



# Senate Handbook

## Staff Handbook

### External Examiners - Taught Programmes (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

This Handbook supplements Regulations governed by Senate.

It includes policies, procedures, advice and/or guidance that staff and External Examiners are expected to follow in the proper conduct of University business.

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## **Major changes to this document since version 3.6 (August 2021):**

- Revised fee structure for undergraduate external examiners

# Glossary

The following terms are provided to external examiners to aid them in understanding Cranfield terminology:

<b>Academic Lead</b>	Academic responsible for the management of the course, normally known as the Course Director, Programme Director, Academic Leader or Course Chair. (Different Schools use different terminology, depending on local programme structures.)
<b>Board of Examiners</b>	Group of internal and external examiners that convene to consider student progress and award outcomes. There is a Chair to lead the Board.
<b>Course Team</b>	Team dedicated to the delivery of a course, normally comprising the Academic Lead, module leaders and course administrators. The first point of contact for local external examining matters.
<b>Director of Education</b>	The senior academic responsible for quality and standards within a School. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Education Services</b>	The central department that is the point of contact for external examining matters.
<b>Head of School</b>	The senior academic responsible for the management of a School.
<b>Link Tutor</b>	Where the University validates a programme with a trusted partner organisation Link Tutors are in place for each partnership to act as a key point of communication between the validated partner and the University.
<b>Module Leader</b>	Most taught courses at Cranfield are made up of shorter courses or modules (as outlined in the annual course structure document). The academic member of staff responsible for the management of an individual module.
<b>Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)</b>	The foremost member of academic staff responsible for standards and quality, who reports to the Vice-Chancellor and Senate.
<b>Vice-Chancellor</b>	The Chief Executive Officer of the University.

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<sup>1</sup> For undergraduate courses the roles usually performed by a Director of Education are the responsibility of the Undergraduate Education Lead on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

# 1 Selection and nomination

## 1.1 Selection

The course team will have contacted you informally to discuss whether you would be willing to act as external examiner for a specified period (typically four years). Cranfield has adopted the following criteria for selecting its external examiners; you will normally be expected to be able to demonstrate:

- i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- ii) competence and experience of the fields covered by the taught programme of study, or parts thereof;
- iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least UK Master's level<sup>2</sup>, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- v) sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers;
- vi) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- vii) fluency in English;
- viii) for apprenticeship courses, knowledge of the relevant apprenticeship standard.

You will preferably also be able to demonstrate:

- ix) meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
- x) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- xi) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Cranfield recognises that you may not feel able to meet in full all of the above criteria, and you are invited to review these and discuss any points with the course team or with Education Services. Please note that Cranfield often appoints more than one external examiner to ensure that all of the points are covered for the course.

Please note that all external examiners are expected to demonstrate that they have the legal right to work in the UK on appointment, and course teams are required to gather appropriate evidence of this from you.

Although Cranfield does not divide external examiners into formal categories, the examiners we appoint can broadly be defined as academic or practitioner examiners. Academic examiners have extensive experience of Higher Education in the UK or further afield and are expected to comment on all areas of provision. Practitioner examiners are professionals who work in a sector relevant to the subject area of the course and are expected to comment on some or all areas of provision.

External Examiners may act for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

## 1.2 Nomination

Your appointment will have been made by the Director of Education in a School<sup>3</sup> as a result of your nomination by the course team. You will likely have been asked to provide a CV (or other details of your academic credentials), contact details and confirm the number of external examiner

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<sup>2</sup> For undergraduate courses, External Examiners should be educated to at least UK undergraduate degree level.

<sup>3</sup> For undergraduate courses External Examiners are appointed by the Undergraduate Education Lead on behalf of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education).

appointments you hold currently and in the past. The course team may also have explored with you potential conflicts of interest (see section 2.2).

Your appointment will have included a formal letter from Education Services, and you should have confirmed in writing that you accept the appointment.

## 2 Appointment

On appointment, we would ask you to:

- review and read all of the source material and information provided to you;
- consider any conflicts of interest that may exist in relation to your role;
- make yourself aware of issues relating to privacy and data protection in relation to your role.

### 2.1 Source material and information

The formal letter of appointment will have included web links to University Regulations and guidance. You should familiarise yourself with these documents, now and throughout the duration of your appointment. If you have any questions concerning the University's Regulations you can contact the Registry team at [registrysr@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:registrysr@cranfield.ac.uk). The website also provides downloadable templates for the Annual Report Form and the Expenses Claim Form.

