

WE STAND FOR AMBITION.

University of  
**Kent**

# TAUGHT COURSE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' HANDBOOK 2025-26



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
External Examining: The Process Step-by-Step .....	4
On appointment.....	4
Setting assignments and examination papers.....	4
Reviewing student work.....	4
Assessment Boards .....	4
After the meeting.....	6
Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners.....	7
Partner College Courses .....	8
Validated Institution Courses.....	8
External Examiners' Reports.....	9
Completing the online report.....	9
The Place of External Examiners' Reports in the University of Kent's Quality Assurance Systems .....	11
Training.....	11
External Examiners Assurance and Data Protection .....	12
Fee and Expenses.....	13
Payment and Staff Connect.....	13
Change of Circumstances .....	14
Web Links .....	15
How to Find the University, and Further Contacts.....	15

## Introduction

The University requires the participation of at least one External Examiner in the examining process for all its qualifications and we are grateful to you for taking on this role. You have been invited to join Kent as an External Examiner because of your expertise and experience in teaching and examining in your subject or because of your related professional experience in the field. You may also have responsibility for managing similar courses at your home institution. Your feedback to us, as someone working in the subject area, is valued and will be used to inform the academic School's process of reflection on its performance.

The input and contributions of External Examiners are of great importance to the quality management of Kent's courses, as they are the key means of ensuring that:

- the academic standard for each award and its component parts is set and maintained by the University at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
- the assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the intended outcomes of the course, and is rigorous, fairly operated and in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
- the University is able to compare the standards of its awards with those of other higher education institutions.

This handbook is primarily intended to help you understand and fulfil your role as External Examiner. It sets out the expectations the University holds with regard to the examination processes with which you will be involved and lists the type of support that is available to you, both from the academic School or the partner institution, as well as from professional services based at Kent (see [Guidance for External Examiners](#)).

A summary of key information drawn from the University's Quality Assurance Regulatory Framework is published in the spring and a copy of this will be emailed to you at that time. This will be helpful as you prepare for the upcoming Assessment Boards.

You may also wish to consult the [QAA's External Expertise website](#) and their [External Examining Principles](#).

Should you have any questions that are not addressed in this handbook, please contact either the academic School you have been appointed to work with or the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office (QAEO) by email: [examiners@kent.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@kent.ac.uk).

## External Examining: The Process Step-by-Step

### On appointment

This handbook has been provided to enable External Examiners to familiarise themselves with the assessment procedures in place at Kent. Other information, such as student handbooks and course specifications, may be obtained from the relevant academic School or partner institution, via the School or partner institution website, as appropriate. Such information will provide specific detail about the course(s) that you have undertaken to examine.

### Setting assignments and examination papers

The first responsibility that you are likely to be contacted about will be the reviewing of and commenting on examination question papers or other assignments. Your comments will be sought before the assignment or examination can be set.

### Reviewing student work

As External Examiner, you will be asked to review and comment on student work that has already been assessed by Kent or the partner institution. This work will be sent to you in advance of the Assessment Boards. Sometimes you may be required to review students' work whilst at Kent in person or at the partner institution due to PSRB requirements or for performing arts courses. When looking at student work, you are expected to determine whether the academic standards are comparable, in your professional opinion, to what you would expect from a similar course in your own institution and, where applicable, in other institutions where you are an External Examiner. Please note that you may not write remarks on the students' work but are asked to record any comments to pass back to the programme admin team to share- [progadmin@kent.ac.uk](mailto:progadmin@kent.ac.uk). You are, of course, welcome to quote from student work if you wish to use this for your feedback to the Assessment Board. All examiners should be aware that any comments relating to individual examination scripts, even if recorded separately, may potentially be made available to the student under the [Data Protection Act 2018](#).

### Assessment Boards

The academic School at Kent or, where relevant, the partner institution will contact you to advise you of the date for the Assessment Boards. You are expected to attend all Assessment Board meetings at which recommendations on awards are to be made, with the exception of Sub-Assessment Boards convened exclusively to consider reassessed students. Should you not be able to attend the meeting of the Assessment Boards on the date proposed, you should inform the programme admin team as soon as possible so arrangements can be put in place.

