



RESPONDING TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS – GUIDANCE FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Introduction

External examiners are an essential element of any university's quality processes. Externals can compare the student work done at QMU (and its partner organisations) and confirm that it's at the same academic level as student work from other UK universities. They are also a source of advice and guidance based on their years of experience of teaching a similar programme.

External examiner reports are taken very seriously. All reports go to the Principal and senior managers. If the external flags up an issue, the University needs to know that steps are being taken in response. That is why all Programme Leaders must draft a formal response to the external examiner which is checked by the Dean. The Dean needs to see that any recommendations made by the examiner have been considered properly. If not, this would raise serious questions about the quality of the programme.

How to respond to your external examiner report

First of all, make sure you are looking at the right report. You may receive communications from the examiner throughout the year, including specific feedback on individual assessments. But there is only one formal External Examiner report submitted to the University each year. This usually comes in after the summer exam boards, but some examiners wait until the boards in September before submitting their final report. The report template includes a number of questions that we ask to make sure that every aspect of the assessment process is running smoothly. There are various tick boxes and space for comments. In section 4 of the report the examiner makes specific recommendations for the programme team. These are divided into urgent recommendations that need to be addressed now and less urgent recommendations that may need longer consideration.

The examiner is also asked about the promptness and appropriateness of the response to his or her previous report. As a general rule, examiners don't like it if it takes a very long time for them to receive a response or if they don't get the feeling that anything is going to change as a result of their report.

What the external examiner report looks like:

11. ASSESSMENT

Please respond Yes, No or N/A for each statement in relation to assessment.

*If you respond No, or have any concerns about assessments, please provide details in the comments section below. **

	Yes	No	N/A
a) I received adequate information relating to QMU regulations and assessment procedures.	☒	☐	☐
b) The assessment processes and schemes for classification and progression were clear.	☒	☐	☐
c) I received all the draft exam questions and other assessment instruments with sufficient time to review.	☒	☐	☐

Sometimes the examiner will have no recommendations. In this case, your response can be quite short, simply thanking the examiner for their positive feedback. However, there are usually some recommendations to consider.

Here are some dos and don'ts for responding to external examiner comments.

- DO be as specific as possible. The examiner doesn't want to hear that you will 'endeavour to improve feedback practices'. They want to know what you will do to encourage that improvement. (For example, hold marking workshops, make greater use of online marking, run sessions with students to ask them about what types of feedback they find useful.)
- DO try to make your proposed action measurable so that it will be possible to track what has been done.
- DO consult as widely as possible before finalising your response. Discuss it with the programme team, your Collaborative Academic Lead and student representatives. If the timing is suitable, bring the report to the programme committee for discussion.
- DON'T feel that you have to agree with everything the examiner proposes. If you, the team and the Collaborative Academic Lead believe there is no need for change, then you can say so. But you must provide a rationale.
- DON'T be afraid to admit that you don't know why a certain problem is recurring. In this case the best action in response might be to conduct more research so that you can find out more about the causes of the issue.
- DON'T be afraid of change! Sometimes external examiners bring completely new ideas or make you look at something in a different way. That's what they're for.

Some examples of appropriate responses to common recommendations are set out below. You can use this template for your own response but it isn't mandatory. Sometimes a letter will be a more suitable format.

Please draft your own responses and don't simply copy what is in the table. These are just suggestions to let you see the type of response that is expected.

Your Collaborative Academic Lead should check your draft response before it is sent to the Dean.

RESPONSE to EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

External Examiner:

Programme/Award:

Date report received:

A summary of issues reported by the External Examiner and the response of the Programme Team is provided below.

COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS	MODULE / UNIT (IF APPLICABLE)	SUGGESTED ACTION	BY WHEN	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
The examiner noted some over-generous marking, particularly at the weaker end of the scale	All	The Programme Leader will hold a marking workshop with all markers prior to the Semester 1 assessment period. This will include calibration and cross-marking exercises.	January 2027	Programme Leader / Collaborative Academic Lead
		Team members will be encouraged to join relevant online workshops offered by QMU.	September - November 2026	Programme Leader
The examiner made recommendations around the use of marking rubrics, in particular around developing clear marking criteria and ensuring consistent quality feedback.	All	Module co-ordinators will liaise with their QMU counterparts to develop clearer marking criteria for assignments.	December 2026	Programme Leader / Module Co-ordinators
		Team members will be encouraged to join relevant online workshops offered by QMU.	September - November 2026	Programme Leader
		J Cobb has been identified as a TEL champion and she will provide training and mentoring to other	On-going	TEL Champion

		module co-ordinators on the use of online marking technologies.		
The examiner made recommendations around preventing plagiarism and academic misconduct and following plagiarism procedures	All	The Programme Leader and Academic Skills Tutor will review the content and delivery of academic writing and referencing workshops. Content will be updated to reflect current developments in generative AI. A refresher session will be built into timetabled lectures prior to each assessment period. A full review of academic misconduct detection and investigation procedures will be conducted to ensure compliance with QMU expectations.	August 2026 End of each semester October 2026	Programme Leader / Academic Skills Tutor Programme Leader / Academic Skills Tutor Programme Leader / Programme Administrator
The examiner notes that students are not reading widely enough.	All	The Programme Leader will liaise with library colleagues to ensure library induction sessions take place during induction week. The Programme Leader and Module Coordinators will work with the liaison librarian to ensure all relevant reading materials are available in the library or electronically. Additional academic skills workshops will be build into the longitudinal induction programme to ensure students understand the expectation for independent study.	September 2026 September 2026 On-going	Programme Leader/liaison librarian Programme Leader/Academic skills tutor/liaison librarian Programme Leader/Academic skills tutor/liaison librarian

The examiner recommends improved communication between module leader counterparts at QMU and partner organisation.	All	Module coordinator counterpart contact details have been circulated. This list will be updated throughout the year in line with any changes in staffing. The Collaborative Academic Lead and Programme Leader will liaise between colleagues at QMU and the partner organisation to resolve any communications issues that occur.	September 2026 On-going	Programme Leader and Module Coordinators and the Collaborative Academic Lead Collaborative Academic Lead and Programme Leader
The examiner recommends improvements in standard data set provided to ensure s/he has adequate information to undertake role	All	The Programme Leader will create a checklist for all module coordinators to use when compiling samples for external examiners. The Collaborations Administrative Officer will recirculate this checklist at the time that the BoE date is agreed as a reminder to module coordinators preparing samples for external examiners. The Programme Team will review feedback forms to ensure all information is available to External Examiners to undertake their role. Feedback forms will also be aligned across modules to ensure consistency of information provided.	October 2026	Programme Leader and Module Coordinators Collaborations Administrative Officer Programme Leader and Module Coordinators
The examiner noted student performance was generally comparable with equivalent programmes in the UK but noted knowledge levels and attainment of students at the weaker end of	All	Personal Academic Tutors and Module Coordinators will be encouraged to monitor student engagement and intervene early where students are not attending or showing evidence of poor	ongoing	Programme Team

