

External Examining Policy

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Version: 2.0

Implementation date: September 2026

Last review date: May 2026

Next review date: May 2027

Approved by: Academic Board June 2026

Middlesex University

External Examining Policy

Introduction

1. External Examining supports Middlesex University to ensure that our education meets internal and external quality standards, is calibrated against sector standards, and informed by sector comparison and good practice.
2. External examining helps assure that the University's education:
 - a. Meets nationally and (where relevant) internationally comparable standards;
 - b. Delivers fair and equitable learning experiences and outcomes for our students;
 - c. Is informed by comparison with relevant sector practice and invested with disciplinary and learning and teaching expertise.
3. External examining forms a key part of the University's commitment to Principle 5 of the [QAA UK Quality Code for HE](#): monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision (updated 2024). External examining is a part of the way we meet [OfS Conditions of Registration](#), in particular B4 (on assessment and quality of awards) and more broadly in relation to B1 (high quality of academic experience).

Scope of policy

4. This policy covers all levels of taught educational provision for awards made in the name of Middlesex University, including those at all campuses, and through academic partnerships.

Guiding Principles

5. Our External Examining aligns to, and is guided by QAA's [External Examining Principles](#) (2022), adapted below:
6. To be effective, external examiners working for Middlesex University will:
 - a. Protect standards and ensure comparability and consistency
 - b. Act as an expert in providing independent critical review, performing the role with integrity and supporting enhancement
 - c. Ensure fairness and transparency in assessment
 - d. Maintain currency of disciplinary and sector knowledge, and apply it in their scrutiny of our programmes
 - e. Support inclusivity and equity in teaching, learning and assessment.
7. To promote effective external examining, Middlesex University will:
 - a. Appoint appropriate external examiners, ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided
 - b. Provide training that enables external examiners to fully understand and fulfil their role
 - c. Enable our staff and students to understand the value and purpose of external examining
 - d. Engage with and support the external examiners they appoint to optimise dialogue and impact
 - e. Review external examining policies and practices on a regular basis to maintain the

value and currency of this function, and to ensure that external examining enhances as well as assures our education.

Scope of External Examining

8. All taught programmes will have an external examiner allocated to them; this includes campus and collaborative partner provision and applies to all levels of taught provision.
9. All research degree programmes will have external assessors (or equivalent) associated with them. Postgraduate Research (PGR) External Examiners and External Assessors are covered by the principles in this policy, but separate guidance is provided in relation to the operational scope, responsibilities and process of their work.
10. An external examiner will be required to consider new proposals for accreditation from client organisations and scrutinise assessment samples from the accreditation client (Level 5 and above).
11. In addition to full programmes, External Examiners will be invited to comment on CPD, LLE and Short Courses validated as a standalone credit bearing modules, both to assess their intrinsic quality and to comment on the way they have been adapted from (or may be repurposed to inform) full programmes of study.

Role of External Examiner

12. External examiners are expected to undertake all the contractual duties and responsibilities required of them to the best of their abilities.
13. External Examiners will normally be appointed for a tenure of 4 years.
14. The Scope of Work for External Examiners will include:
 - a. Undertaking induction training and consulting onboarding resources
 - b. Scrutinising agreed samples of student work, assessment feedback and moderation in advance of attendance at Programme Assessment Boards
 - c. Reviewing and commenting on examination assessments as agreed
 - d. Commenting, where relevant, on proposals for programme change and reform.
 - e. Considering, where relevant, articulation agreements with third party providers
 - f. Commenting, where relevant, on recognition of prior learning (RPL)
 - g. Attending Programme Assessment Boards, having read all papers and scrutinised relevant student work, assessment processes and programme data. In the exceptional case of unavoidable absence, external examiners must submit a written report in advance.
 - h. Commenting, where relevant, on broader curriculum development initiatives associated with the programmes they are scrutinizing.
 - i. Submitting an external examiner report on standards and quality of programme provision
 - j. Receiving and, where relevant, responding to Faculty and collaborative partner responses to the annual report.

