This session was delivered on the 30th September 2019 to those External Examiners who were able to attend the session. This version, with accompanying notes, is provided as reference for those who attended, and also for those external examiners not able to attend the session.

The session was led by Dr Mark Lyne (Head of Quality Enhancement, m.lyne@uos.ac.uk) and Dr Andrew Revitt (Educational Developer, a.revitt@uos.ac.uk). If you would like to clarify any issues covered in these slides please contact Mark or Andrew.
Aims of the day

As a result of today’s activities you should be:
- familiar with the University of Suffolk context
- familiar with University of Suffolk QA processes and your contribution
- comfortable with procedural arrangements
- familiar with the course and its context
For further information on the University of Suffolk, its history and structure, you are advised to explore the content on the University website:

https://www.uos.ac.uk/content/about-us
Recent History

As University Campus Suffolk

- Established in 2007
- Joint venture of the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex
- All awards were joint awards of the two Universities

University of Suffolk

- Awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2015
- Awarded University status in 2016
- University of Suffolk launched in August 2016
  - Wholly independent of the two Universities in terms of ownership
structure

At the main campus in Ipswich there are four Academic Schools:
- School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology
- School of Health and Sports Sciences
- School of Social Sciences and Humanities
- Suffolk Business School

In addition to the main Ipswich campus, University of Suffolk has partnerships with local colleges and with a provider in London:
- East Coast College (with campuses at Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth)
- London School of Commerce
- Suffolk New College (in Ipswich)
- West Suffolk College (at Bury St Edmunds)

These are supported through a number of Professional Services Departments based on the main campus in Ipswich.
Student Numbers 2018-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Headcount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>5232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Yarmouth</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London School of Commerce</td>
<td>2533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowestoft</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk New College</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Suffolk College</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Courses are delivered through the four partners and six Ipswich Schools. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement team supports this delivery and is responsible for quality assurance and enhancement activities across the University including the appointment of External Examiners.

Managed by the Academic Registrar (Fiona Fisk) the Validations and Exams team work closely with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team to support the operation of quality assurance processes.
There are also a small number of PhD students supervised by our academic staff but registered at either UEA or the University of Essex.
Senate is the overarching University of Suffolk academic committee.

- **Academic Committees** - External Examiners may be asked to give their comments on proposed changes to modules.
- **Quality Committee** monitors the appointment of External Examiners.
- **LTAC** – seeks to enhance learning and teaching across the University.

The University and West Suffolk College are both on the OfS Register.
We seek feedback from students through course committees. We have an internal survey which asks the same questions as the NSS for students who are not eligible to complete the NSS. Health students are also expected to contribute to the HEEoE Quality Improvement and Performance Framework (QIPF) Student Survey. Apprenticeship students are invited to complete the annual Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey.

Students are part of the validation and re-approval processes.
Staff across the Schools and Colleges are represented at the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, helping to disseminate ideas.

The University’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy is expected to initiate course development activity across the Ipswich campus in the coming months.
Policies and Procedures

All available on our website:
- [https://www.usu.ac.uk/content/our-policies-and-procedures:delivering-our-services-and-responsibilities](https://www.usu.ac.uk/content/our-policies-and-procedures:delivering-our-services-and-responsibilities)

Framework and Regulations documents set out assessment regulations for each award type

Key policies of note
- Assessment Moderation Policy
- Examining Circumstances Policy
- Preparation and Conduct of Examination Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- Assessment Board Procedure
Course design and approval

Following initial validation, re-approval is required every five years

Course modification processes
- Require external examiner and student consultation

Definitive documentation
- Validation document or Self-evaluation document
- Definitive record
- Course handbook
  - Includes module specifications
- Specific documents (e.g., mentor handbook)
Risk-based monitoring ties into the work of the course committees. EE reports and surveys etc. are used to monitor quality of the course.

Risk-alerts are raised in response to concerning KPI results and other operational indicators including external examiner reports. If a risk alert is issued, the course team carry out a mini-audit to explore the reasons for the issues raised, and to plan actions to address these.
Teacher training, and Foundation Degree based apprenticeship programmes, are reviewed by Ofsted. Some courses are also accredited by PSRBs.

The TDAP process was completed in 2015 successfully enabling us to independently award undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees.
The role of the External Examiner
We have an expectation that the EE will attend assessment boards. Additional visits can be negotiated, for example, to see the final art show, fashion show or to visit students in placements. The External Examiner should work together with the course team to ensure that they have everything they need to do their work well. It should be a collaborative relationship as part of the process of improving our courses.
The QAA’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education
The External Examiner provides guidance about whether our standards are appropriate. We expect our external examiners to judge our standards against relevant national standards (including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ; https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks) and subject benchmark statements (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements)), other comparable HE provision, and any pertinent professional body standards and expectations. We seek feedback from EEs on our assessment processes, the quality of the feedback we provide for students, evidence of the quality of teaching and learning, and any evident good practice.
The role of the External Examiner is to keep watch over assessment processes.

**Initial moderation of assessments** – the assessment goes through an internal moderation process before being sent to the External Examiner for approval. This gives us assurance that the assessment is appropriate before being given to the students.

**Actual assessments** – Are we assessing appropriately? Are the marking standards consistent with University of Suffolk policies? Are all students treated consistently?

There is no need for the External Examiner to look at every piece of work (a sample will be provided), however, the External Examiner can if they wish to. The External Examiner is not being asked to mark the work. If there are disputes between the first and second marker this will be resolved by a third marker from University of Suffolk. External Examiners can provide comments.

The External Examiner has an advisory role and can ask the course team to review a cohort’s marks. The External Examiner cannot require changes to individual marks.

