1. External examiners provide an essential service – not only to confirm the academic standards of the University’s awards, but also to report on the fairness and rigour of the University’s assessment processes and to feed back to Schools on the development of their programme(s).

2. External examiners should be familiar both with the University Quality and Standards Handbook and with the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy – documents that will enable them to review existing School procedures against University policies and guidance, recognise exemplary practice, particularly within the framework of the University’s strategic objectives, and to suggest improvements in both quality and enhancement.

3. This document is intended to provide practical guidance on the responsibilities of external examiners as well as on the breadth and significance of their role. External Examiners should also consult the University Policy and Procedure for External Examiners of Taught Programmes. Whilst the Handbook and the Policy are intended to complement each other, the Policy shall be the definitive document should there be any conflict or contradiction or information.

Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners:

4. The following section outlines essential information for prospective or recently nominated external examiners. For additional information on the nomination and appointment process, including detailed criteria for the selection of external examiners, please see the University policy on external examining.

5. For more information on the provision of briefing documentation from the University and academic unit following the approval of your appointment, or on fees and expenses, please see the relevant sections of the guidance for external examiners.

UK Work Eligibility:

6. The University must, by law, ensure that prospective external examiners are eligible to work in the UK. All nominated examiners must supply copies of identity documents, and any failure to do so will delay the approval process. All external examiners must provide an original identity document or verification by the University upon their first attendance at the University. Guidance on work eligibility and accepted documentation is available at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-extexam-taught-eligibilityguidance.pdf

Term of Appointment:

7. The normal term of appointment is four years, although a fifth and final year may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Academic units may appoint examiners for less than four years if this is desirable for both parties.

First-Time External Examiners:

8. The University encourages the nomination of suitably qualified colleagues to undertake their first post as external examiner and gain experience in the role. Please talk to your nominating academic unit about handover or shadowing arrangements or to request a suitable briefing as preparation.

Conflicts of Interest:
9. The University will not appoint as an external examiner anyone in the following categories or circumstances. If you are aware of any potential conflict of interest, you must notify the academic unit responsible for your nomination. If you move to a new post at a different institution, you must notify the University to ensure that no new conflict of interest has arisen.
   a. A member of University Council or Senate, or a governing body on one of the University’s collaborative partners
   b. A current employee of the University
   c. Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
   d. Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
   e. Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
   f. Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
   g. Former staff or students of the institution, unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
   h. A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
   i. The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner’s home department and institution
   j. The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution
   k. A former external examiner, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his/her last appointment
   l. Any external examiner already holding more than two external appointments at any institution for taught modules/programmes.

Note: Previous appointments as external advisers for programme approval and external subject specialists for Learning and Teaching Review are NOT considered to be conflicts of interest.

Termination of Your Appointment:

10. You may terminate your appointment for any reason by writing to the Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University, King’s Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. The University can terminate an appointment at any time, in the event that:
   a. The examiner fails to attend a Board of Examiners meeting (where required to do so and without good cause and/or making alternative arrangements);
   b. The examiner fails to submit an annual report by the deadline determined by the University, or submits an incomplete report;
   c. An irresolvable conflict of interest develops (see above).

External Examining Fees and Expenses:

11. On appointment of an external examiner, the relevant Faculty will determine the fee rate to be paid, according to established University principles. All fee rates include one annual visit (for up to three days) for purposes of moderation and attendance at the Board of Examiners.

12. Examiners may claim a fee of £50 per visit for up to two additional visits per year if it has been agreed with the Chair of the Board of Examiners that these are essential to the role. These visits may be used, for example, to facilitate meetings between examiners and students or to enable examiners to attend student presentations, performances, etc.

13. Additional fees will be paid to the external examiner for modules or programmes which are offered at multiple locations.
14. An additional fee will also be paid to the external examiner if he/she is asked to provide an independent view on changes proposed to existing programmes.

15. The payment of fees is conditional upon receipt of completed reports by the deadlines provided.

**Expenses:**

16. Newcastle University will reimburse external examiners for the following types of expenses: travel, accommodation and related costs, and meals.

