

ACADEMIC QUALITY



Learning and Teaching Policy

Review of Assessment Tasks by External Examiners

The University's [Policy on the Moderation of Assessment](#), and the accompanying [Procedures](#), set out the institutional approaches for both the internal and external moderation of assessment, which covers the following two stages:

- 1) The process of reviewing assessments during drafting and setting stage, ie before these are issued to students;
- 2) The process of reviewing assessments following completion by students.

At its meeting on 29 June 2022, the University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS) approved a change to requirements regarding review, by External Examiners, of assessments during the drafting and setting stage.

The Policy is supported by the Procedures on [Internal Review of Assessment and Internal and External Moderation](#), which were approved by the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2024.

As at July 2025, the Chair of UCQS and the School Directors of Academic Quality are undertaking a review of the University's [Moderation Procedures](#); updates to this document will be made as required.

Review of Assessment Tasks by External Examiners: Regulations and Policy

The University's [Policy on the Moderation of Assessment](#) states the following with regard to the scope of the policy, ie where moderation needs to be applied:

1. *All qualifying assessments which contribute to the degree awards associated with a programme:*
 - *All forms and variants of summative assessment, ie those which contribute to the overall mark/grade and award of credit, irrespective of mode or location of delivery of a programme.*
 - *All stages of the assessment process, from design of, and criteria for, assignments to the final marking and confirmation of results.*
2. *Stage Three assessments of programmes from which substantial numbers of students exit with an Ordinary degree.*

Schools may opt to apply moderation processes to assessments associated with non-qualifying courses.

From 2022/23, the responsibilities of External Examiners in relation to external moderation of assessments were revised, so that there is no longer a requirement in the Regulations for Externals to review 70% of a qualifying course's assessments at the design stage.

Rather, Schools are to determine an "appropriate and sufficient" selection of assessment components for Externals to review before the Award Board.

As well as providing External Examiners with an appropriate selection of completed assignments to review, Schools should also seek external comments on the design of assessments. External Examiners can review the design of assessments throughout the academic year prior to completion of their annual report. There is no University requirement for External Examiners to review assessment tasks prior to the assessment being undertaken by students (it is recognised that some PSRBs require External Examiners to review assessment tasks prior to completion by students). The [Handbook for External Examining](#) sets out the requirements for external review of assessments at the design stage and at the post completion stage.

Additionally, Schools may choose to seek comments from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

Procedures for Providing External Examiners with Assessments for Review

This section should be read in conjunction with the [Procedures on Internal Review of Assessment and Internal and External Moderation](#).

Review of assessment materials by External Examiners is supported on the University's [Virtual Learning Environment \(Canvas\)](#) and [Intranet \(SharePoint\)](#).

On appointment, External Examiners are given HWU IT credentials by Information Services, enabling them to access SharePoint and Canvas. Provision of this access will require EEs to progress through the University's online security processes. However, the process of enabling access to specific course materials on these platforms remains relatively manual, and so EEs may be unable to access the relevant materials. In these cases, Course Leaders should send specific access requests to Information Services (ishelp@hw.ac.uk).

The Academic Operations Division within Registry and Academic Support is responsible for providing External Examiners with assessments (briefs, sample of completed assignments) to consider as part of their annual review prior to Award Boards. These services are provided by two teams for all campuses: the Exams Team and the School Support Teams (both based at the Edinburgh Campus).

If an external review is required in advance of an assessment's distribution to students (in cases where, for example, an accreditation authority requires a pre-completion review of questions/tasks by Externals), the Course Leader provides the name of the External Examiner when exam requirements are notified to the Exams Team. The Exams Team will liaise with the External Examiner to manage the review process.

The Exams Team will liaise with Schools over selection of materials and access for External Examiners. If an External Examiner has not been set up by Information Services for access to Canvas sites, Course Leaders, who have access to Canvas course sites, will need to raise a ticket with IS to request this access (ishelp@hw.ac.uk).

The Exams Team manages a [Review of Assessment and Moderation SharePoint site](#) for recording, storing and sharing evidence of External Examiner reviews (and also internal reviews/moderation).

Process for Review of Assessment Tasks in advance of Distribution to Students

Please note that this is a summary of the full procedures as set out in the [Procedures on Internal Review of Assessment and Internal and External Moderation](#); it focuses only the role of External Examiners and excludes procedures related internal review/ moderation.

External Examiners do not need to review assessment tasks prior to release to students unless this is required by an accreditation authority. In these cases, there are different processes for coursework and for exams, but all reviews must be completed by the end of week 8 of each Semester:

- Coursework tasks (including resits), including completed internal review forms, are uploaded by Course Leaders to Canvas. Reviews are conducted only through Canvas;
- Exam papers (including resits), including completed internal review forms, are uploaded by Course Leaders to the relevant SharePoint folder.

Each External Examiner will have a named folder within the SharePoint site containing assessment papers, solutions documents, internal moderation paperwork and External Examiner review form template.

Review Process:

- At the beginning of week 4 of each semester, the Exams Team will email the External Examiner (to HWU and home institution emails) with the link to their specific folder advising them that assessment documents will be available for review and prepopulated [External Examiner Review Form](#) week 7
- The deadline for the External Examiner to complete their review of assessment documents and upload the completed External Examiner review form is the end of week 8;
- The External Examiner's completed review form is accessed in the relevant folder by the Course Leader and comments addressed as appropriate by end of week 9;

Process for Review of Assessment Tasks and a Selection of Completed Assignments prior to Award Boards

The section below summarises procedures within the Academic Operations for the post-completion review of assessments by External Examiners prior to Award Boards.

Service provision:

- As standard, Academic Operations provides online-only support for review by External Examiners; unless the nature of the assessment requires in-person review; for example, physical submissions from students in the School of Textiles and Design;
- If a Discipline prefers to have in-person review by External Examiners, this must be arranged by the academic team (with the exception noted above for physical submissions). Academic Operations will provide access to a sample of the scripts or all scripts, on request from the academic team.

Review of exam scripts:

- To enable online review, a sample of the hard copy exam scripts is scanned and uploaded to the intranet for the External Examiners to view;
- *Exception:* Scripts for courses which use Gradescope are not specifically scanned for EE review, but are instead reviewed within Canvas

For coursework, digital exams, and exams using Gradescope:

- External Examiners are provided with access to Canvas to review any electronic coursework, digital exams, dissertations, or exams using Gradescope;
- Due to the largely manual nature of assigning course allocations in Canvas, EEs may be unable to access the relevant materials. In these cases, Course Leaders should send specific access requests to Information Services (ishelp@hw.ac.uk). Note: the process for enabling access to the relevant course materials for External Examiners is under review.
- If deemed appropriate, Course Leaders can additionally upload samples of coursework and dissertations to the aforementioned intranet site.

All reviews should be completed and the review paperwork returned by the deadlines set by Academic Operations prior to the relevant Award Board.

Approved by UCQS, 29 June 2022. Factual accuracy updates, 1 August 2023. Factual accuracy updates and inclusion of revised procedures for review and moderation, 17 July 2024

2025/26 version: factual accuracy updates, 2 July 2025