

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality
Secretariat

MENTORING ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEW EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Requirement for the appointment of a mentor

The criteria for appointment of external examiners allow nominations to be drawn from a wide variety of professional contexts, in order to ensure that there is appropriate external scrutiny. The University recognises that there may be a range of circumstances in which mentoring is appropriate for a newly appointed external examiner. The University considers each external examiner case individually to decide whether a mentor should be appointed.

Typical circumstances may include:

- Where an examiner is new to external examining.
- Where the External Examiner is an external professional expert of standing in a relevant field, but lacking significant experience of teaching and assessing in HE.
- Where the subject area to be examined is a new field in HE, and where there are no examiners of seniority in that field.

Role of the Mentor

Existing experienced external examiners in a related area are appointed to act as mentor for new colleagues during their first year of appointment, on a flexible basis according to the needs of the mentee.

The role of the mentor is to provide an independent, experienced point of contact for advice and guidance. The mentor would act independently of the department in guiding and advising the mentee.

The mentor should:

- establish contact with the mentee;
- wherever possible, arrange to meet the mentee face-to-face, either in person or by video link, but if not possible the mentoring role can be accomplished without face-to-face meetings via email or telephone;
- provide advice and guidance on relevant University external examiner processes and procedures;
- advise on approaches to moderation including applying criteria, assessing consistency of marking, sampling across grade boundaries and dealing with borderlines and fails;

- advise on dealing with draft examination papers, coursework titles, assessing the appropriateness of questions/titles in terms of coverage of topics/learning outcomes, level of challenge, rigour, ambiguity, fairness, etc.;
- advise on the role and perspective of the External Examiner in Assessment Boards (in relation to moderation, extenuating circumstances, malpractice, etc.);
- advise on the role, context and content of oral and written reports;
- clarify details, provide support and build confidence.

Mentoring duties would be specific to the actual examining work. All regulatory and procedural issues would continue to be communicated as currently.

The role of mentor attracts an additional fee of £100 which is paid automatically along with the external examiners annual fee.

Criteria and Procedure for Appointment of a Mentor

The need for mentoring arrangements to be put in place will be identified during the nomination of a proposed new external examiner. For Lancaster University and International Teaching Partner appointments, the proposer should approach potential mentors during the nomination stage and obtain confirmation that the proposed mentor is willing to act in this capacity. The Teaching Quality Support Officers will ensure that mentors are identified and this will be recorded in the Faculty Teaching Committee minutes. For Regional Partner appointments, the Academic Standards & Quality team will identify and approach potential mentors at the nomination stage, and this will be recorded at the Collaborative Provision Teaching Committee.

- A mentor should normally be a current external examiner of the University, and where possible be drawn from the existing team of external examiners for that department
- A mentor should normally have been an external examiner of the University for at least one full academic year.
- The role of mentor is in addition to standard external examiner duties.
- Where possible, a mentor will be from the same or a cognate discipline and be examining at the same level as the mentee.
- Where possible, a mentor should have current or recent experience of working in Higher Education.