

Guidance on Sampling of Assessed Student Work for External Examiners

The school should decide in negotiation with the external examiner/s the amount of student work they will receive to enable them to form a view as to student performance against the appropriate standards

The expectation is that external examiners will only be asked to review work that contributes to the degree classification (for example they are not required to review assessed first year work). The sample should be of sufficient size to enable externals to gain an understanding of the range of marks and to ensure they have sufficient evidence to determine internal marking, moderation and classification are of an appropriate standard and consistency.

External examiners have the right to ask to see all assessed work, including evidence of performance on placements which form an assessed part of the programme.

For units with large cohorts of students the sample might include several marked assessments from each of the areas below, for a unit with fewer students this might only be a few assessments overall. To assist the external examiner, it is expected that a reasonable sample of material might include a selection of the following:

- Assessment(s) marked highest overall /first class marks/Masters distinctions
- A selection of assessments from each classification band
- Assessments with borderline marks
- A sample of fails, including all fails in final year dissertations / projects

Assessments include all components that contribute to a unit mark including, for example, coursework essays, examination scripts, project reports, placement reports, and dissertations, performances (live/recorded).

In consultation, the school and external/s should agree the numbers of dissertations / projects to be reviewed, depending on their weighting in the degree programme. The weighting and/or credit points assigned to units should also be considered when choosing the sample of work to be reviewed, so that units (such as projects / dissertations) which form a large part of that year's assessment should be moderated and seen by the external examiner.

It is the University's expectation that external examiners will NOT act as second markers, rather they will have oversight and review of standards of assessment.

Sampling assessed work

“External examiners are not normally responsible for, or involved in, the assessment of individual students to the extent that they do not carry out marking of assessed work. However, to fulfil their role external examiners view student work, which ranges from reading essays or examination scripts to viewing performances (live or recorded) or artefacts. The volume of assessment generally means that an external examiner is unlikely to be able to view all the assessed work unless the cohort is small. Samples are of sufficient size to enable him/her to form a view as to whether the internal marking has properly assessed student performance against the appropriate standards.

In viewing samples of students' assessed work, external examiners are not normally in a position to expect or encourage an examination board to raise or lower marks for individual students, on the basis that such a practice would be unfair to those candidates whose work is not part of the sample. Where the external examiner has concerns about the internal marking, departmental or degree-awarding body procedures make explicit what action will be taken immediately to address the concern. This may include providing the external with access to a larger sample or wider range of assessed work. The degree-awarding body would inform the external examiner if it decides not to take any action and is thereby rejecting his/her view.

Degree-awarding bodies distinguish between concerns expressed by the external examiner that need to be addressed before the final decisions relating to the current assessment process, and those that might be appropriately addressed on receipt of the external examiner's report.”