External examiners’ briefing day
21st November 2018

Welcome to Oxford Brookes University

WELCOME TO OXFORD BROOKES

Liz Turner
Head of Academic Policy & Quality Office
Directorate of Academic & Student Affairs
AGENDA

Presentations:
- Brookes context
- Current priorities for curriculum enhancement
- Assessment at OBU
- The external examiner experience at OBU
  - what you'll be asked to do
  - the annual report and what we do with it
- Using the Online Expenses Management System

11.15 Refreshment break
11.30 Discussion groups
12.45 Plenary (Q&A/feedback from discussions)
13.00 Lunch with Programme Leads, followed by meetings with programme teams, visits to Departments, etc.

ABOUT OXFORD BROOKES

- 4 Faculties: Business School; Health & Life Sciences; Humanities & Social Sciences; Technology, Design & Environment
- 18,000 students in total; around 20% EU/International
- Campuses in Oxford (Headington, Marston, Harcourt, Wheatley) and Swindon
- Many programmes accredited by professional bodies
- No. 1 in UK for teaching and research (THE, Young University rankings, 2018) and the only UK university in QS World Rankings Top 50 under 50 (2019)
- International partnerships in many countries around the world, including Germany, Hong Kong, Kenya, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland
- UK collaborative taught programmes, mostly in the Associate College Partnership, and also in a number of specialist areas.
STRUCTURES

**Undergraduate programmes (UMP)**
- 15 credit standard module size; pass mark 40%
- Compulsory v optional modules
- Stage 1 (L4) and Stage 2 (L5/6)
- Degree classification (average of best 14 Stage 2 modules)
- **GPA** (average of all modules at Stage 1 and Stage 2)

**Postgraduate taught programmes**
- **PGT regulations**
- 20 credit standard module size; pass mark 50%
- Award classification - Pass/Merit/Distinction

**Examination Committees**
- SEC/MEC (UG); single tier (mostly) for PGT
- “conducted in a professional, but warm manner”

KEY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

- **New student records system** (Banner) being implemented from Sept 2019
- **Academic Framework** Review: key changes from Sept 2020:
  - affects UG programme structures
  - move to more linear programme structure with more prescription of compulsory elements, and more focused options
  - move to discrete years of study rather than Stage 1/Stage 2
  - reviewing progression requirements and degree classification algorithm
- **Assessment**: reducing examinations, reviewing Assessment Compact
- **Inclusivity**: alternative assessments, addressing attainment gaps, engaging students with career planning
- Review of **regulations** (structures, mitigating circumstances)
ASSESSMENT AT OXFORD BROOKES

Dr George Roberts
Principal Lecturer, Educational Development
Oxford Centre for Staff & Learning Development

Assessment begins with simply wondering whether what you do all day is contributing to what you hope your efforts can accomplish.

Or

Are you doing what you want to be doing?
Academic Framework Review Update

Proposed Programme Structure

- **Level 4/Year 1**: Compulsory Credits x 90 (minimum); Optional Credits x 30 (maximum, from a choice of 60)

- **Level 5/Year 2**: Compulsory Credits x 60 (minimum); Optional Credits x 60 (maximum, from a choice of 120)

- **Level 6/Year 3**: Compulsory Credits x 45 (minimum); Optional Credits x 75 (maximum, from a choice of 150)
No Semester 1 Exams

It is intended to eliminate exams in Semester 1 across the University

What might the impact be?

Fair, valid, reliable, inclusive?

Validity and authenticity

Intrinsic validity

● Constructive alignment

*The principles of intrinsic validity are underpinned by constructive alignment.*
A note on inclusion – social model of disability

The law (simplified)

Views the LOs as the ‘Standards’

Required to make reasonable adjustments for the disabled

If it’s not part of the standards then it can be ‘reasonably adjusted’

Reasonable adjustments are not referenced to others

Best avoided by using Universal design
Types of assessment

- Written exam – traditional
- Written exam – seen
- Written exam – multiple choice
- Written exam – take away, restricted time (e.g. 24 hours)
- Viva
- Practical exam
- Case study
- Essay
- Project
- Dissertation
- Film/video
- Narration
- Generating models/simulations
- Self assessment
- Peer assessment
- OSCE
- Performance
- Sculpture
- Reflection
- Picture
- Website
- Blog
- Discussion Boards
- Portfolio
- Continuous observation
- Competency assessment
- Laboratory/practical report
- Short/long question assignments
- Computer programme
- Review and annotated bibliography
- Poster
- Presentation, solo
- Presentation, group

Conditions

Enough but not too many appropriate tasks

Timed appropriately for a cohort on a programme in terms of schedule and duration of any single task:

- Avoid bunching hand-in dates

More than one, but not too many different forms of assessment

Focus on the formative and give feed-forward into practice.
Marking rubrics

But... even within subject communities

Very poor agreement between blind double marking of exam scripts at ‘a certain university (Laming, 1990)

Huge differences between both internal and external examiners’ marks, with externals more random than internals (Newstead & Dennis 1994)

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Externals</th>
<th>Internals</th>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>85</td>
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Reliability: calibration by subject communities

to establish a simple mechanism to bring together examiners from within a subject community (however best described) to compare their students’ work and to judge student achievement against the standards set in order to improve comparability and consistency

HEFCE QAR (2015, p27)

..to provide public assurance that the academic standards achieved by students are broadly comparable across the UK, more work is needed to ensure consistency in calibration. We envisage this would be done through external examiners working within their wider subject communities to assure better comparability of standards.”

QAA Response to QAR (2015 p7)

ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

“It is my firm belief that an external examiner should be a critical friend and there have been times when I have challenged the committee, hopefully in a constructive way. I would therefore like to thank all members of the SEC for their patience and good humour when subjected to my opinion…”

EEs have a wide ranging role: assurance on quality and standards for the University (and sector); enhancement for the Programme.

