Undergraduate External Examiner Reports Overview Analysis for 2018/19

Section 1: Summary and analysis of undergraduate External Examiner reports 2018/19

1.1 Purpose of External Examiner

External examiners are one of the principle means by which we uphold our academic standards. External Examiners are usually academics employed by other universities. External Examiners support the University in ensuring that the University's award requirements are appropriate and that the academic standards achieved by students are comparable to the sector. The University regularly reviews its policies and processes for external examining and ensures alignment with the UK Quality Code.

1.2 Appointment

An External Examiner is appointed to each course of study for a period of 4 years. A rigorous appointment process, aligned to the UK Quality Code, is in place to ensure that External Examiners are appropriately experienced and that they can carry out their role impartially, to provide independent scrutiny.

1.3 Induction

New External Examiners are primarily inducted through the material sent out by the Academic Development and Quality Enhancement (ADQE) office and the School. All new and existing External Examiners are invited to an induction session scheduled during the year on the role of the External Examiner and on the Examination and Assessment Regulations. This includes an opportunity to meet with School faculty and students.

1.4 External Examiner role

Specific aspects of the External Examiner role include:

- signing off heavily weighted assessment tasks, for example exam papers or essay questions
- reviewing samples of completed assessments across the classification bands to establish that the outcomes are consistent and fair with reference to the marking criteria and assessment task
- attending the Progression and Award Board to ensure that the assessment procedures are applied consistently
- completing an annual report to help the University confirm that academic standards have been maintained

1.5 Annual Reports

Overall 92.2% of the reports that were expected were received by the Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Office (83/90 reports received). The reports were distributed widely throughout the institution in line with agreed procedures. This compared to an 89% response rate in 2017/18. This excludes BSMS reports which JARB receives on behalf of the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students) has the option to consider terminating the contract if a report is not received in time to be considered as part of Annual Course Review.

Actions plans in response to school level issues will be considered by School Teaching and Learning Committees and responses sent directly by the Chair of the Progression and Award Board (PAB) to External Examiners. The reports and the action plans will be reviewed during the Annual Course Review event. A proposed response to institutional issues that have been raised in External Examiner Reports have been set out below in italics.

Sections 2-4 provide a summary of data extracted from the External Examiner reports 2018/19 and areas of good practice amongst Schools.

<u>Institutional Issues for 2018/19</u> (refer to relevant section for more detail)
- Timeframe for completing moderation is tight – *Inform Externals of timeframes for moderation and provide sample electronically for non e-submission assessments, if possible.*
- Feedback on some modules varies greatly and is sometimes too generic - *Schools to continue to review feedback practices with a view to providing more consistent and helpful feedback to students.*
- Some concerns about marks checking processes and moderation – *Schools to advise Externals of marks checking process used e.g. double marking on all heavily weighted assessments prior to moderation. ADQE to produce a short guide for Schools to send with the sample for moderation.*
- Some Externals are keen to have more data on the distribution of marks – *Schools to ask some Externals to attend the MAB instead of the PAB*
- Marking criteria in some Schools to be reviewed to ensure clear differentiation at the upper end and clarity regarding different assessment modes – *review marking criteria.*

<u>Update on Institutional issues from 2017/18</u>

- Concerns related to the timeframe for moderation and the lack of opportunity to reject a moderation sample and ask for a remark (time constraints prior to the PAB do not allow a remark of entire cohort) – *where the concern relates to a marking band or a particular examination question, the External can specify that a band or question is remarked for the cohort. ADQE can work with Schools to produce a short guide for Schools to send with the sample. The guide would include reference to the FAQs for External Examiners.*

- Preference to prescribe the moderation sample, for example, to see scripts of highest and lowest marks given, instead of a random sample – *for esubmission assessments, the sample is automatically selected in accordance with the criteria (10% of the assessments (minimum 7 maximum 25), all fails, scripts from all classification bands). These criteria should also be used for moderation samples provided in hard copy. The FAQs for External Examiners include a check list of the materials to be sent with the sample for moderation. ADQE can work with Schools to produce a short guide for Schools to send with a hard copy sample.*
- Feedback varies greatly, within module, and is sometimes too generic - *Schools to continue to review feedback practices with a view to implementing some standardisation to ensure consistency and support feed-forward to future assessments.*
- A minority of external examiners have expressed disagreement with aspects of the University's regulations – *The University will continue to provide briefings for External Examiners with PVC before PABs, to provide an opportunity to discuss regulatory issues. It is important to note that regulations vary between institutions and that Sussex's have been approved as appropriate to maintain standards through normal committee processes.*