External Examiner Seminar
16 January 2012

Forum for New External Examiners
New Examiners’ Forum

- Lesley Matthews, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), School of The Built & Natural Environment
- Jan Stafford, School Registrar, School of The Built & Natural Environment
- Enid Ashdown, Principal Administrator, Quality Support
Assessment and Examining

Key documents held on University website:

- Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards (ARNA), 2011/12
- Examiners’ Handbook, published January 2009 to be updated shortly
- External Examining at Northumbria: an Introductory Guide
External Examiners’ page

http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/assess/exex/

Access through:
Staff, University Services, Academic Registry, Programmes, External Examiners
Exam Board Structure

- Module marks are considered and confirmed at the Module Examination Board (MEB)
- Student profiles are considered at the Progression and Awards Board (PAB)
- External examiners normally appointed to MEB, PAB or combined MEB/PAB
Exam Board process

- Two tier structure reviewed in 2008/09
- Some variation permitted to suit individual School circumstances
- Central oversight of exam boards and annual review of exam board operation and assessment regulations
Awards are made up of a particular number of credits at specified levels eg
- Honours degrees normally comprise 360 credits: 120 at levels 4, 5 and 6
- Masters degrees comprise 180 credits at least 150 at level 7

All modules must be passed to progress to next level. Where modules failed,
- Referral or Compensation may be possible
- specific disregard and option to retrieve regulations at award stage of Honours/Integrated Masters degrees

Any variations to ARNA will be made clear by School
Modules

- Each module (if passed) contributes approved number of credits
- All assessment components in module must be completed
- Module pass mark
  - normally 40% for UG (level 6 and below)
  - 50% for PG (level 7) implemented in 2007/8
  - where clearly specified, component pass may be required
  - modules/components can be pass/fail
- All module marks (and level average) rounded to nearest integer %
Referral

- Level average required for referral of failed modules
  - level 3/4 – 30%
  - levels 5/6 – 40%
  - PG programmes - 45% from level 7 modules (level 6 modules excluded from average)
    - no level average requirement for referral of dissertation
- If level average met, no limit to number of referrals
- Module pass mark (40/50%) and credit awarded for successful referral
- Level 6 Honours degrees – ‘option to retrieve’ rules normally apply (also level 7 Integrated Masters)
Compensation

- Discretionary except at award stage of Honours/Integrated Masters degrees and on Masters degrees
- Level average requirement must be met and all assessment components completed. NB 50% level 7 average needed for compensation at 1st sit on PG programmes
- Module mark must be at least 30% except at award stage of Honours/Integrated Masters degrees
- Maximum of 20 credits per 120 credit level
- Pass mark awarded except
  - at award stage of Honours/Integrated Masters degrees non-discretionary, no threshold, original mark retained
  - on PG programmes non-discretionary, mark must be ≥ 30% and is retained
the External Examiner’s role

... to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:

- an institution is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements

- the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes... and is conducted in line with the institution’s policies and regulations

- the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which external examiners have experience.

QAA Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B7: External Examining – October 2011
the wider aspects of provision

- Externals examiners are:
  - expected to comment on assessment process and academic standards
  - not required to comment on learning resources, although such comments will be welcomed and considered
  - regarded as ‘critical friends’
Externals are involved ...

- Levels contributing to the award
  - all modules on PG programmes
  - level 5/6 of honours programmes
  - level 5 of Foundation Degrees
  - exceptionally at level 3/4 if contributing to award or required by professional body

- Comment on collaborative provision

- MEB discussion, decision-making for technical extenuating circumstances (TECs) and academic misconduct cases

- PAB external overview of operation, handling of personal extenuating circumstances (PECs)
Examiners’ Handbook 1

- Revised March 2009 and now under review in light of new QAA code
- For internal and external examiners
- Describes University expectations on:
  - approval of assessment
  - moderation
  - anonymous marking
  - marker comments
Examiners’ Handbook 2

- External examiners should be fully consulted on assignments, exam papers and marking schemes

- At start of academic year, Schools asked to provide external examiners with:
  - indication of expected workload
  - any timescales for approval of work
  - timescales for provision and moderation of samples
  - Exam Board dates
Moderation of standards

- Samples of assessed work
  - square root of student number, minimum 6

- Dissertations
  - UG following mark-concealed second marking of all dissertations, standard sample plus confirmation of process sent to external examiner
  - PG possibly larger sample by agreement at MEB

- All work (including exam scripts) is returned to students
... changing marks

The external examiner may

- wish to recommend, either formally at the MEB or informally in advance of it, that module marks are changed eg by scaling a set of marks, usually either up or down
- recommend the correction of marks that have been determined incorrectly, where both internal and external markers are in agreement
- not recommend adjustments to individual marks
Your report

- Standard template
- Electronic format
- Students & staff should not be named
- Normally required by 31 July
- Written response must be provided
- Shared with student representatives (HEFCE requirement)
- Reports, and responses to them, form part of the University’s formal review process
Appointment letters should indicate main contacts eg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Description of duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Contact</strong></td>
<td>Name, Position, Telephone Email <a href="mailto:name@northumbria.ac.uk">name@northumbria.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Liaison over assessment strategy, professional requirements, programme structure and module content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Registrar</strong></td>
<td>Name, Position, Telephone Email <a href="mailto:name@northumbria.ac.uk">name@northumbria.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Advice on regulatory issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Contact</strong></td>
<td>Name, Position, Telephone Email <a href="mailto:name@northumbria.ac.uk">name@northumbria.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Exam Board dates, travel and accommodation arrangements, marking schedule, approval of assessments, moderation of samples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>