

Examiner's External Examining Audit Tool (Undergraduate courses)

The purpose of this audit tool is developmental, not simply to come up with an overall score. It is designed to help individual examiners improve various aspects of the external examining process. External examiners who examine in more than one institution should audit their practice in each institution separately since, for a variety of reasons, their practice may not be consistent between the different institutions.

The duties and responsibilities of external examiners are defined by the individual contracting institutions but fall into 4 general areas:

- to assure the institution the standards of its awards are comparable with those in other institutions;
- to assure the institution that its assessment system is fair, operates equitably and measures student achievement against the intended outcomes;
- to provide expert advice on the structure, content and assessment of programmes and modules;
- to undertake such other duties as specified in the contract.

The audit tool is not intended to be prescriptive but is intended to help external examiners consider if the provision made can be improved and to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of their practices.

The Examiner's External Examining Audit Tool can be downloaded from the Centre's website:

www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx

The audit tool can be changed to suit your requirements. All we ask is that you clearly acknowledge the UK Centre for Bioscience as the originator. We would appreciate it if you would let us know that you are using the audit tool and the nature of any changes you have made as a result of your analysis.

How to use the Examiner's External Examining Audit Tool

An external examiner should carry out the audit below on an individual basis. The audit tool should help identify aspects of good practice which are appropriate to their circumstances and which could be incorporated in their current practice. The numeric scoring system allows for the situation where an issue might be addressed but only superficially or at the wrong time. Only score 4 if you believe what you do optimally deals with the audit tool point. Remember that the score is not the important thing; it's the reflection on your practice which is useful.

In the 5 aspects of external examining score (0-4) for EACH of the 59 INDIVIDUAL audit tool points depending on how closely you believe these audit points are optimally achieved.

- Score 0 if the audit point has not been seriously considered at all.
- Score 1-4 if the audit point has been considered but reflection indicates it is
 - poorly (1);
 - partially (2);
 - adequately (3); or
 - optimally (4) satisfied.

Make a subjective judgement and score accordingly. It's not about the numbers, it's about the reflection.

Having completed the audit analyse each of the points with a score of 2 or less:

- What possible options could be envisaged which would satisfy the point?
- Do resource or other constraints make any of these options unrealistic?
- Which 4 changes would most benefit your practice?
- Can a realistic action plan be formulated to introduce these 4 changes?

Are there potential quick wins? Things which could be changed easily that would not cost a lot in terms of resources or time.

Are there changes that require longer term planning?

Collect all your action points into the action plan at the back of the audit.

Having instituted changes as a result of the audit the process should be repeated in 12-24 months.

Note that an Institutional External Examiners Audit Tool is also available from the Centre's website: www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx

1. Selection and appointment of external examiner (EE)

	Score
Did you supply a CV detailing previous and current internal and external examining experience and your experience and background in specialist subject areas?	
Was sufficient information supplied about the course for which you are responsible to enable you to decide that your specialist knowledge was appropriate?	
Was sufficient information supplied about the course for which you are responsible to enable you to decide you were in a position to make comparisons between the standards of similar awards at other institutions?	
Did you receive a formal letter of appointment which specified the duration of the appointment/contract, whether any part of it was probationary and under what circumstances it could be terminated?	
Is the amount and mode of payment specified along with any conditions which must be met before payment is made?	
Are the required duties and the time scales within which they are to be performed clearly specified?	
Are the dates on which you are required to attend the institution (including any resit dates) clearly specified and were these negotiated with you to fit in with other commitments?	

2. Induction

	Score
Are you aware of the appropriate parts of the various institutional policies which will impinge on your duties?	
EITHER have you read the following policies of the institution at which you are EE?	-----
Policy on external examiners?	
Assessment policy?	
Policy on mitigation and extenuating circumstances?	
Policy on assessment of disabled students?	
Policy on plagiarism?	
Policy on double marking?	
Policy on anonymous marking?	
Student sickness and absence policy?	
OR have you read a set of summary sheets provided in an induction pack?	
Do you have access to copies of the course/module booklets supplied to students (including material supplied by distance learning methods)?	