17. For additional information, please see:
   a. Guidance on External Examiner Expenses
   b. External Examiner Fee and Expenses Claim Form
   c. External Examining for taught programmes or modules offered in multiple locations. Available at: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/exams/exams/externalexaminers.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/exams/exams/externalexaminers.htm)

**Documentation Provided to External Examiners:**

18. The following section outlines the materials that an appointed external examiner should expect to receive, both from the University and from the relevant academic unit. Please note that examiners can request any documentation within their remit, even if it is not included in this list, and/or request to see specific materials at a particular point in time. External examiners should be notified in advance as to when they can expect to receive given forms of documentation, particularly in instances when a substantial time investment is necessary for thorough review.

**Provided upon appointment, with annual updates if appropriate:**

19. From the University Learning and Teaching Development Service:
   a. A confirmation email setting out the terms and conditions of appointment, including confirmation of the programme(s) and/or module(s) to which the external is appointed;
   b. Links to key information including:
      c. The University Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes;
      d. The University’s General Regulations, relevant Examination Conventions and the University’s Academic Appeals Procedure for Students;
      e. Guidance for Boards of Examiners;
      f. The University’s Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy
      g. Information for Candidates with Special Requirements in Exams
      i. Guidance on using the online External Examiners system for the submission of reports
      j. Additional paper- and web-based information outlined in Section 3.3 above;
      k. Regular updates on institutional assessment policy and procedures to be provided by LTDS

20. From the relevant Board of Studies:
   a. External Examiners reports and Board of Studies responses from the previous two years;
   b. The relevant Degree Programme Handbook;
   c. Procedures relating to relevant professional issues, e.g. Fitness to Practise.

**Provided annually by the relevant academic unit:**

21. From the appropriate Examinations Convener/Chair of Board of Examiners:
   a. Details of any duties additional to those specified in the University’s Policy and Procedure for External Examiners of Taught Programmes;
b. Examination Conventions relevant to the degree programme;
c. Any instructions issued to examiners and/or boards of examiners;
d. Degree programme regulations, programme specifications and programme handbooks (including assessment criteria) for the relevant programme(s);
e. Information about School moderation and scaling procedures;
f. A full list of modules, module descriptions, including learning outcomes and assessment methods;
g. Procedures relating to relevant professional issues, e.g. Fitness to Practise.
h. Access to programme materials within the Virtual Learning Environment used by the school;
i. Draft assessment types, including examination papers and coursework instruments, and, if appropriate, a description of the marking schemes for each type of assessment, and, if deemed appropriate by the Board of Studies, model answers for assessments.
j. A selection of assessed student work (to be sent or made available to external examiners). The principles for such selection should be agreed early in the academic year between the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the external examiner;
k. Samples of Learning Agreements relating to any student placements or - if the placement is for credit- samples of assessed work.
l. The arrangements, where appropriate, for the selection of candidates for viva voce examinations where the viva is a formal part of the assessment process (taught postgraduate programmes only);
m. The arrangements for the external examiner to be given adequate opportunity to communicate with internal examiners and, where appropriate, others involved in teaching and assessment (such as placement providers/assessors);
n. Information concerning the authority and role of the external examiner in the Board of Examiners. (NB This must be consistent with the relevant Examinations Conventions: Undergraduate Examination Conventions: Conventions B2-13; Postgraduate Examination Conventions, Conventions B4-13);
o. Early information concerning the dates and times of Boards of Examiners meetings;
p. Minutes from meetings of Boards of Examiners which have taken place during the period of their appointment and at which student performance has been considered;
q. Details of arrangements made, where appropriate, for them to meet with students on the programme (including, wherever possible, those on placements);
r. By request, statistical reports showing analysis of cohort marks, including Mean, Standard Deviation, Sparkline, Lowest Mark, Lower Quartile, Median, Upper Quartile, and Highest Mark (which the School can generate from the NESS system).

22. In addition, external examiners will receive a briefing from the Chair of the Board of Examiners and, if appropriate, the Degree Programme Director prior to the Board of Examiners’ meeting which will cover all relevant examination conventions.

23. From the Board of Studies:
   a. Feedback on any actions that have been taken as a result of the previous year’s report (if applicable). If the Board of Studies has decided that no action should be taken on any issue, this will be stated and the reason(s) for this decision will be detailed.

**Duties of External Examiners:**

24. This section explains the customary duties of an external examiner and provides examples of good practice where appropriate. The duties have been divided into separate categories to emphasise the key responsibilities of external examiners and to provide guidance on each. This is not to suggest that the duties outlined should be considered or carried out in isolation from one another; indeed, many external examiners will find that they are often fulfilling several of the outlined responsibilities at once.