Education Services will also send you any external examiner reports submitted in the previous academic year for your perusal.

The course team should also provide you with a range of information relating to the course and assessment. The information you can expect to receive from the course team is outlined below:

- aims and objectives of the course;
- details of the course curriculum;
- details of the course assessment methods;
- details of attendance requirements, including dates of meetings of the board of examiners;
- confirmation of the fee that will be paid to you and an indication of when this is likely to occur;
- key dates when you will be required to undertake specific tasks, i.e. approval of assessments<sup>4</sup> and sampling of assessments.

In cases where you are appointed for a course that has a partnership involving academic provision, the course team will ensure that you are fully briefed on the nature and extent of the partnership and who the Link Tutor for the partnership is, and that your role in relation to third party providers is clearly defined. This will include confirmation of whether you will be expected to visit partner sites either in the UK or overseas.

If at any point you believe that you have not received sufficient information from the course team to allow you to undertake your role please contact Registry using the above email addresses for clarification.

### 2.2 Conflicts of interest

The course team should have discussed with you the extent to which you are involved with Cranfield, or with individual members of staff or students associated with the course. Wherever possible, Cranfield ensures that there are no unintended or unknown conflicts of interest.

We would ask you to review the list below and, if you have any concerns that you contact the Director of Education, or Education Services, to discuss the potential impact. If any connections become apparent in the course of your duties, please raise them as soon as possible with the Chair of the board of examiners.

Wherever possible, Cranfield avoids appointments where the external examiner is, or becomes:

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<sup>4</sup> External Examiners are required to approve all assessments, including examination papers, assignments and project briefs.

- i) a member of the Council of Cranfield University or a current employee of Cranfield or any of its subsidiary companies, including MK:U;
- ii) someone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the taught programme of study;
- iii) someone required to assess colleagues who have been recruited as students to the programme of study;
- iv) someone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
- v) someone involved in any recent or current substantive collaborative teaching or research activities related to the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question;
- vi) a former member of staff or student of Cranfield (unless a period of five years has elapsed);
- vii) someone who is directly connected to a Cranfield member of staff appointed as an external examiner at their own institution;
- viii) someone where the immediately previous, or other current, external examiners were or are colleagues from the same department in the same institution.

A conflict of interest may not necessary preclude or curtail your appointment, but it is important that these are registered and reviewed.

## **2.3 Data Protection and Freedom of Information**

### **2.3.1 Your data**

The University collects and holds personal data about you for the specific purpose of facilitating and managing the external examination process. This includes your name, your contact details, your previous experience relating to your role and your current academic and/or professional credentials and affiliations. This information will be retained by the University as per the University's Data Retention Schedule. The University will share this information with appropriate staff within the University. The University will also share your name, and your current academic and/or professional credentials and affiliations with students, in line with national expectations relating to the transparency of the use of external examiners. Students, however, will be asked not to contact you in relation to your role as an external examiner, and you should politely decline any requests to engage with them outside of the examination process.

As part of your duties, you are requested to submit an annual report to the University on the quality and standards of the taught programme of study, its assessment and the performance of students. In addition to circulating your report to the course team and the School's Director of Education, the University may wish to make it available to a wider internal audience. There may also be circumstances where your report will be made available to groups external to the University for audit purposes, such as the Office for Students and Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies.

Your annual reports are not made publicly available, but will be provided to students in full on request. You are asked to keep this in mind as you draft your report. If you feel it appropriate to report on specific issues relating to individual candidates or staff, please include these comments in a separate report, marked "Strictly Confidential": although we cannot guarantee that this separate report will not be more widely circulated, we will contact you specifically should such a request occur under either data protection or freedom of information legislation.

### **2.3.2 Our data**

In the course of your duties, you will receive information that can be considered the personal data of students of the University. You are expected to keep such information (including, for example, scripts, marks, and comments from other examiners) confidential and secure at all times as part of your data protection responsibilities. You should not share this information with people outside of

the board of examiners without the express permission of the University (usually either the Chair of the board of examiners or a member of Education Services).

Upon the completion of your role as external examiner, you should destroy all information relating to individual candidates. You may also be asked during your appointment to undertake this for specific cohorts, in line with any data retention policies provided to you.

Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Policy:

[https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/about/governance-and-policies/policies-and-regulations/privacy-notice.](https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/about/governance-and-policies/policies-and-regulations/privacy-notice)



## 3 Conditions of appointment

### 3.1 Fees - Postgraduate Courses

Cranfield University's annual external examiner fees are calculated at the beginning of each academic year, and reflect the number of registered students on the courses you cover who are due to complete their award within that academic year. A revised fee schedule for payments to External Examiners has been agreed by the university's Education Committee for all new appointments from 2021-22 onwards. Existing appointments will continue to receive a fee based on the old fee structure as detailed in Appendix A.

