

# Institutional External Examining Audit Tool (Undergraduate courses)



## **What is an Audit Tool?**

An audit tool is a good way to initiate discussion and development on an issue. It enables you to make clear the range of activities which may contribute to the issue and the process can reassure colleagues that quite a lot of work may already be developed in the area. The process can also recognise local autonomy and priorities, within an institutional frame-work, and can:

- encourage development of a strategic plan to clarify how practices can be developed;
- identify how far and in what area development should take place; and
- give recognition to existing activity which contributes effectively.

However an audit tool also serves broader purposes:

- raising awareness by staff of practice in general and of the institution's plans;
- revealing or clarifying links between the aspect being audited and plans and strategies in other areas;
- engaging a wider constituency within the academic community; and
- facilitating dialogue and development within and between teaching units.

The purpose of this audit tool is **developmental**, not simply to come up with an overall score for the course. It is designed to help teachers **consider** the content and design of a course with respect to the issue of **external examining** and to see where they could improve the course to better address this issue.

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

[www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx](http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx)

The Institutional External Examining Audit Tool can be changed to suit your requirements. This audit tool was last updated in December 2011



## How to use the Institutional External Examining Audit Tool

The audit should be carried out with respect to the totality of provision within a course. 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 the course optimally deals with the audit point.

In the various aspects of examining score 0-4 for **each** of the audit points depending on how closely you believe these audit points are **optimally** achieved in the course being audited.

- 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. Think about it from the student's point of view as well as that of the course team.

Having completed the external examining audit you should analyse each of the audit points with a score of 2 or less:

- What possible options could be envisaged which would satisfy the audit point?
- Do resource or other constraints make any of these options unrealistic?
- At what point in the process could appropriate changes be made?
- Which changes would most benefit the external examining process?
- Can a realistic action plan be formulated to introduce these changes into the course before the next intake of students?

Are there potential **quick wins**? There may be something that you or your colleagues could do very easily that would not cost a lot in terms of resources or time.

Are there changes that require **longer term planning**? Does the change require agreement of others / resource allocation / time to implement?

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

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

**Note there is an Examiner's External Examining Audit Tool also available from the Centre's website: [www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx](http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx)**



## 1. Selection of External Examiner (EE)

	Score
Does the selection process establish if the proposed EE is currently employed by an HE institution and will remain under retirement age until the end of the proposed contract?	
Are arrangements in place to ensure the proposed EE is not from the same institution as the outgoing EE and that suitable time intervals have elapsed since the individual undertook any previous external examining duties within your institution?	
Does the selection process establish if the proposed EE is fully experienced as an internal examiner in appropriate institution(s)?	
Does the selection process establish if the proposed EE is in a position to make comparisons between the standards of similar awards at other institutions?	
Does the selection process establish if the proposed EE has prior experience as an EE and, if inexperienced, will appropriate internal support be available, if required, from senior academics?	
Does the selection process establish if the proposed EE holds any concurrent external examinerships and has consideration been given to the maximum number of external examinerships which should be held concurrently?	
Does the selection process establish if anybody from the teaching unit(s) involved in course provision currently EE in the institution associated with or employing the proposed EE?	
Does the selection process establish the currency of the proposed EE awareness of modern teaching practice and standards?	
Does the selection process determine if the proposed EE is a member of the Higher Education Academy (e.g. Fellow or Senior Fellow)?	
Is a current CV obtained from the proposed EE?	
Has consideration been given to the number of EE required for a course in the light of the workload and the number of students on the course?	

## 2. Appointment

	Score
Does the process require a formal letter of appointment been sent to the EE and a formal acceptance to be received?	
Is the duration of the appointment/contract clearly specified?	
If the duration of the contract is for more than one year, is it clear that the first year is probationary?	
Are the dates on which the EE is required to attend the institution (including any resit dates) clearly specified?	



## 2. Appointment (cont.)

	Score
Are the required duties and the time scales within which they are to be performed clearly specified?	
Does the process require EE to give permission for their personal details to be recorded and used by the institution?	
Is the amount and mode of payment specified along with any conditions which must be met before payment is made?	