When you are contacted regarding the timing of the Assessment Board(s), we will agree with you how this will work. We have strict procedures for meetings of Assessment Boards, and

you will find that the Assessment Lead will adhere to these closely. It may seem that the meetings are quite formal, but this should not stop you from commenting on student's work, or the overall quality of awards or the examining process as you see fit. An External Examiner should only change a mark if they have reviewed all the assessment submissions and where there is disagreement between the first and second markers that has not been resolved by the Assessment Lead. Alternatively, an External Examiner may ask that the marks for all candidates for a module be systematically adjusted where, having seen either all submissions or a sample of submissions, they consider this to be appropriate- [assessment-regulations-framework-annex-6.docx](#) (4.7)

Before each meeting of an Assessment Board, the Assessment Lead will convene a Mitigation Committee meeting to agree recommendations to be made to the Board regarding students who have applied for mitigation of extenuating circumstances. They may also convene a pre-Assessment Board to discuss other matters, such as trends in marking, and agree on any specific things that they would like to draw to your attention.

During the meeting of the Assessment Board the Board will confirm module marks for students and will seek your input regarding the quality and accuracy of the marking and the marks awarded. You may be invited to agree provisional decisions for reassessed students pending the results of the reassessments. You will be asked to confirm these decisions later, when the reassessment results are known.

Towards the end of the meeting the Assessment Lead and the Secretary will prepare a list of the results agreed by the Board and you will be asked to confirm these. You will be given the opportunity to make any closing remarks on the examining process and the quality of awards, or any other matters you wish to raise. Your remarks will be recorded in the formal minutes of the Board.

Please note that the Assessment Board's operate a policy of anonymisation of student identities for the purposes of agreeing grades or awarding classifications. The Assessment Lead is responsible for ensuring that the identities of students are not made known to examiners at any Board during the proceedings for confirming marks and awarding credit, or when determining the progression or classification of students. Only when the proceedings have been completed in full may the identities of students be revealed to the examiners, if required (to facilitate, for example, the award of prizes). Decisions on students, however, may not be revisited after their identities have been made known to the Board. For further information, please refer our guide on [Assessment Boards and in Stage Assessment Reviews](#).

### After the meeting

You will be required to submit [an electronic report](#) to the University within **four weeks** of the meeting. External examiners are asked to complete their reports as fully as possible, in order that these may be of most use to the examining School.

Once the School has received your report in accordance with our internal procedures, the relevant colleagues in the School/partner institution (and perhaps also from Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office, should your comments warrant this) will formulate a response to your report, which will be included on your online report submission. This response needs to be approved internally so there may be a delay in replying to you. This does not mean that your comments are not being acted upon in the meantime, and the response will set out what actions are being taken in response to your feedback.

## Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners

One of the key functions of the External Examiner is to determine whether the standard of academic work undertaken by students of the University is comparable to what you would expect to find on similar courses at other institutions. However, we expect our External Examiners to inform us on a wide variety of issues regarding the academic standards of our courses and the process of examination. Accordingly, the role and functions of External Examiners are as follows:

- To participate as a full member of the Assessment Boards of which they are a member.
- To monitor and report on the standards set by the University for its awards in the subject area concerned in comparison with those of other institutions.
- To confirm that standards are appropriate for qualifications at that level and in that subject.
- To ensure that awards are in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Characteristics Statements, Subject Benchmark Statements and where applicable Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) requirements.
- To review and comment, in advance, on examination question papers (including those for reassessment) which contribute to the classification of an award.
- To attend all meetings of the Assessment Boards of which they are a member and at which decisions may be taken about awards to students, [Assessment Boards and in Stage Assessment Reviews](#). Attendance by virtual means will be the norm, with apologies for absence permitted only with the advance permission of the DVC Education and Student Experience this can be requested via [examiners@kent.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@kent.ac.uk)
- To monitor and report on the achievement of students.
- To monitor and report on the proceedings of the Assessment Boards and in particular on whether these ensure that students are treated fairly and consistently within institutional regulations and guidance.
- To monitor and report on whether assessment enables achievement by students of the stated learning outcomes to be tested.
- To comment on whether students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level and to comment on degree outcomes.
- To monitor and report on whether marking is undertaken rigorously and in accordance with assessment criteria, in particular by reviewing the marking of samples of student work (including work for reassessment).
- Where appropriate, to observe student work, for example in the performing arts.
- To monitor and report on whether students are offered appropriate opportunity to realise learning outcomes through work based learning, placement and employer links and its associated assessment.