Fees paid to Course-level External Examiners take into account all students registered on the course(s) that the External Examiner is responsible for. External Examiners will receive one payment per course or per programme (a defined group of courses) that they are responsible for, regardless of the number of different award types that may be associated with that course (i.e. an External Examiner would receive just the Master's fee for a course which had a Master's, PgDip and PgCert exit routes). External Examiners may receive multiple payments for acting as an external examiner for different courses/programmes.

		Master's	PgDip	PgCert
Band 1	1 to 5 students	£250	£200	£100
Band 2	6 to 14 students	£365	£315	£160
Band 3	15 to 30 students	£480	£430	£215
Band 4	31 to 50 students	£615	£565	£285
Band 5	51 to 80 students	£730	£680	£340
Band 6	Over 80 students	£850	£800	£400

Part-time Master's courses where student numbers are >80 attract an additional fee of £500 per additional student intake (or additional intakes totaling) over 80 students, (£450 per additional intake(s) totaling over 80 students for PgDip courses, £225 per additional intake(s) totaling over 80 students for PgCert courses).

In addition, Course teams may appoint External Examiners to specific modules to support the Course-level External Examiner(s). Where this is the case, External Examiners will be paid an annual appointment fee and a flat-fee for each 10 credits covered. No External Examiner appointed to modules for a course will be paid more than the maximum fee for a course External Examiner (£850, £800 or £400).

Appointment by Module:	Annual appointment fee	£50
	Fee per 10 credits-worth of modules 1-100 students	£50
	>100 students	£100

Overall Course External Examiner Fee: £150  
(only appointed where an entire course has module-only External Examiners)

As examiners are paid by Schools there may be occasions when a higher fee is agreed with you in line with increased responsibilities, i.e. high volumes of students, additional responsibilities over and above the normal duties included in this Handbook, specific duties for examiners of courses with third parties involving academic provision. Similarly, a separate fee for external examiners of part-time only courses may be agreed, depending on the number of registered students who are due to complete in an academic year.

The School will also pay reasonable travelling expenses.

## 3.2 Fees - Undergraduate Courses

All courses must have an overall External Examiner, the “Course External Examiner”, who receives an annual appointment fee and payment for each module that they oversee. The Course External Examiner is expected to oversee all levels of a course which are running.

Where the Course External Examiners are not a specialist in a subject, they may be supported by Module External Examiners, who will receive a fee for each module that they oversee.

**The annual fees payable to Course External Examiners are:**

**Overall Course External Examiner Fee:** £150 per level

**Plus**

**Module fee:** Fee per 15 credits-worth of modules £50

**The annual fees payable to Module External Examiners are:**

**Module fee:** Fee per 15 credits-worth of modules £50

In both cases the Module appointment fee is per iteration of a module and it is anticipated that there will be up to three iterations per academic year.

**In addition, External Examiner(s) will be appointed to oversee the Professional Skills modules, delivered to the entire student population.**

**The fees payable to Professional Skills Module External Examiners are:**

<b>Per level, per year:</b>	1-50 students	£100
<i>(delivered to entire student population)</i>	51-200 students	£200
	200-500 students	£300
	500+ students	£400

Course teams, with the approval of the MK:U Education Lead, are at liberty to make payments in excess of the approved levels at their own discretion. Reasonable travelling expenses should also be paid. It should be noted that, in line with HMRC guidance, tax will normally be deducted from travelling expenses for work carried out at the University, although travelling expenses for work elsewhere can be paid gross.

## 3.3 Resignation of Appointment

Although the majority of our external examiners serve the usual terms of four years, a change of circumstances may mean that you can no longer fulfil your duties. If this does occur, please contact Education Services ([registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk)) in writing to confirm your resignation. Education Services will ensure that all necessary parties are informed of your resignation. Exceptionally, the University may request that you extend your appointment beyond four years (to an absolute maximum of five years), but this will be discussed with you before any extension is agreed.

