Summary of university-level issues raised by undergraduate External Examiners and institutional responses (extract from the report approved by UEC)

6.   Institutional Issues emerging from External Examiner Reports 2019/20

6.1   The following issues have been raised by External Examiners. Proposed response and actions is included in italics

6.1.1   Timeframe for completing moderation is tight (for Schools and Externals)
Examiners observed that the moderation deadlines are exceedingly tight for both faculty and external examiners. This issue was also raised in 2018/19 and 2017/18.
It is recommended that External Examiners are informed of timeframes for moderation and that a sample is provided via Box for non e-submission assessments, where possible. This concern should also be taken into consideration in a future review of the academic year structure.

6.1.2   Feedback on assessment
Examiners observed that the quality and quantity of feedback can vary considerably and that it is sometimes too generic.
It is recommended that Schools continue to review feedback practices with a view to providing more consistent and helpful feedback to students. Some positive comments were received in 2019/20 where departments have adopted standardised marking/feedback templates. Work is underway to systemise the expected date for marks and feedback to be published for each assessment. This is to manage student expectations and to support Schools in keeping 'turnaround' times under review. The online learning baseline include the requirement to ensure that the methods for returning feedback are clearly explained.

6.1.3   Data on degree outcomes
A number of examiners indicated that they would like more data on degree outcomes.
Schools are reminded that a rank list web report is available and can be provided at the PAB. Whilst at institutional level, the Annual Report on Degree Outcomes should be shared with External Examiners.

6.1.4   On-line exam questions
Some concerns were raised regarding online exam questions and the need to ensure that they test student understanding where material can be sought from the internet or module resources.
It is recommended that Schools review online exams to ensure they are robust and that assessments are shared with examiners prior to their use

6.2   Overall, reports contained many positive comments recognising the effort that went into supporting students, adjusting assessments and moving teaching online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was widely noted that this had helped maintain strong student performance despite the difficult circumstances.

7   Update on institutional issues from 2018/19

7.1   Distribution of marks - data
Some Externals indicated a preference to receive more data on the distribution of marks
Schools to ask some Externals to attend the MAB instead of the PAB

7.2   Marks checking and Moderation
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 sent a short guide to External Examiners in June 2020 to support them in the moderation process).

7.3   Marking Criteria
Marking criteria in some Schools to be reviewed to ensure clear differentiation at the upper end and clarity regarding different assessment modes
Schools to *review marking criteria. The online learning baseline include the requirement to include clear instructions, marking criteria and/or rubrics for all assessed tasks.*

8   **Institutional issues from 2017/18**

8.1   Moderation processes
Concerns related to the timeframe for moderation and the lack of opportunity to reject a moderation sample and to ask for a remark (Note: time constraints prior to the PAB do not allow a remark of the 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 sent a short guide to External Examiners in June 2020 to support them in the moderation process. The guide included a link to the FAQs for External Examiners which explain that a partial remark is possible).

8.2   Some examiners expressed a preference to prescribe the moderation sample, for example, to see scripts of highest and lowest marks given, instead of a random sample
 For e-submission 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. (ADQE sent a short guide to External Examiners in June 2020 to support them in the moderation process. The guide included a check list of the resources that are available to support moderation.)