- To discuss with internal examiners and to report on steps which might be taken to enhance the experience of students, the assessment process and the proceedings of the Assessment Boards.
- To report on good practice identified within the School, relevant to the course(s) for which they act as the External.
- To submit an annual report to the University within four weeks of the main annual meeting of the Assessment Board (i.e. where a course has more than one Assessment Board meeting per academic year the annual report should not be completed until after the final meeting has taken place).
- Ratify all Alternative Exit Awards throughout the course of the year to ensure awards are given consistently and appropriately in accordance with the regulations.
- Review and consider all data provided in relation to course and module assessment outcomes and yearly award outcomes (see list of data in Meetings of Assessment Boards and In Stage Assessment Reviews).
- Take part in continuous monitoring, periodic reviews or accreditation reviews.

Prior consent is required from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office where this will exceed a total of six visits in one academic year.

In addition, Schools may invite External Examiners to make recommendations to the School (including, in particular, any steps which might be taken to enhance the experience of students, the assessment process or the proceedings of the Assessment Boards) and to the University (in relation to aspects of institutional policy).

You may find that the Assessment Lead raises prospective plans or policies for your comment. If the School is developing a new course in your subject area, they may also seek your comments and suggestions on this.

### Partner College Courses

University courses delivered by the Partner Colleges to Kent students include certificates, Higher National Certificates, diplomas, Higher National Diplomas, foundation degrees and top-up degrees. These courses are subject to the University's Quality Assurance Regulatory Framework. External examining for these courses should, therefore, be conducted on the same basis as for mainstream University provision.

### Validated Institution Courses

The University validates courses of study at other institutions. This means that the other institution devises and delivers the course to its own students and that students who successfully complete the course of study are awarded a certificate, diploma or degree by the University. The University is therefore responsible for standards of awards and quality assurance of validated courses.

Institutional profiles with web links to validated institutions are [available on the QAEO website](#).

All validated courses of study are subject to the University's Quality Assurance Regulatory Framework.

## External Examiners' Reports

Within **four weeks** of the Assessment Boards you are expected to provide a full report of your findings. This report will influence the critical thinking of the School on the future development of the course(s) and its procedures for matters such as assessment, etc. The report is [accessible online](#).

Please note that External Examiners' reports are **not** 'reserved' documents, unless you make a separate confidential report to the Head of School or Vice-Chancellor. You are, therefore, asked not to identify students by name or refer to individual cases in ways that would make the student easily recognisable (such as by reference to an individual's disability). The reports will be read by a number of staff in the University/partner provider and will be made available to the student body.

### Completing the online report

Using the online report template, you are asked to describe your experience as an External Examiner for Kent. You may find the following guidance useful in completing Section B:

#### Section B

- 3. The adequacy of the documentation provided.** Such documentation will include detailed information about the relevant course(s) and methods of assessment by the School concerned, such as a course specification, module specifications and the assessment strategy of the School, as appropriate. You should also be provided with a sample of student work, Assessment Boards meeting papers and details of the timing and location of the meeting.
- 4. Your participation in the assessment process.** In the role of External Examiner, you are a full member of the Assessment Boards. We would like to hear that your opinion was sought and acted upon at the correct time, and in an appropriate manner. Ideally you would also comment on how the process(es) could be enhanced, should you feel this is appropriate.
- 5. Student achievement.** We expect you to comment on the quality of the student work of the group of students, as well as on individual student work. You may wish to refer to the range of student achievement and its relation to the quality of marking by the School. Again, we would like you to comment on how the achievement of Kent students compares to the achievement of students on a similar course elsewhere and we encourage you to make suggestions for improvement.
- 6. Whether the method of assessment makes it possible to test whether students have achieved the stated learning outcomes.** The Credit Framework requires that students, before they can progress to the next stage, should achieve the learning outcomes for the modules of their stage. Hence the reliable assessment of the achievement of the learning outcomes for a passing grade is most important. HNC and HND courses are graded on a fail/pass/merit/distinction basis according to the achievement of specified criteria and do not attract numerical marks.

We would also like you to consider whether the assessment relates appropriately to the topics, skills and content of the module that it is intended to measure. Should you feel this is not the case, we would like you to clarify how the School should remedy this.

