Dear External Examiner,

I am writing to give you an update on how the University of Sussex is responding to the unprecedented situation in which we all find ourselves and how this will impact on your role as an external examiner.

The University is fully committed to supporting all of our students, as far as is possible, to complete the assessments due during the remainder of this academic year; so that as many students as possible are able to progress to the next year of study or to receive their degree and graduate in the summer.

The University took the decision to suspend all face-to-face teaching and to begin online teaching from Monday 23rd March. The University also confirmed that there would be no further on campus assessment for the rest of the academic year (including the resit period) and that in-person examinations would be adjusted to other forms of assessment that students will be able to undertake remotely, whilst still demonstrating the necessary learning outcomes. Academic colleagues have been working exceptionally hard over the past few weeks to prepare for online delivery and to modify assessments. The University has put in place simplified processes to enable and approve these temporary modifications to modules. We have asked that where possible, you are asked to review the revised assessment task, but understand that because of the exceptional circumstances in which many people are now living and working, you may not be able to comment.

In light of the extraordinary circumstances, the University has also taken the decision to give all students a two-week extension on all assessments scheduled to take place in the Semester 2 assessment period. Students with reasonable adjustments for extra time will continue to receive this in addition to the general two-week extension. This means that all dates for marking, internal and external moderation and Progression and Award Boards have been moved on by two weeks. All student work will be submitted electronically, so this should ensure that we are able to share samples of marked work with you and we will be asking you to review the work in the usual way, albeit at a distance. We anticipate that Progression and Award Boards will take place virtually and your School will be in touch about revised dates for boards and how you will be able to participate.

Like many institutions, the University has made a no detriment commitment to our students that their final award or progression will not be adversely impacted by Covid-19. This no detriment arrangement will take the form of a safety net that will ensure that a student’s overall year average will not be lower than the average achieved in Semester 1. Where courses are accredited, we are liaising with PSRBs to ensure that our no detriment policy aligns with their requirements. We are currently finalising these exceptional regulations and will be able to update you in due course on the specific detail.

I hope that this update will reassure you that the University continues to be mindful of academic standards and the essential role that our external examiners play in assuring these standards. If you have any queries concerning the course or modules that you are assigned to please contact your School. If you have any queries about the University’s mitigation
approach to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, please reply to this email address and your query will be referred to me.

In the meantime, I hope that you stay safe and would like to thank you for your continued support for the University.

With best wishes

Kelly Coate

PVC, Education and Students

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