## 3.4 Termination of Appointment

The University reserves the right to terminate the appointment of external examiners who fail to meet the requirements of their role as outlined in Sections 4 and 5. Any such decision will be taken by the School's Director of Education<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Or, for undergraduate courses, the Undergraduate Education Lead on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

## 4 Key Tasks

### 4.1 Approval of Draft Assessments

All assessments<sup>6</sup> will be sent to External Examiners prior to their release to students, with an appropriate timeframe allowed for you to provide comments or feedback. The University will take no responses (within the appropriate time frame) as an endorsement of the assessment.

Registry will send draft assessments to you, together with model answers or outline solutions (where appropriate) and marking schemes. Registry will advise you of the timeframe for the return of any comments or feedback, but as a general principle you should aim to return any comments or feedback within ten working days.

At the start of your appointment the course team will confirm the times of the year when you may expect to receive draft assessments. If you anticipate you may not be available at these times please inform the course team as soon as possible so that an alternative timeline can be agreed.

### 4.2 Sampling Assessments

As an external examiner you have the right to see any examination scripts, coursework, project work and theses (hereby known as assessments). Most often, the course team will provide a sample in the first instance. You should check that you have enough evidence to determine the internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent.

At an early stage of your appointment the course team will agree with you the number of samples you will normally receive. As a guideline you should see a sample of scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range, together with all assessments of borderline candidates and those assessed internally as failures.

If you are appointed to a course with a high volume of students it would be reasonable for the course team to suggest that you visit the University in advance of the board of examiners meeting to sample assessments *in situ*.

As an external examiner you are not required to mark assessments. On occasion and by prior arrangement you may agree to mark a particular assessment, or even a suite of assessments. However, your primary role in this capacity is to make judgements about the comparability of Cranfield's standards with those of other universities and check for the level, range and consistency in the internal marking of assessments.

### 4.3 Exceptional Assessment of Individual Examination Candidates

There are a number of rare circumstances that may result in individual students being required to take a different assessment to that of other candidates (e.g. specific learning needs adjustments, re-sit examination, legitimate and approved absence from a scheduled examination).

Where an assessment is created for an individual candidate, the course team will alert you about this and the reasons for it. The course team will also provide you with the opportunity to comment on the equity of the proposed alternative assessment with that scheduled for the other candidates.

### 4.4 Participation in Oral Examinations

From time to time, course teams might ask you to jointly conduct oral examinations with at least one internal examiner. Where oral examinations are only held for a proportion of the candidates on a

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<sup>6</sup> This will include all examination papers, assignments and project briefs.

course, the principles for the selection of candidates will be agreed by the internal examiner in consultation with you.

Cranfield University offers you the right to meet with any candidates you so wish, assuming that the candidates are available and/or content to attend a meeting.

*NB: The only exception to this may be if students are based overseas as part of an academic partnership arrangement. A decision as to whether you will visit an overseas site will be agreed when you are initially approached by the course team.*

## **4.5 Attendance at Meetings of Boards of Examiners**

You will be informed of the date of any meetings of the board of examiners you are required to attend at the start of each academic year. Attendance at the meetings is an important function of the external examiner role and assures the oversight of the function to enable the University to conduct fair and appropriate meetings.

Although every effort should be made to attend the board of examiners meeting, Cranfield University does recognise that in exceptional cases this is not possible. If you cannot attend in person the course team will explore with you whether you can be present via web or teleconferencing. If you cannot attend the meeting in any capacity you must at some point endorse the outcomes of the awards. The timing in which you will be required to do so will be agreed with the course team at the point when you indicate your intention to miss the meeting.

External Examiners appointed to modules only are not usually invited to attend Board of Examiners meetings but are expected to provide a report prior to the Board of Examiners meeting to the overall Course External Examiner.

On occasion, it may not be possible to make a decision on an individual student's progression or award (i.e. if marks are missing or if a case of academic misconduct is still in progress). In these circumstances, the Chair of the board of examiners will facilitate a discussion to agree the nature of your engagement with decisions for these students. This may include attending a meeting remotely or signing off results of the individual student(s) at some future point.

# 5 Annual Reports

## 5.1 Schedule

Reporting is a crucial part of an external examiner's role and the University relies on the assurance the exercise provides for its taught course provision.

All external examiners (including those appointed to modules only) are required to submit a report on at least an annual basis, normally after a meeting of the board of examiners. Please note that you are required to submit a report on an annual basis, whether or not you have attended an examination board or received work samples. In an academic year we would expect you to have had some element of contact with the course team (including for part-time courses) and therefore produce at least a brief report. If you have had no contact with the course team during an academic year please contact Education Services to discuss.