External Examiner Appointment, Development and Quality Assurance

15. Nominations for, and appointments of, external examiners will be informed by transparent criteria relating to required expertise, experience, and qualification in the relevant disciplinary or subject area.
16. To be appointed, external examiners will also be required to demonstrate robust knowledge of Higher Education quality and regulatory standards and to show an understanding of contexts of practice, employment and professional body requirements relevant to the programmes of study.
17. Appointments of External Examiners will normally be led by the relevant Head of Department or Director of Programmes. They will consult with relevant colleagues and subject and sector networks as they decide who to approach for nomination.
18. For validated provision, the Collaborative partner will normally be responsible for nominating a potential external examiner, using an equivalent process. Partner nominations of external examiners will be reviewed by the Quality, Enhancement and Teaching Excellence (QETE) team.
19. Joint and Franchise partner provision will be allocated the same external examiner as for the in-house provision and nomination will follow the same process as in-house.
20. QETE will review Faculty nominations for appointments against the criteria, to assure nomination process and check for any conflicts of provision.
21. Faculties will inform QETE of any external examining appointments held by Middlesex staff members, so that the University can maintain up to date reciprocity records.
22. External examiner appointments must comply with UK Visas and Immigration regulations and requirements that confirms the external examiner's permission to work in the UK. QETE will complete the Right to Work checks.

Induction and Training

23. External examiners will undertake induction training to orientate their role and responsibilities in the context of Middlesex strategy, policy and practice.
24. QETE will provide central training and resources. Training will normally be online and synchronous, with recorded and curated resources to supplement this.
25. Faculty-led programme level induction meetings will be held to give External Examiners programme level information and secure access to programme resources and student work.
26. Programme level orientation will provide the external examiner with their scope, schedule and sample of work for the year and introduce relevant staff contacts for dialogue and support.
27. Where possible, external examiners will be invited to meet others in the same role as part of induction training and orientation, to establish a community of practice and shared orientation.
28. Where possible, newly appointed external examiners will be invited to meet relevant Faculty staff and other external examiners as they prepare for Programme Assessment Boards,

to help define and prepare their contributions.

Standards and Uses of External Examiner work

29. Faculties will assess the quality of external examiner reports on submission, and, where necessary, will ask the external examiner to resubmit with additional detail or comment as required to fulfil contractual duties and agreed scope of work.

30. External examiners who submit an inadequate report will be asked to resubmit their report following the guidelines in the University's Report Template. Payment of fees is withheld until a report is received which fulfils agreed themes and levels of scrutiny, commentary and quality assurance.

31. The Learning and Teaching directorate will support Faculty level thematic analysis of external examiner outputs through business partnering and will produce an annual report on external examiner findings and recommendations, received and discussed at University Quality Committee.

32. External examining reports will inform module and programme change, programme review, reapproval and decision making in relation to suspension and closure.

33. External examining reports will inform institutional partner review and revalidation, and, where relevant, feed into partner Education Monitoring and Enhancement (EME) reports.

34. External examining commentary should be used, where relevant, to inform the development and re-purposing of provision for CPD and LLE, as programmes or standalone units.

35. Collated external examiner scrutiny and recommendations will shape institutional education initiatives and quality enhancement projects, and should, where commentary is relevant, inform Access and Participation Plan (APP) interventions.

Faculty Role in External Examining

36. Faculties will respond to external examiner reports within four weeks of submission.

37. Faculty responses to annual reports will acknowledge work undertaken and will respond to recommended actions and any areas of concern in relation to educational provision. They should also respond to areas of noted good practice and outline how these will be sustained and incorporated in enhanced provision within and (where relevant) beyond the programme.

38. International campuses, Faculties, Schools and Departments will analyse external examiner reports as part of relevant assurance and enhancement processes: e.g. NSS action planning and Programme review, making their contribution to educational enhancement explicit to internal and – where relevant - external quality assurance audiences.

39. External examiner reports and recommendations will be considered as key evidence in Faculty discussions of programme redesign, reapproval, suspension and closure.

40. If an external examiner feels that the relevant Faculty, Department or Partner Provider is failing to comply with the quality monitoring processes, the External Examiner may refer and escalate concerns to the Head of Quality Enhancement and Teaching Excellence in the first

instance, and to the Vice-Chancellor if relevant.

Termination of Appointment

41. If an external examiner wishes to terminate their appointment before the end of their period of tenure, they must inform QETE and Programme team. An external examiner must give at least six months' notice to allow alternative arrangements to be implemented.

42. External examiners who request a break in service, which may include maternity leave, will be considered on an individual basis, and should be discussed with the relevant Programme team and QETE. The Programme Leader, with relevant support, will be expected to source cover for the agreed break in service.

43. The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of an external examiner at the discretion of the Head of QETE and in respect of failures to fulfil contracted duties or deliver agreed scope and quality of work.

Data Protection and Privacy

44. Information pertaining to External Examiner appointment will be maintained and managed by QETE.

45. External Examiner data and records will be maintained and updated in line with the University's data protection and data privacy statements at [Privacy | Middlesex University](#)