7. **Whether marking is undertaken rigorously and in accordance with assessment criteria.** If you feel that there are comments to be made regarding the marking practices of the internal examiners (such as the use of the full marking scale, use of all classifications where appropriate, validity of marking, and comparability of marking between internal examiners, etc), we would encourage you to include these in this section of your report.

We would like you to confirm whether the assessment criteria are correctly and consistently applied, and sufficient weighting is given to each of the criteria.

8. **Any good practice you have identified within the School (e.g. strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes).** Are there any examples of good practice that might be flagged for dissemination within Kent?
9. **Whether students are offered appropriate opportunity to realise learning outcomes through work-based learning, placement and employer links and its associated assessment (if applicable).** We expect you to comment on whether any work-based learning opportunities or placements undertaken as part of the course of study are appropriate for the related learning outcomes and whether students are adequately demonstrating the appropriate skills and knowledge and achieving the learning outcomes through the corresponding assessment.
10. **Whether there is effective employer/work-related engagement and contribution in the curriculum to support the students' learning experience for a Foundation Degree award or if steps might be taken to enhance this (if applicable).** The emphasis of a Foundation Degree award is on vocational skills and knowledge and the application of these within an industrial/work environment. Please comment on whether the employer/work related engagement utilised on the course is sufficient and effective in supporting students in their learning and is applicable to the course level outcomes.
11. **Whether there is effective integration between academic study and work-based learning (if applicable) for students to have the opportunity to experience a holistic course through study of a Foundation Degree in the award subject.** We would like to hear your views on whether you feel that any work-based learning utilised within the course is underpinned by the academic study elements. Do the vocational and academic constituents integrate well together to form a holistic curriculum and student experience, or is the work-based element seen as more of an additional building block that is attached to the academic course?

## 12. Professional Body Requirements

Are there any issues relating to the course(s) that are raised by specific PSRB requirements or accreditation? External Examiners of architecture courses will be asked to complete an additional form confirming whether RIBA/ARB criteria have been met.

## The Place of External Examiners' Reports in the University of Kent's Quality Assurance Systems

Reports of External Examiners will be considered by the School Education and Student Experience Committees. Any comments or suggestions made by the External Examiners will be discussed by the School and an explicit decision made about whether or not to introduce changes. An appropriate member of academic staff will collate a response to your report, which will be added to your online report, after it has been checked by the School. This response will set out how your comments have been acted upon, or why the School has felt it not appropriate or possible to act on your recommendations. Should the content of your report warrant it, other staff in the University may also receive your report for action or response. Your feedback may lead to further discussion or review of policy and practice.

Reports of External Examiners will be considered under 'non-reserved' business and, therefore, should not contain any identifiable references to students.

QAEO will forward your report to any partner institution that has responsibility for the delivery or assessment of the course(s) you have examined. QAEO, the relevant School administrator(s) and the relevant Head of School (or nominee) will also read your report.

Recommendations made to the University will be considered by the Education and Academic Standards Committee on behalf of Education and Student Experience Board. A copy of the report made by an External Examiner at the conclusion of their period of office and the School's response will be sent to an incoming External Examiner by the School.

### Training

Recently appointed External Examiners are invited to attend a virtual staff training session on how meetings of Assessment Board's are conducted, with particular attention to the procedures and regulations in use. The virtual training session is normally held in May each year. If you would like to attend the session please contact QAEO at [examiners@kent.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@kent.ac.uk).

## External Examiners Assurance and Data Protection

The University of Kent requires all External Examiners to abide by and be aware of their responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

### Privacy Notice

In order to appoint External Examiners Kent collects, uses and manages your personal information in accordance with data protection law. Please see our HR Department's [Privacy Notice](#).

All personal information supplied by External Examiners for the purposes of their appointment will be held securely and for no longer than necessary, and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

### Providing External Examiner Details to Students

The University will ensure that students are provided with the name, position and institutions of their External Examiner(s). This is supplied on a Kent based SharePoint site here- [External Examiners - Home](#), which has a warning, '**Under no circumstances are students permitted to contact their External Examiner.**'

### Freedom of Information Requests

The University of Kent has been designated a Public Authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Upon receipt of a request for copies of External Examiners' reports, the University has a statutory obligation to consider their release subject to any applicable exemption under the provision of the Act. External Examiners should ensure that their annual report does not, therefore, include any identifiable references to students for example, name, ID number or any other distinguishable references.