25. External examining duties might be carried out electronically and/or through the post—e.g., if an academic unit sends out drafts of examinations—as well as on campus. All external examiners have at minimum one 2-3 day visit to Newcastle University campus (to attend the Board of Examiners, meet with students, consider hard copies of assessment samples, etc.); some external examiners may have one or two additional one-day visits to observe student practical exams or presentations, visit off-site locations, etc.
26. For further information on the role and duties of the external examiner at the Board of Examiners meeting, please see the next section.
Evaluating the Standard of University Awards:

27. External examiners are charged with commenting upon the standard of University awards in relation to external referents—including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and subject benchmarks—and in relation to other UK Higher Education Institutions (including, where appropriate, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies). Evaluating the standard of university awards should entail the following:

28. Reviewing the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) and relevant modules to ensure that they are appropriate to the level of award and similar to those of programmes elsewhere in the sector.

29. Commenting upon the extent to which student performance and stated output standards of the programme are comparable to those of similar programmes, with particular regard to the employability of students. This may involve any of the following good practice activities:
   a. Looking for a balance between practical application and academic structure, and between accreditation requirements and research-led content, in module syllabi and assessment samples;
   b. Attending student performances, practical and/or laboratory classes, practical and/or clinical examinations, exhibitions, and/or presentations;
   c. Holding one-on-one or group interviews with final year students;
   d. Reviewing samples of final year dissertations and projects to assess student standards, particularly at the high and low ends of the marking scale;
   e. Reviewing employability statistics.

30. External examiners may also be asked to provide an independent view on changes proposed to existing programmes to ensure that standards are comparable with similar programmes elsewhere. In these circumstances, a small additional fee will be paid by the unit proposing the programme.

Evaluating Assessments and Marking:

31. External examiners should comment upon the standard of assessed work as well as on the consistency and clarity of the assessment and marking processes.

32. Examiners should review the assessment process to evaluate not only the quality of set coursework and examinations, but also to measure the consistency and appropriateness of proceedings. Evaluating the assessment process should entail all of the following, with good practice examples noted below relevant points:

33. Reviewing the extent to which the assessment for a programme of study enables students to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes have been met. This task may include: receiving a written or verbal report from the academic unit on its programme assessment strategy, reviewing a current list of modules and their forms of assessment, reviewing and/or approving draft assessments, and reviewing marking criteria and their relation to learning outcomes. Note that external access to the MOFS database cannot currently be provided; external examiners should use the public-facing module catalogue to review module summaries and assessment types. Good practice may also include the following:
   a. Evaluating the use of group activities to assess specific learning outcomes;
   b. Evaluating indicative and/or model answers to ensure that students are being tested for fundamental understanding in addition to higher level application;
   c. Assessing the difficulty level of assessments.

34. Evaluating the appropriateness of the balance between examinations and other forms of assessment as well the assessment load against the credit rating of individual modules.

35. Reviewing the procedures involved in internal marking, moderation and scaling, the handling of late submissions, and the provision of feedback to evaluate impartiality, consistency and transparency. Good practice may include the following:
a. Reviewing student handbooks and/or information provided on the VLE to check that information on school and University assessment policies is clearly presented to students.

b. Reviewing the use of marking criteria, considering how students are made aware of marking criteria, and contributing to the development of marking criteria if asked;

d. Reviewing samples of feedback to evaluate whether comments are used not only to justify the mark but also to encourage student development;

e. Reviewing a range of mark sheets (pro formas) for consistency of use and effectiveness in providing clear feedback;

f. Reviewing marks allocated around grade boundaries (i.e. 39, 49, 59, 69) to assess the consistency and fairness of the marking process;

g. Reviewing the use of double marking and the use of a third marker, including any justification for the reconciliation of marks among markers;

h. Assessing the comparability among markers (if more than one marker contributes to the marking of a particular assessment);

i. Noting whether or not the academic unit makes use of the entire marking range (as well as reasons why it may or may not do so);

j. Confirming the markers’ handling of disability adjustments and ensuring that the scripts of dyslexic students are not identified as such (as they have already been given extra time to complete the assessment or other appropriate adjustments);

k. Moderating exam scripts and/or samples of coursework, in advance of the Board of Examiners, if necessary and appropriate. All adjustments must be applied to entire cohorts and not to individual students’ marks (other than to correct errors).