## 5.2 Content of Report

You are free to comment in your report on any aspect of the course and its assessment, but you are invited to comment specifically on:

- a) whether or not the academic standards of the assessment processes and resulting assessed work are at Master's level (or Bachelor's level for undergraduate awards), as defined by national guidelines, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and related guidance issued by the University;
- b) whether or not the assessment processes measured student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the course;
- c) whether or not the assessment processes were conducted in line with the policies, regulations and other guidance provided on appointment (or any subsequent revisions of);
- d) the extent to which standards are comparable with similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions of which you have experience;
- e) any good practice and/or innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment;
- f) any opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

Please also outline in your report those areas where you do not feel able to comment, and why this might be.

To accompany your report you are asked to complete a cover sheet concluding whether you believe:

- a) the standards set for the course are appropriate for qualifications at this level;
- b) the assessment processes and the marking and classification schemes were appropriate;
- c) the meeting of the board of examiners (if attended) was conducted satisfactorily;
- d) whether you require a response to your report from the course team.

## 5.3 Submission of Report

We ask that all reports and cover sheets are submitted to [registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk) as this assists us in storing our reports electronically for ease of access.

If you prefer to submit your report in hard copy, please send it, along with the cover sheet to:

Registry Administrator – External Examiners  
Education Services  
Building 45  
Cranfield University  
Bedfordshire  
MK43 0AL

We ask that all reports are submitted no later than 6 weeks after the final examination board meeting for that academic year.

## 5.4 Consideration of Your Report

Education Services processes all external examiner reports on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. If you have raised any of the following concerns, your report will trigger a written response to you from the course team, which will normally be provided within six weeks of receipt of the report:

- if you have indicated that “immediate action is required to ensure the future quality of the course”;
- if you have indicated the overall experience for the students is either “below average” or “very poor”;
- if you have otherwise requested a formal written response.

The report and response will also be reviewed by Senate’s Education Committee, which includes the Directors of Education of the University.

Otherwise, on receipt of your report Education Services will forward it to the course team and the School’s Director of Education<sup>7</sup> for consideration. It will also be examined by Education Services with a view to collating identified good practice, or areas that require development, for dissemination and consideration within the wider community of the University.

## 5.5 Raising serious concerns

On rare occasions, you may feel that a standard report may be insufficient to address serious concerns or issues you would like to raise. You may at any point take up an opportunity to submit a private and confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor directly (marking any correspondence as such).

Where you believe your concerns to be of paramount importance, and you feel that the University is unable or unwilling to address those concerns, you may contact the Office for Students, the independent regulator of higher education in England, who consider concerns about quality and standards at publicly funded higher education providers in England.

Please note that this scheme should only be used if you believe all avenues of enquiry with the University have been exhausted.

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<sup>7</sup> Or, for undergraduate courses, the Undergraduate Education Lead on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

## 6 Contacts and Other Resources

If you have any questions about your role during the term of your appointment please contact the course team in the first instance.

If you require further advice please contact Education Services:

### **Contact:**

Registry  
Education Services, Building 45  
Cranfield University  
Cranfield  
Bedfordshire  
MK43 0AL

Tel: 01234 750111 Extension 2122

Tel: 01234 754055

Email: [registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:registryexams@cranfield.ac.uk)

### **Other Resources**

- Senate Handbook: Student Handbook Assessment Rules (Taught Courses)
- Senate Handbook: Managing Taught Courses
- Senate Handbook: Undergraduate Awards
- Senate Handbook: Managing Undergraduate Courses

These Handbooks are available on the intranet:

<https://intranet.cranfield.ac.uk/EducationServices/Pages/SenateHandbooksA-Z.aspx>

and on the Cranfield University web site: <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/About/Governance-and-Policies/Quality-assurance>

# Appendix A Previous Fee Structure

The below fee structure was in place for all appointments made to postgraduate courses prior to the academic year 2021-22, and any External Examiners appointed prior to 2021-22 will continue to receive payments as below:

Annual fee levels for appointments made prior to 2021-22 are:

1 to 5 students:	£250
6 to 14 students:	£365
15 to 24 students:	£480
25 to 40 students:	£615
Over 40 students:	£730

Part-time courses at Cranfield Defence and Security, where student numbers are >70, attract a fee of £730 per student intake over 70 students.

<b>Owner</b>	Academic Registrar
<b>Department</b>	Education Services
<b>Implementation date</b>	August 2022
<b>Approval by and date</b>	Academic Registrar, August 2022
<b>Version number and date of last review</b>	Version 3.7; August 2022
<b>Next review by</b>	July 2024