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Award External Examiner Handbook

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23

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Welcome

Welcome to Northeastern University London (the University). We hope that your period of tenure as an Award External Examiner for the University will be a successful and valuable experience.

The procedures regarding External Examining at the University have been developed in line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education - [Theme: External Expertise](#). For more information, please read [AQF11 External Examining](#).

The purpose of this handbook is to provide relevant information to you about the University and its examination processes, and to provide you with support and guidance for carrying out your role.

Should you have any queries at any point during your period of appointment, please do not hesitate to contact the Registrar.

Northeastern University London

Founded in 2011, as the New College of the Humanities, Northeastern University London offers a unique liberal arts-inspired curriculum taught to small groups and through the one-to-one tutorial system that is the gold standard of a humanities education.

In February 2020 the University was granted (time-limited) Taught Degree-Awarding Powers (TDAP) which enabled the University to enhance its provision of education to undergraduate and postgraduate students and include degree apprenticeship programmes in its portfolio. In August 2020, the Department of Education granted the University indefinite Taught Degree Awarding Powers due to its registration with the Office for Students, and becoming a publicly funded HE provider.

Also, in March 2020, the University became a Registered Approved Training Provider for Degree Apprenticeships which provided the University with additional channels for offering higher education to a broader spectrum of students and in August 2020, the University was officially on the Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations.

In 2020 New College of the Humanities joined Northeastern University, a large research led university based in Boston in the United States. June 2020, NCH at Northeastern was recognised as a charity and was entered onto the Register of Charities.

In June 2022 NCH at Northeastern became Northeastern University - London. The University is now fully a part of the Northeastern University global network and is one of three sights providing undergraduate degree programmes.

Founding Values of the University

The University's mission is to foster a collegial environment in which learning, debate and the sharing of ideas is central, and in which all members of the University treat one another as partners in the quest for knowledge and intellectual enlargement. The students are embarked on courses of systematic study; the faculty advise, assist and challenge; the joint venture is not a matter of de haut en bas but of co-operation. Encouragement of students to think across the boundaries of disciplines and to see the connection between what we study and our experience of life at large – these are some of the desiderata to place at the heart of University life.

Undergraduate Programmes

Undergraduate students studying a combined honours degree have the option of, currently, seven major subjects and ten minor subjects. The University also offers Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) and Philosophy, Politics and History (PPH) combinations. In addition to the combined programmes, there is a single Honours Law LLB programme.

NCH Diploma

All undergraduate students at the University combine their Degree studies with the University's enriching Diploma,¹ which is designed to provide the insights required to lead a rewarding and fulfilling life and offers exceptional professional development opportunities. The NCH Diploma, which is non-credit bearing, is awarded to graduates in addition to their Degree, and sets them apart from their peers by marking the greater depth of their education. For more information, see [Appendix A](#).

POSTGRADUATE Programmes

The University currently offers five postgraduate degrees: A Master's in Philosophy; a Master's in Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence a Master's in Responsible AI; a Master's in Computer Science, and a Master's in Digital Politics and Sustainability.

Degree Apprenticeship Programmes

The University has four undergraduate degrees apprenticeship programmes: BSc (Hons) Digital and Technological Solutions Professional; BSc (Hons) Data Science; BSc (Hons) Bioscience with Digital Technologies and BSc (Hons) Project Management with Digital Technologies. It also offers two postgraduate degree apprenticeship: MSc Artificial Intelligence and Data Science and MSc Digital and Technology Solutions

¹ The content of the NCH Diploma is embedded in the BSc (Hons) Business & Digital Transformation and therefore these students will not study the diploma.

External Examiner Pack

For the first year of your tenure, the University will provide you with an Award External Examiner Pack that includes relevant documentation as follows:

- Award External Examiner Handbook and referenced documents.
- Relevant assessment information including:
 - Academic Regulations for Taught Awards.
 - Academic Regulations for Degree Apprenticeships.
- Boards of Examiners information including:
 - Minutes of the most recent Progression and Award Board Meeting.
 - Dates of forthcoming Progression and Award Board Meetings.

Should you require any further copies of the above or wish to request any additional information, please contact the Academic Registrar:
rebecca.harrison@nchlondon.ac.uk

Award External Examiner Induction Provided by the University

The University organises an Award External Examiner Induction session to which newly appointed External Examiners are invited to attend. The induction session will normally take place online.

The aim of the Induction session is to provide Award External Examiners with:

- An opportunity to meet **key staff**.
- General information about the University, including recent activities and new developments.
- Further information about the roles, responsibilities and value of Award External Examiners at the University.
- Information regarding Assessment Boards at the University, including the three-tier assessment board process for all taught courses, how Award Boards operate at the University, and forthcoming dates of Progression and Award Boards.
- An overview of relevant University policies and procedures.
- An opportunity to ask any questions and request additional information as appropriate.

An indicative agenda for the Award External Examiner Induction is provided below:

- Welcome to the University: recent activities and new developments
- Roles, responsibilities and the value of External Examiners at the University
- Assessment Boards at the University
- Assessment at the University: policies, procedures and practice
- An overview of the programmes and their constituent courses
- Marking criteria and schemes
- The logistics of External Examining
- Confirming key contacts
- Confirming receipt of relevant documentation

The Responsibilities of Award External Examiners

Award External Examiners are responsible for confirming the standards of the University's awards on the basis of attending Progression and Award Boards and should be confident that:

- Board decisions are reached in accordance with University policy.
- Students are considered equitably and objectively.

Assessment Boards

The University operates a three-tier assessment board process for all courses.

First Tier Assessment Board: Faculty Assessment Board

Faculty Assessment Boards (FAB) review interim (provisional) examination and assignment results and approve them for publication.

The Chair will normally be the Head of Faculty or their nominated senior member of faculty.

If a particular assessment within a course shows an anomalous range of marks (which may lead to further irregularity or aberration within course marks), the relevant Head of Faculty and Course Leader should consider the reason for the apparent anomaly and what adjustments to those marks might be recommended to the Course Assessment Board (CAB) or Course Assessment Board Work Related Learning CAB (WRL).

Any proposed adjustments should be discussed with the External Examiner and confirmed at the next CAB/CAB (WRL).

Second Tier Assessment Board: Course Assessment Board (CAB)

The CAB oversees the standard of assessments and confirms marks or grades for assessment elements and courses, to students who have achieved the learning outcomes and passed the course.

It also scrutinises course statistics flagging any anomalies. At the first sitting CAB a flagged course will be where 25% or more students did not submit. At the second sitting CAB a flagged course will be a course where the mean of the overall course mark is below 55% or above 68% and/or 25% of the students have failed the course.

The discussion and confirmation of flagged courses is recorded along with any action for the University to take for the next sitting or academic session.

CABs are held prior to PABs, in order to confirm course marks ahead of the progression and award decision making process.

For Work Related Learning, the Course Assessment Board (Work Related Learning) (CAB (WRL)) has its own [Terms of Reference](#) and will be held quarterly to support student programme progression.² CAB (WRL) will be able to make decisions such as referral opportunities prior to the Progression and Award Board (Work Related Learning) (PAB (WRL)).

The business of CAB/CAB (WRL) is confidential.

Third Tier Assessment Board: Progression and Award Board (pAB)

Progression and Award Boards (PAB) confirm student course marks, and approve progression between levels and the conferment of University awards and award academic credit.

For Work Related Learning, the Progression and Award Board (Work Related Learning) (PAB (WRL)) has its own [Terms of Reference](#) and will be held at the end of each level for each cohort. The PAB/PAB (WRL) acts within and applies the University's regulations. In respect of each student, the PAB/ PAB (WRL) will receive:

- i. The overall mark for each course.
- ii. The mark for each assessment element.

² For the purpose of this AQF chapter, 'student' refers to students registered on undergraduate programmes, postgraduate taught programmes and learners registered on work related learning programmes.

- iii. Notification of any irretrievable deficits.
- iv. Extenuating circumstances decisions confirmed by the University's Extenuating Circumstances Panel.
- v. Confirmation where a late submission penalty has been applied.
- vi. Confirmation where the student is subject to an academic misconduct ruling.
- vii. Confirmation where any recognition of prior learning credits has been awarded.
- viii. Level averages to one decimal point place and award averages to one decimal point place.
- ix. A total of all credit points achieved by the student in the named programme in this and previous years.

The PAB/PAB (WRL) will:

1. Agree the final version of the minutes of the previous meeting and note any matters arising from them.
2. Note any actions taken under the delegated authority since the previous meeting.
3. Confirm the course assessment results for students and the award of credit.
4. Confirm whether students can progress onto the next level of their programme.
5. Confirm the conferment of an award and, as appropriate, its classification.

The business of the PAB/PAB (WRL) is confidential.

Membership & Terms of Reference of Progression Award Boards

For full details of the membership of PAB and PAB (WRL), please see the assessment boards terms of reference in the Academic Handbook governance section, [here](#).

Presentation of Data to the Assessment Board

Progression and Award Board/Progression and Award Board (Work Related Learning)

At PAB/ PAB (WRL), each report lists the students with the estimated outcome. A complete assessment profile for each student is provided to the Board.

Where amendments are necessary these are recorded by altering the decisions by marking the appropriate result. These amendments must be made immediately after the meeting by the Secretary to the Board and a report of amendments will be produced to be checked by the Chair and appended to the minutes of the meeting.

There are **ten** possible decisions that may be made by the PAB/ PAB (WRL) regarding a student's performance as follows:

- Pass - Proceed
- Proceed with Deficit
- Pass (plus classification)
- Defer
- Refer
- Deficit Course Result
- Chair's Action
- Repeat Courses
- Cannot Proceed
- Student Withdrawn

There are **seven** possible individual course outcomes:

- Pass
- Defer
- Refer
- Pass Compensated (does not apply to PAB (WRL))
- Repeat Course
- Chair's Action
- Failed Final Attempt

Appeals Against Examination Board Decisions

Students can appeal the decision of the Progression and Award Board. Further information on Academic Appeals can be found [here](#).

Extenuating Circumstances

Except when prevented by medical reasons or other sufficient causes, students who fail to present themselves for an examination shall be deemed by the PAB to have failed that examination.

Students are strongly advised to submit their assessment ahead of the published deadline. However, if assessments are submitted late without approved Extenuating Circumstances, there are penalties:

- Up to 24-hours late of the published submission deadline = 5% points deducted from the grade. For example, an assignment awarded 58% from the markers, the final mark recorded will be 53%. If the assignment is awarded 42% from the markers, the final mark recorded will be 37%.
- 48- hours late, any mark of 42% or higher will be capped at 40% for undergraduate students. Any mark of 50% or higher will be capped at 50% for postgraduate students. Any mark below 42% for undergraduate students and below 50% for postgraduate students will stand.
- Students who do not submit their assignment within seven days, and have no approved extenuating circumstances, are deemed to have failed that assessment element and the mark recorded will be 0%.
- 48-hours after the submission deadline, the Canvas submission area will be closed.

If a student experiences serious events that have a significant adverse effect on their ability to study or undertake an assessment, they may report them as Extenuating Circumstances using the University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy, which is provided to students through the Academic Handbook, on the University [website](#). The students are also directed to this policy through their programme handbooks. This policy provides students with clear instructions about events that are and are not considered Extenuating Circumstances and the procedure for submitting Extenuating Circumstances for both examinations and continuous performance (including the submission of coursework/assignments).

Award External Examiner Annual Report

As an Award External Examiner, you are responsible for completing a five section report at the end of your term in office. You will have an information document to guide you through the report and have the opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and feedback any recommendations or concerns you may have. The report sections are as follows:

1. Support
2. Progression and Awards Boards
3. Student Progressions and Awards
4. Good Practice and Enhancement
5. Final Exit Report

Raising a Concern

If you have cause to raise a concern regarding the academic standards of courses, or the behaviour or performance of a member of staff, you are advised to raise this with the Academic Registrar. The Academic Registrar will investigate the issue in order to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all parties. If you have a concern

regarding the Academic Registrar you should raise this with the Director of Academic Services.

Should the issue remain unresolved, you may submit a confidential report about academic standards directly to the Dean of Faculties or about a member of staff to the Chief Executive Officer.

Where an Award External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, they may invoke the 'QAA's concerns scheme' or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

The scheme's focus is designed for systemic failings in the University's management of standards or quality and should not be used for one-off cases of ineffective practice, or to raise a personal grievance or issues relating to an appointment.

Key Contacts

Rebecca Harrison	Academic Registrar	rebecca.harrison@nchlondon.ac.uk
Michele Longhurst	Head of Quality Assurance	michele.longhurst@nchlondon.ac.uk

List of Referenced Documentation in this Handbook

The following is a list of the documentation that is referenced throughout this handbook (excluding weblinks).

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Assessment Boards Terms of Reference](#)
- [Assessment Regulations for Taught Awards](#)
- [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Marking, Moderation and Feedback Policy](#)

Appendix A – NCH Diploma

The NCH Diploma is a combination of Core Curriculum courses and LAUNCH.

The Core Curriculum equips students with an intelligent understanding of the core concepts, arguments and theories that underpin the study of humanities, and enables students to approach their Degree studies in a more rounded and enlightened way.

LAUNCH fosters the basic capabilities that are essential for a wide range of different professions, and encourages students to develop winning attitudes and behaviours to excel in any field, from law, finance and consulting to marketing, advertising and TV, the setting up of enterprise companies or continuing in academia and postgraduate studies.

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Referenc ed document s	Undergraduate Assessment Policy; Assessment Regulations; Annex 2 Grade Marking; Annex 3 Grade Scale; Undergraduate Extenuating Circumstances Policy; Undergraduate Academic Appeals Policy; Assessment Board Terms of Reference				
External Referenc e Point(s)	UK Quality Code Theme: External Expertise				