36. Reviewing, if applicable, the scripts of all candidates who have been severely penalised because they have failed to obey instructions relating to the assessment.

37. Commenting, if invited to do so by the University, on specific questions arising from academic appeals made by candidates.

38. Commenting, if invited to do so by the University, on the academic consequences of cases of suspected or proven cheating / assessment offences by students.

39. Examiners should be equipped to comment upon the particular strengths and weaknesses of a given student cohort. Evaluating the standard of assessed work might entail any of the following activities:

Examining a sample of assessed work, to be decided between the examiner and the Chair of the Board of Examiners. At minimum, external examiners should see at least one piece of work from each module each year. For written examinations, external examiners should see a sample of scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range, and should normally see all scripts of borderline candidates. Good practice may also include the following:

a. Noting any specific deficiencies in student output that may require attention at earlier stages (e.g., use of theory, knowledge of academic formatting standards);

b. Reviewing final year dissertations or projects to assess the range of topics and the quality of final products.

40. Commenting upon students’ work undertaken in Stages 0 and 1.

41. Observing and assessing clinical practice, oral/aural performances, or demonstrations of work (e.g. poster, design or artistic work). Such examinations, if the external examiner is involved, will normally be conducted for the whole cohort of students and with the assistance of one or more internal examiners.

42. Participating in viva voce examinations, if they are held (taught postgraduate programmes only). The postgraduate viva is used, according to the Postgraduate Taught Examination Conventions, as a means of monitoring standards or for determining whether a higher classification should be awarded in borderline cases. Note that, as stipulated in University policy, viva voce examinations are not permitted at the undergraduate level.
43. Meeting with students informally to discuss and evaluate student output.

Evaluating the Curriculum and Research-Informed Teaching:

44. External examiners are required to comment upon the appropriateness of the curriculum (e.g., whether it enables students to attain the intended learning outcomes) as well as on its inclusion of current research and scholarship. Evaluating the curriculum might involve the following activities:
   a. Reviewing the assessment strategy to determine if there are opportunities for students to undertake independent research and/or to receive feedback on research skills.
   b. Evaluating the ways in which specific modules publicise the aims of the unit, address University initiatives and draw connections between research and teaching. Good practice may include the following:
      I. Meeting with module leaders individually to discuss module curriculum;
      II. Reviewing the use of the VLE to provide enhancement materials and activities.
   c. Meeting with students informally to discuss their experience of the programme curriculum and the impact of research-informed teaching upon it.
   d. Reviewing student feedback forms on module and/or programme content.

Evaluating Educational Partnerships:

45. External examiners of programmes that are the subject of a collaborative arrangement or part of the University’s transnational education portfolio are asked to consider the following in addition to what is listed above:
   a. Any variations in learning and teaching between the Newcastle programme(s) and those of the partner.
   b. Any comparisons between the achievements of candidates from Newcastle University and from the partner institution, and whether or not the quality of the partner programme is adequate to support the attainment of the standards of the award.

46. External examiners of programmes involving Educational Partnerships may be expected to visit the partner institution twice during their period of appointment, and in no circumstances should visit less than once during their period of appointment.

The Board of Examiners and the Role of the External Examiner:

47. Each external examiner is a member of the relevant Board of Examiners and is required to attend any meetings in which the Board makes recommendations for the award of qualifications. Non-attendance can be taken as grounds for terminating an external examiner’s appointment. If, exceptionally, an examiner cannot attend a meeting, he/she must be available for consultation by other means.

48. This section outlines the expected role of the external examiner in regards to Boards of Examiners. For more information on examining duties or for case studies of exceptional circumstances, please see those relevant sections.