2. Induction (cont.)

	Score
Are the expected outcomes of the programme/module clearly specified?	
Are you aware of the QAA guidelines for external examiners?	
Are you aware of the appropriate benchmark statement(s)?	
Are you aware of any requirements imposed by professional bodies in the subject area?	
Are you aware of how the course fits into the national qualifications framework?	
Are you aware of the implications of the Data Protection Act for your role as EE?	
Did you receive a copy of the final report of the outgoing EE as well as previous reports so the thread of any changes could be followed?	
Did you receive a copy of the response from the course team to the final report of the outgoing EE?	
Have secure and effective routes of communication been established between you and the course/programme team leader or examinations officer?	
Is it clear who has responsibility for each year of the course both internally and externally?	
If you have responsibility for more than one year of the course is it clear how your responsibilities for the earlier years are discharged?	
Do you know what powers you have in relation to all aspects of the examination / assessment process?	
If vivas are held was the policy on vivas and their marking clearly explained?	
Has there been an opportunity for you to discuss with members of the course team your view of what you need to be able to discharge your duties?	
Is the process by which double marking is carried out clear to you?	

3. Approval of examinations

	Score
Were the examination question papers sent to you in plenty of time for you to consider the relevance of the questions to the syllabus, the balance of the material covered and the detail of the questions?	
Was a course/programme/module time-table available together with the learning outcomes expected for each element?	
Were model answers supplied to the questions set together with the marking schedule?	
Was the type/structure/marking policy for any objective questions made clear?	
Was the mark balance between elements of course work and formal examination clear?	
Could you judge that marking of written work was consistent and at an appropriate standard?	
Did you receive a formal response the course team to each matter raised by you on the examination papers?	
Where the conditions under which examination papers taken clear to you (e.g. unseen, open book, pre-knowledge of questions etc.)?	

4. Visit to examine (or immediately prior to visit)

	Score
Were the travel/accommodation arrangements appropriate to secure your arrival when required?	
Was marked student work (or an appropriate sample) available for your inspection?	
Was the method for selection of any samples of student work agreed with you prior to the event?	
Were you able to judge the quality of student performance on placement if these are part of the assessed course?	
Could you access a full list of marks for each contributing component available preferably in the form of an annotated spreadsheet which made it clear how each item contributed to the total mark including any contribution from previous years?	

4. Visit to examine (or immediately prior to visit) (cont.)

	Score
Was the numeric mark for each item recorded in a consistent form which enabled you to track a mark from original work through to final mark list and was the mathematical treatment of the marks correct?	
Was data for the mean performance of students in previous years and/or their grade distribution made available to you so you could make comparisons between student cohorts?	
Was information on the distribution of marks and the mean mark for each question/item available?	
If vivas were carried out:	-----
Was there opportunity for you to approve the physical arrangements of the room/seating and the waiting arrangements for students?	
Was the method of selection of the students for viva agreed with you beforehand?	
Is an internal examiner always present and were the vivas documented appropriately?	
Did they indicate that the pass mark was in the right place (i.e. some borderline students failed after viva and some passed)?	
Were you invited to attend the final examiners meeting at which results are approved?	
Was sufficient time available at all stages for proper decision making and discussion?	
If prizes are awarded are you aware of the criteria on which the awards are made?	
Was the institutional policy on awards of honours/distinction grades clear?	
Were the consequences of a student's failure clear?	
Did you sign the final mark/grade list?	
Was there an opportunity for informal contact with academic staff AND students at all levels?	
Did you consider any possible conflicts of interest? (e.g. relationship to student on the course).	

5. Reports

	Score
Was there clear guidance as to the form and content expected in the report?	
Was a response to each item raised in your report supplied by the course team?	
Were changes agreed by the course team implemented in the following year and was this made known to you and the students?	
Did your report include a clear statement on the appropriateness of the standards of the awards and that the assessment process measures student achievement of expected outcomes and was fair and in accordance with the institution's policy?	
If operating as a team of EE were reports from other EE on the team available to you?	
Was there opportunity for you to comment on the course structure and content and the assessment methods used?	
Did you receive feedback from the institution or the course team about your performance as an EE?	

Action Plan

I will:

1.

2.

3.

4.