**Viva voce** – Viva voce is not a standard assessment process so it will be rare to be asked to attend viva voces. Some courses do have vivas as an assessment technique.

**Presentations** - the course team should facilitate the overview of presentations for External Examiners, e.g. provide video of the presentations or evidence of what was presented and how it was assessed.

**Course Modification** – We expect that the course team will want to make changes to the curriculum over 6 years to keep the course up-to date and to react to changes in industry. We have to seek approval for this internally through our course modification
process. Comments will be sought from the EE.

**Assessment issues** – Is the assessment effective? Are students getting good feedback? Are staff able to deliver the assessment? Is it over-assessed? Is the assessment appropriate for the learning outcomes?

**EE rights and responsibilities** – set out in EE policy:
https://www.uos.ac.uk/sites/default/files/External-Examiners-Policy.pdf
**The Course Leader** manages the course. The Course Leader is the External Examiner’s primary contact. Module Leaders are responsible for individual modules, although there may be several people working together to deliver the module.

**Schedules and dates** – the External Examiner will be informed of the dates of assessment boards at the beginning of each academic year.

**Students** – External Examiners are encouraged to speak to students as this can be helpful in gaining and understanding the impact of assessment, teaching and learning, and resources. EE reports are shared with students: consequently it is requested that you consider this when posing your comments. The student reps will discuss the action plan at course committees, and resultant action plans will be monitored through the course committees.
We seek your assurance, reported to the assessment board, that:

- the course team have provided you access to everything you need
- the proposed grading is appropriate
- the assessment processes have been adhered to. There is evidence that the course team have used appropriate processes.

Clashes with meetings at your own institution will not be accepted as a sufficient reason to miss a final board. Thus, any potential clashes should be brought to the attention of the Course team and administrator at the earliest opportunity to enable alternative arrangements to be explored.

However, there may be occasions where last-minute situations prevent you from attending the board, for example, due to illness. In such circumstances, please contact the Course Administrator. The Academic Registrar needs to be assured that three elements listed above have been met so that the board can go ahead without you being present.
Regulations

- One set covering most undergraduate awards including honours degrees and foundation degrees
- One set for Higher National awards
- One set for taught postgraduate awards
- One set for integrated masters awards
- Two sets for education provision.

See [website](#) for all sets of Framework and Regulations documents
Work not achieving pass standard is graded below 40% (50% for postgraduate provision) and deemed as ‘Refer’; work not submitted on time as ‘NWS’. A single opportunity for re-assessment is usually offered with only a pass grade available.

To facilitate the application of module condonement and in-module compensation, marks between 35% and 39% (45% - 49% for postgraduate provision) are deemed ‘marginal fail’. Progression between levels of study is normally permitted with up to 40 trailing credits.

A ‘Extenuating Circumstances policy’ governs how extensions, deferrals and intercalation are granted. Course teams and student services work together to ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments are in place for students.

All allegations of academic misconduct are referred to the University’s Office for Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct (OSACC) for investigation, resulting in advice to the relevant assessment board with respect to whether the allegation was ‘proven’ and, if relevant, recommended penalties.
Assessment Moderation processes are defined by the University’s assessment moderation policy: https://www.uos.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Assessment-Moderation-Policy.pdf

**Sample moderation** – The sample will comprise all work which is marked by the first assessor as not meeting the required pass standard (40% at undergraduate levels, 50% for postgraduate work), and a representative selection of work from each other mark band. This sample should have been looked at by the second marker. If following the second marker’s considerations there is agreement to alter a student’s grade, then all the work within the same band will be also reviewed by the second marker.

**Double marking** – work is double marked if the first marker is a member of staff who has not graded at the specific level at the institution before. Unrecorded presentations and all final year projects are also double marked.

**Anonymous marking** – where realistic work should be graded anonymously. Some courses have a policy of looking at draft work so some markers may be aware of who the student is. Exams are marked anonymously by student number.
‘Brightspace’ is our online learning environment (OLE). You should be provided a username and password to access Brightspace by your course team in the near future, and the team will provide you with access to modules and assessment records. For guidance designed for external examiners on Brightspace please see https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/digital/external-examiner.
Assessment boards require your assurance of the appropriateness of assessment decisions to be able to approve awards.

We are using an online system for formal reporting. An example of the current form is included in the pack given to External Examiners at the Forum. The report is completed online and can be saved as you go along. Once you have submitted the report, the course team will be required to respond by completing the action plan and providing a summary paragraph or two. The responses are then approved through the course’s management structure. Once the report has been approved by the Head of Quality Enhancement or his nominee it is made available to students through the course committees.

In the report there is a questionnaire section. If you have answered no to any of the questions please provide reasons why in the area at the end of that section.

There is space to make recommendations to the course team. Please make each recommendation on a separate row. If you have mentioned something in your report which you have not included as a recommendation but requires a response from the course team they can create an action for this.

Please ask your course leader to let you see last year’s action plan so that you can see if the recommendations have
been actioned.
For courses at Colleges, internal approval will be done by managers (usually the Head of HE or a senior centre manager with responsibility for Higher Education provision).
If the course is delivered at multiple locations we would like to know if different locations have different ways of doing things, for example, highlighting good practice. There is space on the form to note any feedback on individual centres.
Each year we collate themes raised by the External Examiners and these are the focus for areas for enhancement.
If you are not satisfied...

If things go wrong…or if you feel you are not being listened to…

• … liaise with the course team
• … contact the Dean of School or Head of HE and the Educational Developer
• … contact the Head of Quality Enhancement
• … contact the Vice Chancellor
• … notify the Office for Students¹

¹ see https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/contact/complaints-and-notifications/
Any Questions