49. External examiners are expected to be familiar with the following University guidance on Boards of Examiners:
   a. Guidance for Boards of Examiners
   b. Role Description for the Chair of the Board of Examiners
Before the Board of Examiners:

50. External examiners should expect that any moderation boards and PEC (Personal Extenuating Circumstances) committees will have met in advance of the Board of Examiners. The role of the external examiner as regards these meetings is as follows:

   a. The external examiner has no special role in individual cases relating to mitigating circumstances and will not be invited to take part in School PEC committees. School PEC Committees are responsible for considering claims by students of personal extenuating circumstances that may have affected performance on assessments/examination and for making the appropriate adjustments; because of the paramount need to maintain student confidentiality and streamline the process of consideration, external examiners are not invited to these meetings. The PEC Committee will provide a discretion rating to the Board of Examiners in advance of the meeting, and the BoE will apply the most appropriate adjustment given the student’s full academic profile. For this reason, external examiners should be familiar with the PEC procedure (information available here), and should expect to be informed of any discretion ratings in advance of the Board of Examiners.

   b. External examiners MAY be invited to participate in moderation boards (or pre-Board of Examiners meetings) if they are held immediately before the Board of Examiners. In these instances, the examiner should share his/her opinion as appropriate and assess the consistency and fairness of the moderation and scaling process but they have no role in the determination of marks. If external examiners are not invited to such moderation boards, Boards of Examiners are obliged to inform them of the outcomes, or should be sent the minutes and/or records of moderation and scaling, so as to assess the consistency and fairness of the process. According to University policy, all summative assessments that individually account for ≥ 6 credits should be moderated; Schools are responsible for ensuring that there is written evidence of moderation having taken place. All moderation must take place before the Board of Examiners. External examiners should be familiar with the University’s policy and guidance on moderation and scaling, as well as School procedures.

51. External examiners should be familiar with the University’s rules of compensation and discretion, explained at length in the undergraduate and postgraduate taught examination conventions and also defined in brief here:

52. Compensation (UG): An undergraduate student who is not in the final year of a degree programme (Stage 0, 1, or 2 of a three-year programme or Stage 0, 1, 2, or 3 of a four-year programme) will be deemed to have passed all the modules at the stage and be eligible to progress to the next stage, notwithstanding marks of less than 40 in one or more modules at that stage, if all of the conditions in the exam conventions have been met.

53. Compensation (PGT):
   For students commencing a Masters programme in 2013/14 or earlier:
   A Masters students who fails up to 40 credits of the taught element shall still be awarded a degree provided that all conditions in the exam conventions have been met; no compensation is permitted for core modules and the dissertation module.

54. For students commencing a Masters programme in 2014/15 or later:
   There will be no compensation on postgraduate taught programmes.

55. Discretion: The Board of Examiners may, using discretion, deem a student to have passed specific modules (including core modules), deem a student to have passed a stage of the programme, or recommend a final stage student, or student eligible to leave the University with an award, for a higher award or degree classification. in addition to the exercising of discretion as a response to a PEC application, the University MUST consider all students within 2 rounded percentage points of a boundary. Discretion can be exercised only on the following grounds:

   a. Overall profile: should be based on a local understanding of what constitutes a strong student profile and is not algorithmic;
b. Exit velocity: is applicable to undergraduate programmes only when stage weightings are equal and only to masters programmes that have a clear separation between first and second semesters;
c. Performance in a particular module: usually applied to a dissertation or project module, but not limited to such modules.

Board of Examiners Agenda:

56. The Board of Examiners makes and confirms decisions regarding student progression and the award of qualifications. No member of the Board of Examiners, including the external examiner, can alter the marks of individual students at this meeting. Because PEC committee meetings will have been held in advance, and a summary provided by the Chair, there should be no detailed discussion of any individual student’s personal circumstances. Boards of Examiners should consider all students anonymously wherever possible, so as to focus solely on overall profile and marks rather than allowing personal bias and sympathy to affect decisions. The role of the external examiner is as follows:
   a. To speak on any matter regardless of whether an opinion has been specifically invited (e.g., on the use of discretion). Note that the Board is not obliged to defer to the judgment of the external examiner.
   b. To assess whether or not the Board has adhered to University policies and maintained consistency and fairness, e.g., in regards to student anonymity and the use of discretion.

Endorsement of Standards and Classifications:

57. The signature of the external examiner must be appended to the final list of degree results as an endorsement of the overall standards and to signify acceptance of the individual classifications shown. This endorsement must also be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Examiners meeting. If an external examiner is unable to attend the Board of Examiners, then they should send an email to confirm their endorsement. A suggested template for this email follows:

Dear Chair of Board of Examiners,

I was unable to attend the recent meeting of the Board of Examiners. On the basis of my scrutiny of a sample of assessed work made available to me and communication between us prior to the meeting, I confirm my acceptance of the appropriateness of the overall standards of the programme(s), and of the decisions taken in respect of individual classifications by the Board.

