the attention of others within the University? |
| Comments |
| 6b | Do you have any suggestion to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students of the programme(s)? |
| Comments |

**Question 7 – Closing Remarks**

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|  7a | Are there any recurring issues that you feel have not been addressed satisfactorily since the previous academic session? |
| Comments |
| 7b | Are there any comments you wish to make to the School and/or the University that have not already been covered elsewhere in this report form?  |
| Comments |
| 7c | If you are in the final year of your appointment, we would welcome any comments that you might have regarding your overall experience as external examiner for the University. |
| Comments |

**End of Report Form**

1. Framework for Higher Education Qualifications [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ‘Draft assessments’ refers to exam papers and essay questions [↑](#footnote-ref-4)