

School of Law

A note on External examination practice

10 Jan. 17

Only modules in degree-awarding years are externally examined. External examiners for law modules are generally at senior lecturer or higher academic level and come from peer Universities in the UK and Ireland. They each serve for a term of three years. In response to suggestions from external examiners, the Law School now conducts its courts of examiners on an anonymous basis and has revised its approach to borderline grades so as to provide greater consistency. External examiner reports are considered in detail by the Head of School and the Director of UG Teaching and Learning, before being presented to the School Executive. The Head of School revises School processes as just described. The Director feeds general recommendations about pedagogy and assessment into forums in the School dedicated to that purpose. Concerns about individual modules are raised directly with the module-lecturer. Where concerns are raised at the end of the tenure of one external examiner, these are provided to her or his successor to ensure continuity. To address the lack of external examination at freshman level, the Law School adopted a practice several years ago of all failed assessments being reviewed by another member of staff. From this year, this will be extended to borderline candidates. Visiting students are not externed.

Processes for sending assessments to the External Examiners

The process for sending material to external examiners is centralised. Colleagues are required as soon as the marks have been inputted onto the SITS to deliver relevant examination scripts and coursework to the law school office, from where all candidates with a composite mark (based on all elements of the assessment in the module) that must be externed will be sent to the External Examiners. We have agreed with the external examiners a profile of assessments that will be sent to them. The following will be automatically sent: any composite mark of 69, 59, 49, all fails, the lowest mark in each band, the highest first class mark, the lowest mark in

the 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd band. Colleagues may also have any other assessment reviewed for any reason.

External examiners are not specifically guided as to what level of review to apply to assessments. They are not specifically asked to, for instance, change marks only where patently unreasonable. We rely on their judgment as experienced academics. Where external examiners suggest a change of mark, the practice is to return the external examiner's mark for the student.

For non-traditional assessments, eg, web discussion boards, externs are sent the material where practicable. Some assessment components, such as in-class presentations and participation, externs will not have sight off, as these are typically not recorded.