Information on how the University of Kent deals with Freedom of Information requests can be found here- [Freedom of Information Requests - Assurance and Data Protection - University of Kent](#). Should an External Examiner receive a Freedom of Information Request they should forward the email to [foi@kent.ac.uk](mailto:foi@kent.ac.uk).

### Data Protection Training

Once we have confirmed your appointment as an External Examiner for a Taught Course, we will invite you to complete Kent's Data Protection training modules before you start reviewing students' work. See section 14 on Training and Awareness of Kent's [Data Protection Policy](#).

You will need to activate your Kent IT account before accessing the [Data Protection training](#) modules. There are three modules, and each will take around 20 minutes to complete. There is the option to bookmark your progress and to complete the training in stages. The training needs to be retaken every two years, so twice during a four-year Taught Course appointment.

## Fee and Expenses

You will be sent a sheet showing current fee structures. Payment request forms for fees and expenses are [available to download](#).

Payment of fees will be made on receipt of your annual report(s) and your expense claim form. Please ensure that you provide your home address, National Insurance Number (if you have one) and your date of birth, together with bank account details as the University is unable to make payment without this information.

Attendance fees are paid when an External Examiner is **required** to attend a meeting, performance or oral examination in addition to the normal visit for the meeting of the Assessment Boards. Attendance fees will not be paid for informal visits to Schools, however, expenses will be reimbursed in line with the University guidance on this-[Expenses Policy - Travel and Subsistence Rates.pdf](#).

## Payment and Staff Connect

External examiner payment request forms are processed by the University of Kent's Pay Office and are paid on a monthly pay roll. Should you have any queries regarding the payment received please direct them to [payrollservices@kent.ac.uk](mailto:payrollservices@kent.ac.uk) in the first instance.

The University of Kent utilises an online system which enables staff to view and update personal details and view and print payslips and P45s. This Staff Connect system is also the means by which External Examiners are able to view details of the payment of their fee and expenses.

To access Staff Connect go to <http://staffconnect.kent.ac.uk> and login using Google Chrome and the University of Kent IT account username which was sent to you with details of your appointment. You may have already changed the password to view modules on Moodle or to submit a report through EERSS.

Your pay document can be accessed either via the Pay Documents widget or via the My Pay Documents link in the left-hand menu. Please note that access to Staff Connect will end on your last

day of employment with Kent. We recommend that you print out payslips as soon as you receive notification of payment. If you have not downloaded your P45 before your Kent IT account has been deactivated, please email [payrollservices@kent.ac.uk](mailto:payrollservices@kent.ac.uk) and they will be able to forward you a copy by email or post.

Should you require any support with your Kent staff IT account or in using Staff Connect, please contact the University Information Services Helpdesk on 01227 824888 or email [helpdesk@kent.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@kent.ac.uk). You will need to explain that you are an External Examiner and quote your Kent employment number provided in your appointment letter, which is an eight-digit number.

## Change of Circumstances

External Examiners should inform QAEO directly (via [examiners@kent.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@kent.ac.uk)) of any change of circumstances, for example, change of institution or role, in order to keep our records up to date and to avoid any conflict of interest.

## Web Links

[External Examiners and Advisers](#)

[External Examiners Reporting](#)

[Partnerships and Off Campus Study](#)

[Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)](#)

[Credit Framework for Taught Courses](#)

[Qualification Level Descriptors](#)

[Annex 6: Submissions, Marking, Moderation and Feedback](#)

## How to Find the University, and Further Contacts

For further information, please contact:

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office

Rutherford College

University of Kent

Canterbury

Kent

CT2 7NX

Email: [Examiners@kent.ac.uk](mailto:Examiners@kent.ac.uk)

**Directions for travel to the University campuses:** <https://www.kent.ac.uk/maps/>

**Directions for travel to Partner Colleges:**

**Canterbury College:** <https://www.ekcgroup.ac.uk/colleges/canterbury-college>

**North Kent College:** <https://www.northkent.ac.uk/contact>

**Validated Institutions:** <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/collaborative-partnerships/validated-institutions/validated-institution-profiles>