



GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS

1. Background

The University of Oxford asks all of its external examiners to prepare a report following each examination session in which they have participated. If you are examining in Trinity Term 2015 or later, please retain this information for future reference.

2. Submission

- (a) Please submit your report **within four weeks** of the final Examination Board meeting. The timely receipt of reports helps the University to give full and prompt consideration to the valuable comments of external examiners which are regarded as a main element of the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures. The University acknowledges that occasionally circumstances arise in which a delay in submission is unavoidable; in this case, please keep us fully informed. Please kindly note, however, the following extract from the University's *Examination Regulations*: 'An external examiner who fails to submit the annual report required by the University may continue in office only with the permission of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the Proctors.'
- (b) Please submit your report (preferably as a word document attachment) to: external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk (marked for the attention of The Vice-Chancellor c/o Catherine Whalley) and copied to the appropriate divisional contact as follows:

Division	Covering subject disciplines:	Send copy reports to:
Humanities	Classics; English Language and Literature; Fine Art; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Oriental Studies; Philosophy; and Theology and Religion.	exams@humanities.ox.ac.uk
Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Biological Sciences; Chemistry; Computer Science; Earth Sciences; Engineering Science; Materials; Mathematics; Physics; Plant Sciences; Statistics; and Zoology.	Ms Bulvinder Gurm bulvinder.gurm@mpls.ox.ac.uk
Medical Sciences	Biochemistry; Clinical Medicine; Clinical Neurosciences; Medicine; Experimental Psychology; Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Oncology; Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences; Paediatrics; Pathology; Pharmacology; Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics; Population Health; Primary Care Health Sciences; Psychiatry; and Surgical Sciences.	Mrs Aga Bush aga.bush@medsci.ox.ac.uk
Social Sciences	Anthropology and Museum Ethnography; Archaeology; Interdisciplinary Area Studies; Economics; Education; Geography and Environment; Human Science; International Development; Internet; Law; Management; Politics and International Relations; Public Policy; Social Policy and Intervention; and Sociology.	(1) Ms Sophie Fowler sophie.fowler@socsci.ox.ac.uk (2) Dr Jane Gover jane.gover@socsci.ox.ac.uk
Department for Continuing Education	Part-time and open/distributed learning provision.	registry@conted.ox.ac.uk

Electronic submission is the University's preferred method of submission. Alternatively, however, please post a copy of your report to: The Vice-Chancellor c/o Catherine Whalley, Head, Education Planning & Quality Review, Education Policy Support, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD. Your report will then be circulated to the divisions as necessary.

It is important that reports are submitted centrally in accordance with these instructions in order that payment can be processed.

3. Content of Report

- (a) The Quality Assurance Subcommittee (which reports to the Education Committee) has agreed to the introduction of a report template as a requirement for all external examiner reports for the 2015 examination period. All reports should therefore be prepared using the form which accompanies these guidelines.
- (b) The report template aims to strike a balance between capturing the essential information required and allowing the opportunity for external examiners to provide detailed qualitative comments on any aspect relating to the examination/assessment system, processes and outcomes, including any features unique to a particular subject or programme. The comprehensive and careful commentaries provided by most external examiners are valued highly within the University.
- (c) **Question A.3** asks whether the threshold standards for the programme appropriately reflect the [Qualifications Frameworks](#) (the “Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies”) and any applicable [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) which both form part of the *QAA Quality Code - Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards*.
- (d) The University recommends that external examiners consult [Chapter B7 of the QAA Quality Code](#) (extracts of which are set out in the Annex) for a full description of those areas upon which external examiners are generally expected to comment. In order to develop its quality enhancement strategy, the University particularly welcomes examiners’ comments in relation to: (i.) issues which should be brought to the attention of supervising committees (**Question B.3**) and (ii) good practice and enhancement opportunities which should be noted and disseminated more widely, as appropriate (**Question B.4**).
- (e) The Education Committee’s Examination Panel has requested that external examiners do not discuss the contents of their report within the responsible faculty or department prior to its submission to the University.

4. Circulation of Reports

- (a) Reports will normally and routinely be circulated widely among members of the department/faculty and division concerned, including to students (subject to the deletion of any references to identifiable individuals). This is in accordance with Chapter B7 of the QAA Quality Code, Indicator 14. Examiners are, however, welcome to send a separate confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor if desired. If so, **please clearly mark the message or letter as ‘confidential’**. In such circumstances it is not necessary to copy the report to the divisions concerned.
- (b) Please note that a number of universities, including the University of Oxford, have in the past received requests under the Freedom of Information Act requesting disclosure of the full text of external examiner reports. It is our policy to notify examiners personally where such requests occur.
- (c) You should receive a response to your report from the relevant department/faculty or division, including details of any actions taken as a result, or the reasons for not taking action.

5. 2nd BM Courses

External examiners for 2nd BM courses should additionally follow directions for reporting provided by the Medical Sciences Division.

6. Further Information and Queries

In case of any query or if further guidance is required, please do not hesitate to contact the University via Miss Sajda Arabi (external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk) who will be pleased to advise or redirect your enquiry, as necessary.

Annex

QAA Quality Code: Extracts from Chapter B7

Indicator 2

Awarding institutions expect their external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:

- *an institution is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements³*
- *the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations*
- *the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.*

Indicator 3

Awarding institutions expect their external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- *good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiners*
- *opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.*

Indicator 13

External examiners' annual reports provide clear and informative feedback to the institution on those areas defined for the role in Indicators 2 and 3 (the core content). In addition, their reports:

- *confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details)*
- *state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction*
- *address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body*
- *give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).*

Indicator 14

Higher education providers make external examiners' annual reports available in full to students, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly, and separately, to the head of the degree-awarding body.