Best wishes

[Name of External Examiner]

Note: If an external examiner is unwilling to endorse the outcome of the examination process with regard to the overall standards, the Chair of the Board of Examiners will report the matter to the Examinations Office, which will withhold the relevant pass list and collate relevant information for the consideration of the Academic Registrar. See the case studies of exceptional circumstances for more information on options available to the external examiner in such a situation.

After the Board of Examiners Meeting:

58. After the meeting, the Board of Studies is responsible for reviewing the exercise of discretion and reporting to the FLTSEC (Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee). The external examiner should also receive minutes from the Board of Examiners to review and, if appropriate, to use in preparation for the following year.

External Examiners’ Reports:
The University requires external examiners to submit annual written reports via an online submission system, available here: [https://apps.ncl.ac.uk/examiners](https://apps.ncl.ac.uk/examiners)

This section outlines the necessary content of the reports, submission procedures, and what feedback external examiners can expect to receive in response.

**Submission Procedures:**

60. Guidance on using the online submission system is available here: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/Examinersguidelines.pdf](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/Examinersguidelines.pdf)

Note: Following receipt of a report, the Examinations Office (or Assistant Registrar in the Faculty of Medical Sciences) will arrange for the external examiners’ fee to be paid.

61. Deadlines for submission are as follows:
   a. For undergraduate programmes (except for MBBS and BDS programmes) – 1 September
   b. For taught postgraduate programmes – 30 November

Note: If a report has not arrived by two weeks after the appropriate deadline, and if there are no exceptional reasons for the delay, a reminder will be sent to the external examiner. If a report has not been received within two weeks of the reminder letter, the Head of School will be notified and the external examiner will be asked to submit as a matter of urgency. If the report is not received after such reminders have been sent, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) will write to the examiner to terminate his/her appointment.

**Content of an External Examiner’s Report:**

62. External examiners are asked to comment on the quality, standards and procedures of the programme(s) reviewed. Examiners should not refer to individual students or staff members by name; any names included against negative comments will be subject to redaction. The questions on the report reflect those areas of provision listed in the duties of examiners. External examiners are also asked to note areas of exemplary practice (i.e., practices that might be shared and adopted by other subject areas), commendations (i.e., good and efficient practices that deserve recognition but might not be easily adopted by others), and recommendations for the academic unit or university. **Recommendations must be provided in Section B of the report form.**

63. The questions on the report form are intended to cover all aspects of provision, and they reflect the external examiners’ responsibilities to comment on the quality and standards of the programme(s) and to provide feedback on the development of the programme(s). External examiners should answer all questions or clearly explain why specific questions are outside of their remit.

**Final Reports:**

64. If an external examiner is completing the final report of his/her appointment, he/she should complete an overview report (see the final page of the report form) in addition to the standard annual report.

**Matters of Serious Concern:**

65. If an external examiner wishes to raise a matter of serious concern with the Vice-Chancellor, he/she should send a confidential letter, separately from the report, to The Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University, King’s Gate, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. Serious concerns might include those which put academic standards or quality at risk, such as:
   a. Significant deficiencies in academic provision by a School;
   b. Substantial differences in the application of assessment criteria within the same School;
   c. Major irregularities or deficiencies in the examination and assessment processes;
   d. Lack of facilities appropriate to the standard normally expected for a particular programme of study.
66. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor will conduct necessary investigations and respond directly to the external examiner.  

Note: Only when an external examiner has exhausted all applicable internal procedures for reporting serious concerns, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, should he/she invoke QAA’s concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.  

Responses to External Examiners’ Reports:

67. Following consideration of the report at the relevant Board of Studies, the Chair of the Board of Studies must ensure that a written reasoned response to each report is prepared and sent to the examiner. The response must address all issues raised in the report and should outline any actions to be taken and/or reasons for disagreeing with any recommendation(s). External examiners should expect to receive the response directly from the School within the following timescale (at which time the report and response will also be sent to Faculty and then University committees for review):
   a. Undergraduate programmes (except MBBS and BDS) – No later than the end of November
   b. Taught postgraduate programmes – No later than the end of January

68. If an external examiner has made recommendations to the University, LTDS (Learning and Teaching Development Service) will bring the report to the attention of the relevant Dean and, if appropriate, to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching). A response will be prepared by LTDS and sent to the external examiner by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor.