

# Unit External Examiner Information 2017-18

This document provides an overview of the changes to the University's processes and regulations and relevant contact details and links to information.

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# Changes to academic processes and regulations for the 2017-18 academic year

## 2B: Academic Framework

A review of the Academic Framework for both credit bearing and non-credit bearing provision was undertaken during 2016/17. The updated framework comes into effect from 2017/18; existing courses will align to the new framework during revalidation.

The key changes to the frameworks includes:

- a) Section 2C (Academic Framework: Non-credit bearing provision) has been deleted. Information has been moved to other sections of the Academic Handbook.
- b) Section 2X (Student Attendance Statement) has been deleted. Key principles of student attendance has been included in the Academic Framework.
- c) Curriculum Plus has been removed from the Framework. Employability is a 'USP' for the University should be embedded within a course's curriculum. The principles of employability is reflected in the University's Educational Principles.
- d) Courses no longer need to offer a minimum number of optional units. The Educational Principles include the requirement to provide students with appropriate choices and this would be assessed at course approval and revalidations.
- e) To ensure courses continue to align to the University's Internationalisation Strategy all undergraduate courses of three levels or more must provide a language option; this could be an option against a single unit if the course only has 'core' units. Additionally the Framework now permits all undergraduate students on a three year (or more) course to study level 5 at a partner institution abroad where the units are equivalent and have been appropriately mapped.
- f) To ensure uniqueness of courses within the University's academic portfolio a minimum number of credits of a course must be distinct to that course: 60 credits across level 5 and 6 for undergraduate courses of three or more levels or 45 credits at level 7 for postgraduate courses, excluding research methods, dissertation/final year projects.
- g) To encourage consistency in unit sizes and course design the minimum unit size should be 20 (undergraduate courses) and 30 (postgraduate taught courses). Any 10 (undergraduate) or 15 (postgraduate) credit units must be approved by the Director of School/Service and explicitly considered by the validation panel.
- h) The Professional Development Framework including all Professional Development Units (PDU) have been discontinued. Students currently studying a PDU can complete the unit and those who are currently eligible for a Professional Development Award will receive their award in line with current regulations. The Framework provides the option for standalone units to be developed and for existing units to be studied as standalone units.

## 2C: Academic Framework: Non-credit bearing provision

This Section has been deleted. The information contained in this section has been moved appropriately to other sections of the Academic Handbook.

## 2D: Approval, monitoring and review of University Provision

A review was conducted on the University's Periodic Review policy. Periodic Review as currently conducted has been discontinued and replaced with revalidation.

The new policy requires all courses to be revalidated on a 6-yearly cycle. The process to be followed is the same as the course approval process except for Stage 1. The work done at Stage 1 depends on the level of risk: if the course is deemed low risk then APRC can approve the course for revalidation without receiving full documentation; however if the course is deemed high risk then full Stage 1 documentation must be presented to APRC.

The other key changes to this policy were:

- a) For all course proposals School/Service Management Teams must approve an initial business case for the development of the course. Once approved the lead developer would complete the full stage one documentation required for approval by APRC.
- b) The external and student panel members would be recruited at the development phase and would be part of the development team as well as the validation panel.
- c) Additional requirements for approving courses to be delivered online were incorporated into this policy; previously this had been a separate section.
- d) Validation panel membership has been amended and now stipulates a minimum requirement for the constitution of the panel. The internal panel member does not have to be an academic member of staff but must still come from the staff standing panel; to be on the staff standing panel staff must meet a specific criteria.
- e) The policies relating to course review, periodic review (now revalidation) and academic audit have been inserted into this policy.

## 2E: Course review, Periodic Review and Academic Audit

This Section has been deleted. Information contained in this section has mostly moved to Section 2D.

## 2F: Unit approval and course modifications; and 2G: Collaborative provision

These policies have been updated to enable the University's Unit Approval and Course Modification Group to approve changes to units and courses delivered by a partner institution. Previously these changes would have been considered and approved by the relevant Partnership Management Group.

## 2H: Recognition of Prior Learning

The period within which students at level 4 may transfer to a new course has been reduced from six weeks to four weeks. This will ensure that the student, the tutor and others students on the new course are not overly disadvantaged by the transfer.

Course leaders are required to confirm that appropriate mapping has been completed and indicate their approval of the transfer request.

The criteria to award advanced standing was revised to allow students to be admitted with advanced standing when they can demonstrate they have the equivalence of the learning outcomes of an earlier stage/level; rather than having to demonstrate they have achieved all the learning outcomes.

The requirement for RPL applications to be approved by external examiners has been removed as external examiners confirm the standards of the units through the assessment moderation process.

## 2I: External Examiners

External examiners will no longer moderate assessments at level 3 and level 4\*. All assessments across all levels will continue to be internally moderated, as per current practice.

The new external moderation policy is similar to policies at many other UK universities and continues to meet the Quality Assurance Agency's requirements.

This change will help the University to ensure that student results are confirmed and published as scheduled in the academic calendar.

\*some exceptions do apply to this and are detailed in the policy.

## 2L: Student Academic Misconduct Policy

Minor changes to terminology has been made to aid clarity of meaning. The term 'exclusion' has been replaced with 'withdrawn from the course'.

In order to get withdrawal decisions to students more quickly approval is only required from the Chair of the Academic Board. Award external examiners will not be required to ratify the decision; they will be updated after the process has been completed with details of the process followed in reaching that decision. Award external examiners will be required to confirm in their report that due processes had been followed. This will enable the University to inform students of the withdrawal decision quicker and therefore allowing students to take the necessary actions without any unnecessary delays.

The revised process continues to meet the Quality Assurance Agency's requirements.

## 20: Assessment Policy 20 (Annex 1): Assessment Regulations

The authority to approve exemptions to grade and anonymous marking has been clarified; these exemptions are approved through the course approval or the unit approval and course modifications processes.

The requirement to record performance based assessments has been inserted to enable these types of assessments to be moderated in line with the University's regulations.

The policy relating to students changing an option unit that they have failed has been updated in order to aid clarity. The revised wording confirms that students can choose to change the option unit after one or more assessment elements have been failed but before any reassessments are taken. Students can, subject to availability, start the new unit the next time it is delivered and within the first two weeks of the unit's start date

The policy regarding repeat levels has been updated to clarify that students who are unable to repeat a level as they have already done a repeat level will be given the remaining referral opportunities available; if the student is unable to proceed after all referral opportunities have been taken they will be withdrawn from the course.

The regulations relating to registration periods have been moved to the Academic Framework (Section 2B).

## **2V: Framework for online course and units**

This Section has been deleted. Where relevant, information contained in this section has been moved to Section 2D.

## **2X: Student attendance statement**

This Section has been deleted. The information contained in this section has been moved to other sections of the Academic Handbook.

## **2Z: Online Submission of Assessments**

The University wide deadline to submit assessments online has changed from 2200 hours (10pm) to 1600 hours (4pm). This will ensure that students have better and easier access to academic and professional support staff during the submission period.

## Marking/Moderation and Assessment Board Dates

For ease of reference the marking/moderation dates and the assessment board dates are provided below.

- Weeks commencing 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018 - marking and board preparation
- Week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 - assessment boards
- Weeks commencing 21<sup>st</sup> May and 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - marking and board preparation
- Week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018 - assessment boards
- Weeks commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018 - marking and board preparation
- Week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018 - assessment boards

Assessment board dates for postgraduate and non-traditional undergraduate courses will be confirmed by the Assessments Team.

## Contact Details and Links to Relevant Information

- Information on the External Examiner role can be found on our website here:  
[www.solent.ac.uk/externalexaminers](http://www.solent.ac.uk/externalexaminers)
- The University's guide for External Examiners can be found here:  
<https://www.solent.ac.uk/about/documents/guide-for-external-examiners.pdf>
- All course documentation can be found on Solent Online Learning (SOL) here:  
<http://learn.solent.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6152>
- For any queries relating to the role or responsibilities of the External Examiner role please contact:

Mike Firth - External Examiner Officer  
AS.ExternalExaminers@solent.ac.uk  
02382 016351

- For any queries relating to moderation or assessment boards the Assessments Team can be contacted on:

Email: [Assessments@solent.ac.uk](mailto:Assessments@solent.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 02382 015023

## Unit External Examiner Annual Report Questions

The following questions have been extracted from the 2016-17 annual report template. The template and questions for 2017-18 will be confirmed later in the academic year; minimal changes are expected so the questions should be similar.

The report is split into seven sections:

- Section 1 - Standards
- Section 2 - Support
- Section 3 - Assessment
- Section 4 - Student Performance
- Section 5 - Good Practice and Enhancement
- Section 6 - Unit Assessment Boards
- Section 7 - Final Exit Report



## **Section 1 - Standards**

### **1.1**

#### **Unit standards**

**For each unit in your allocation you will be asked the following:**

- Were you sent copies of all assessment tasks prior to their release of students?
- Were the standards set for the units appropriate for their level?
- Were the standards of student performance comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which you are familiar?

### **1.2**

**Do any unit(s) give you cause for immediate concern or require immediate action on the part of the University?**

Yes/No

## **Section 2 - Support**

### **2.1**

**Have you attended an external examiner briefing day during your tenure?**

Yes/No

### **2.2**

**Were you adequately briefed concerning your responsibilities and rights as a Unit External Examiner?**

Yes/No

### **2.3**

**Were you able to access necessary information and resources to carry out your role?**

Yes/No

### **2.4**

**If you made recommendations in your previous report, did you receive a response to these?**

Yes/No/NA

### **2.5**

**Are there any recommendations you would like to make with regards to the information provided that is given to unit external examiners to better support them in their role?**

Yes/No

Please comment on your responses above and specifically highlighting any areas of good practice or concerns.

## **Section 3 - Assessment**

### **Sample of Student Work**

Were you provided with the details of the following items in good time to give feedback to the staff involved?

**3.1**

The unit descriptors containing the intended learning outcomes of the unit(s) for which you were responsible?

Yes/No

**3.2**

The assessment brief and criteria to be used to assess the level of student attainment?

Yes/No

**3.3**

An appropriate sample of student assessments and, if relevant, suitable arrangements made to moderate presentations/ performances/ recitals/ appropriate professional placements/ oral examinations etc.?

Yes/No

Please comment on your responses above specifically highlighting any areas of good practice or concerns.

### **Nature of Assessment**

**3.4**

Were the assessment methods appropriate to demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes?

Yes/No

**3.5**

Were you satisfied with the level and range of assessment tasks?

Yes/No

**3.6**

Were you satisfied with the extent to which employability has been embedded into assessments?

Yes/No

**3.7**

Do you have any recommendations regarding the assessment of any particular units? If so, please identify the units below.

Yes/No

## Marking and Feedback

3.8

Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking?

Yes/No

3.9

Were you satisfied with the quality and consistency of feedback provided to students and that it enabled them to understand the grade awarded and areas for improvement?

Yes/No

3.10

Were you satisfied with the level and evidence of internal moderation undertaken and Unit Leaders' response?

Yes/No

## Section 4 - Student Performance

Please comment on:

4.1

If standards and student performance are aligned with the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable benchmark statements and reflects any additional professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements.

4.2

The strengths of student performance in the unit(s) allocated.

4.3

The weakness of student performance in the unit(s) allocated.

4.4

The overall student performance compared to that of previous years of your appointment?

4.5

Practical and/or specialist skills demonstrated by students in the units.

4.6

Higher order intellectual skills demonstrated by students in the units.

4.7

Transferable and employability skills demonstrated by students in the units.

## Section 5 - Good Practice and Enhancement

5.1

Please identify and comment on any areas of distinctive and/or innovative good practice.

5.2

Please identify any areas for enhancement, in particular to the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.

## Section 6 - Unit Assessment Boards

Questions 6.2-6.4 are only to be completed by those unit examiners who attended a unit assessment board during the academic year.

6.1

Did you attend a unit assessment board during the 2017-18 academic session?

Yes/No

*If answered 'yes' please answer questions 6.2, 6.3 & 6.4*

*If answered 'no' please go straight to section 7*

Comments provided for each question must be informative and, where possible, highlight any areas of good practice and/ or concerns that you have identified.

6.2

Were you satisfied with the conduct of the board(s) you attended?

Yes/No

6.3

Were all students treated equitably and objectively at the board(s)?

Yes/No

6.4

Were you able to endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes?

Yes/No

## Section 7 - Final Exit Report

7.0

If this is the last report of your tenure, use the space below to comment on your term in office.