University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 24 May 2013

Annual Report on External Examiners' Reports – Session 2011-12

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1. Introduction

External examiners are required to report to the Principal annually on a pro-forma provided by the Senate Office. This is now done on-line due to the Senate Office move to a web-based external examiner database in April 2011. The reports are reviewed by the Senate Office and are categorised according to our satisfaction. The categories are: A (very satisfactory); B (satisfactory); C (satisfactory but some general comments made will prove helpful to course development) and D (concerns have been raised that require attention). There is one further category "spcl", which accompanies the main categories if a specific issue has arisen that applies at University or College level and generally lies outwith the School's responsibility.

This report summarises the External examiners' reports received for Session 2011-12, paying particular attention to concerns and/or recommendations that have been raised by External Examiners. The report draws attention to issues that have affected External Examining procedures during Session 2011.

2. Statistical Information

The report covers External Examiner reports on courses taught in the University and does not include those reports on courses validated by the University or for joint courses where Glasgow is not the administering University (e.g. Christie's Education, Glasgow School of Art, the Scottish Agricultural College and Strathclyde University). These are reviewed by the relevant Joint Boards or Joint Liaison committees.

The table at Annex 1 shows comparative figures for the last six years. 442 out of a total of **469** expected reports (94%) had been received by the date of the preparation of this report with 72 (16%) requiring a response from the School. Of the 442 reports received, 165 (37%) were categorised as A/Aspcl, 111 (25%) were categorised as B/Bspcl and 94 (21%) were categorised as C/Cspcl. Consequently, 370 (84%) expressed general satisfaction.

3. Comments Requiring Reply

As indicated in the table at Annex 1, from the 72 reports (16%) which contained comments that required a response, the Head of School was asked to arrange for the School or Subject to address the points made and to respond to the Senate Office within 3 months. From the 72 requests, 58 replies have been received; copies of these responses have been sent to the External Examiners. Senate Office is currently following up on outstanding responses.

4. Issues

In general, comments and recommendations made by External Examiners for Session 2011-12 covered the following issues.

4.1 Marking and Marking Scheme

There has been an increase in the number of comments made in relation to the marking scheme with 30 External Examiners commenting on marking. The main concerns were:

- 20 commented on inconsistent use of marking scheme between markers including too high/low marks
- 1 stated that there was no evidence of double marking
- 9 commented on inconsistencies in the use of marking sheets.

4.2 Assessment and Feedback

14 External Examiners raised issues relating to Assessment and Feedback. Recommendations raised were as follows:

- 2 commented on the current forms of assessment not being sufficiently challenging.
- 1 requested amendment to the weighting of examination
- 1 commented that too much was expected from the candidates in the time available in the examination.
- 1 commented on the almost identical course essay question to that in the examination.
- 1 commented on the need for a Semester 1 examination.
- 8 commented on the variability of feedback to students

4.3 Procedural and Documentation

23 External Examiners raised issues pertaining to procedures and documentation:

- 11 commented on issues relating to the Board of Examiner meetings. Comments included: no invitation to attend the Board of Examiners, late notification of the date of the meeting, low attendance by staff, the need for the Board of Examiners to be minuted, anonymity of students during the meeting and clarity regarding the discretionary powers of the Board.
- 3 commented on the lack of feedback from Schools on previous recommendations
- 3 commented on the need for schools to induct new external examiners

Other commented on poor administration practices, the need to ensure adequate arrangement for those students requiring learning support and a need for additional external examiners.

4.4 Teaching and Course Content

9 External Examiners commented on teaching and course content issues.

4.5 Standard of Students

4 External Examiners raised concerns regarding the standard of students compared to 1 last year.

4.6 Staffing

20 External Examiners commented on academic and administrative staffing levels which is comparable to last year's figures.

5. Code of Assessment

20 comments were referred to the ASRC for consideration. These mainly concerned the 22-point scale.

6. MyCampus

6 External Examiners made comments pertaining to the difficulties experienced by staff and students through MyCampus.

7. On-line External Examiner System

The External Examiner On-line system has undergone several updates throughout the year. These updates have introduced a number of administrative options and addressed any issues related to the initial release. The next release will focus on making the reports submitted for Session 2012-13 available to the University community and will take place in October 2013. This will permit the Senate Office to read and grade the reports, prior to being published to the web, to ensure that no sensitive information is included.

The system has continued to improve at each upgrade. The initial minor difficulties experienced with the GUID registration process have been addressed. During session 2011-12, four external examiners criticised the registration process in their annual report.

From Session 2012-13 new external examiners are now required by HR to enter their bank details directly into the HR-Payroll Portal. The letter of appointment, issued by the Senate Office, has been amended to reflect this change and provides instructions on how to access the system.

Future Actions:

The automation of school-related processes such as nominations and responses to examiners will be added.

8. QAA Quality Code Chapter B7: External Examining – Update

The on-line induction is now available through the Senate Office webpage. Key information on University policy and External Examiner duties is available on the website and a Frequently Asked Questions section will be added in due course. Schools have also been advised that they should meet with new external examiners prior to the Board of Examiners' meeting to outline policies and procedures.

9. UKBA

As reported last year, the Senate Office has assumed responsibility for registering external examiners on HR Portal. This includes uploading verified copies of external examiners' passports.

Further to instructions from HR, those external examiners who have not provided verified copies of their passports will not be paid their fees. The Senate Office has advised Schools and external examiners of this development and a reminder email was sent recently to all schools and administrators stressing the importance of following this procedure.

10. Summary

The Academic Standards Committee is asked **to note** the following:

- The summary of comments made by external examiners in their reports for session 2011-12. These comments will be addressed where necessary by schools and responses reviewed and monitored by the Senate Office.
- The external examiner on-line system update
- QAA Quality Code Chapter B7: External Examining – Update
- UKBA Update

Diet	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Report Prepared	6 May 2008	4 May 2009	7 May 2010	13 May 2011	14 May 2012	7 May 2013
No. of external examiner reports expected	422	432	441	449	479	469
No. received at date of report	382 (91%)	413 (96%)	409 (93%)	404 (90%)	403 (84%)	442 (94%)
% received by 31 July[1]	43%	46%	50%	44%	37%	47%
% received by 31 October[2]	73%	74%	78%	70%	60%	71%
Reports with substantial comment, for reply by Department	87 (23%)	82 (20%)	52 (12%)	51 (13%)	38 (9%)	72 (16%)
Replies received from Department and forwarded to external examiners to date	56 (66%)	77 (94%)	38 (73%)	36 (71%)	9 (24%)	58 (81%)

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[1] This is the date by which reports are requested

[2] This is the date by which most reports on taught post graduate courses are expected