EEs often comment on the willingness of our programme teams to engage in conversations with them about how to make improvements to the learning experience.
ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Programme teams use EE reports as evidence for annual programme reviews, and we welcome critical analysis/commentary in your reports.

Previous EE feedback has led to:
- Changes to module delivery/assessment strategies
- Improvements to quality of marking, moderation and feedback
- Improved administrative processes, incl. examination committees
- Training for exam committee chairs
- The establishment of this briefing day...

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

- Approve draft examination papers and coursework briefs
- Review samples of assessed student work from across the grades
- (maybe) Attend exhibitions, performances, practical exams
- (maybe) Visit partner organisations, or students on placement
- (maybe) Meet with students
- Attend examination committee
- Write annual report.

Potential extras:
- MEC Sub-Committee (considers exceptional cases)
- Comment on changes to the curriculum
EXPENSES

- Expenses incurred personally while carrying out your duties will be reimbursed in line with the University's expenses policy
- Link to commitment to environmental responsibility (University’s Sustainability Policy)
- Travel: by most economical means: standard/economy class rail; mileage claims @40p per mile; air travel cannot be claimed through OEMS
- Accommodation: up to 3* hotel accommodation, room and breakfast covered
- We can’t offer a booking service for travel or accommodation, but will reimburse you very quickly (weekly payment runs)
- Subsistence: other meals and drinks (no alcoholic drinks) while working for us
- Receipts required to support all claims
- Claims made through online system...

USING THE ONLINE EXPENSES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Tim Davies
Systems and Project Manager
Directorate of Finance & Legal Services
THE ANNUAL REPORT

When is it due?
- Check with your Programme Lead
- APQO will send general reminders in June (UG) or Dec (PG)
- Report is usually due within a month of examination committee

How do you complete the report?
- Front page asks for details of visits to Brookes/partners/placement providers (for fee calculation purposes)
- YES/NO questions (with or without qualification), relating to:
  - Standards set for the award (pass/fail thresholds)
  - Standards of student achievement
  - Conduct of assessment and award processes
  - Do they meet expectations based on your own experience, and in relation to relevant reference points in the sector/discipline/profession

THE ANNUAL REPORT

We are also looking for comments on (in as far as you can judge from the evidence you are provided with, and your conversations with the team/students):
- Currency of the curriculum; and of teaching and learning practices
- The extent to which teams are addressing graduate employability
- Are we meeting professional expectations and PSRB requirements
- Collaborative arrangements – comparability of standards across sites
- Suggestions for enhancement (strengths and weaknesses)
- Assessment and awards – samples of work; standards/consistency of marking and moderation; operation of examination committees
- Issues for consideration by Faculty or University Executive – serious concerns about systemic issues can be reported directly to the V-C
- Feedback on your experience
THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER EXPERIENCE

I am sad to say farewell to my role as external examiner. Working alongside your programme teams – in which I include both academic faculty and professional administrative support - has been a great experience. I have been impressed with the dedication to excellence that typifies all activities...

This is my final report of my hugely rewarding four year tenure as external examiner. I have enjoyed working with a team who have been efficient in providing me with the materials to do my job, have been prepared to change, have taken on board advice swiftly and efficiently and have always been wonderfully welcoming. Thank you for my time as external examiner.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH YOUR REPORT?

- Pay your fee (please send it to externals@brookes.ac.uk)
- Circulated to Programme Lead and Associate Dean for Student Experience, for initial response (within a few weeks)
- Followed up by a copy of the action plan from the Annual Programme Review report (takes place November – January)
- Any concerns about academic or professional standards, or the integrity of the assessment process, triggers immediate action by the Faculty
- Response to wider issues - if raised - will come from appropriate member of senior staff in the Faculty or University
- Published via Personal Information Portal
- Annual overview report of all EE reports written by Head of APQO for the University’s senior quality committee
FEE PAYMENTS

Basic fee £500
- paid on receipt of report
- covers involvement in relevant moderation processes, and attendance at one examination committee per year

Uplifts (one-off payments per year)
- Extended workload e.g. provision of more than one formal report per year, or acting as lead for team of external examiners (£50)
- Additional visits (‘home’ programmes) e.g. >1 exam committee, visiting students on placement, attending exhibitions/presentations, observing clinical exams, etc. (£50)
- Visits to UK collaborative partner campuses (£50)
- Visits to international partner campuses (£100)
- PSRB assurance, if you are appointed specifically for this (£50)

THEMES FROM LAST YEAR’S REPORTS

Commendations:
- Standards of student achievement; staff commitment to student success
- Curriculum content; staff expertise and enthusiasm; research-informed teaching
- Links with industry; quality of placements; field trips, transferable skills
- Assessment design; standards of marking; quality of feedback
- Administrative arrangements; conduct of exam committees

Some inconsistencies:
- Samples of assessed work (size/scope) and accompanying documentation;
- Documentation of the internal moderation process;
- Quality of feedback provided for students;
- Involvement in approving draft exam papers/assignment briefs
THINGS TO ASK YOUR PROGRAMME LEAD

Where can I find programme and module information, and the previous EE’s reports?
At what stage/s will I be involved in the assessment process?
When will I be asked to approve draft assignment briefs/exam papers?
When, and how, can I expect to receive samples of assessed work?
What information will accompany the samples (module stats, marking schemes, module guides, etc)?
How will I review non-written assessments (e.g. presentations, performances)?
Will I be visiting partner organisations, placements, or meeting with students on-campus?
What processes are in place to ensure the consistency of marking across the programme? How is the internal moderation process documented, and monitored?
When is the examination committee meeting?