## 3. Induction

	Score
Does the EE either have copies of or access to the following institutional policies?	-----
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, better, has the EE been supplied with summaries of the important parts of the relevant policies in an induction pack?	
Has the EE been supplied with or have access to copies of the course / module booklets for the areas for which they are EE (including material for elements delivered by distance learning)?	
Have you determined that the EE is aware of the QAA guidelines for external examiners? <a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section4/">www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section4/</a>	
Have you determined that the EE is aware of the appropriate benchmark statement(s)? <a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/">www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/</a>	
Have you determined that the proposed EE is aware of any requirements imposed by professional bodies in the subject area?	
Have you determined that the EE is aware of the national qualifications framework?	



### 3. Induction (cont.)

	Score
Was the EE supplied with a copy of the final report of the outgoing EE and the response from the course team to that final report?	
Have secure and effective routes of communication been established between the EE and the course / programme team leader or primary local contact?	
Is it clear to the EE who has responsibility for each year of the course both internally and externally?	
If the EE has responsibility for more than one year of the course is it clear how the responsibilities of the EE for the earlier years are discharged?	
Has the EE been provided with a clear statement on what powers they have in relation to all aspects of the examination / assessment process?	
Is there an opportunity for the EE to discuss, with the course team, the requirements of the EE in order to discharge their duties?	

### 4. Approval of examinations

	Score
Were the examination question papers sent to the EE for approval with respect to both the balance of the material covered and the detail of the questions?	
Was a course / programme / module time-table available to the EE together with the learning outcomes expected?	
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?	
If vivas were involved was the policy on vivas and their marking clearly explained?	
Were comments on the examination questions received from the EE and was a formal response to each matter raised supplied by the course team?	



## 5. Visit to examine (or immediately prior to visit)

	Score
Were travel / accommodation arrangements appropriately secure to ensure arrival of the EE at the right room when required?	
Was marked student work (or appropriate samples) available for inspection by the EE at an appropriate time?	
Was the method for selection of any samples of student work agreed with the EE?	
Are arrangements in place to permit the EE to judge the quality of student performance on placement if these are part of the assessed course?	
Was a full list of marks for each contributing component available to the EE?	
Was information on the distribution of marks and the mean mark for each question / item available to the EE?	
Was data available from previous years to enable comparisons to be made of mean performance and / or grade distribution?	
If vivas were carried out was there opportunity for the EE to approve the process and criteria used for student selection, the physical arrangements of the room/seating and the waiting arrangements for students?	
If vivas were carried out is an internal examiner always present and are the vivas documented appropriately?	
Is the EE invited to attend the final examiners meeting at which results are approved?	
If prizes were to be awarded was the EE made aware of the criteria on which the awards were to be made?	
Was the institutional policy on awards of honours / distinction grades clear to the EE?	
Were the consequences of a student's failure clear to the EE?	
Has the final mark / grade list been signed by the EE?	
Was there an opportunity for informal contact between academic staff at all levels and the EE?	
Has the notification of any conflicts of interest been requested? (e.g. relationship to student on the course)	
Was there appropriate time available for considered decisions to be made and for discussion to take place?	



## 6. Reports

	Score
Is there clear guidance as to the form and content expected in the EE's report?	
Are there arrangements for the report of the EE to be formally received and logged within the administration section of the institution?	
Was a response to each item raised in the report of the EE supplied by the course team?	
Were changes agreed by the course team and the EE implemented in the following year and was this made known to the students and the EE?	
Is there a clear statement in the report of the EE 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 all?	
If in the first year of a multi-year appointment was a formal decision made by the course management team and administration jointly whether or not to extend the appointment to the full term of the contract?	
Is feedback on the performance of the EE obtained from staff, including those attending vivas if held?	
Is feedback provided to the EE from the institution on their performance?	
Does the institution have in place a mechanism to overview the performance of its EE and the functioning of its EE system?	
Do you know that expenses and fees were received appropriately?	
Is the institution aware of which of its staff act as EE in other institutions and is any attempt made to capitalise on this resource or to facilitate networking?	



## Action Plan

Make a note of the resources you will need and whose help will be required.

1.

2.

3.

4.

