

13th February 2025

Dear External Examiners,

Thank you for taking the time to act as an External Examiner at Liverpool Hope. As a smaller institution with Ecumenical foundations we value our distinctive mission and values. We are an inclusive and diverse community that consistently exceeds its benchmarks for recruiting students with a disability, or from areas of high deprivation and low participation.

I usually write to you with an update in April, ahead of the busy May/June assessment window, to highlight any changes that are significant to your role. I am a little earlier with my update this year so that I can also alert you to a curriculum review which is currently underway at Hope.

I will start with some important information about Level F and C students who began their students in October 2024:

* Students joining us this year will be the first cohorts to enter under our new award calculation rules. We have now adopted a single algorithm for degree calculation: the award mark will be calculated from the weighted aggregate, 25% of Level I and 75% of Level H. Students overall award aggregate will be rounded and borderline rules applied if the rounded award mark falls within 2 points of the border. A student will move to the higher classification if either 50% of their Level H profile is in the higher band, OR if 50% of their Level I and H profile falls into the higher category. Our on-course Level I/H and Integrated Masters students will continue to have their awards calculated on the dual algorithm with a rounded borderline and decisions based of 50% of Level H also being in the higher band. As the new students move through their studies the old rules will be phased out.

There are a number of other changes to our Regulations/Conventions for this academic year which are of note:

* The University has agreed, for the remainder of this academic year, to amend our mitigating circumstances policy. Specifically, to allow students to use self-certificates for extensions of 7 days on two occasions across the year (excluding examinations). This is a supportive measure that recognises the demography of our student groups and has been campaigned for by the Student Union. We will monitor the use of the self-certificate system to determine whether this adjustment to our conventions has been effective before deciding on next steps.
* Some subject areas have removed examinations from their assessment portfolio although students have been given the option to take an examination as planned if this is their preference. You will have been consulted by your teams about these amendments and it will be particularly important to review outcome data at the summer boards to monitor the impact of these changes on student achievement metrics. Please ensure that the appropriate summary statistics are made available to you before the School Boards in the summer.
* You will recall, if you were an Examiner with us in 2023/4, that we seemed to have a larger number of Boards to consider our Postgraduate Taught students than might have been expected. This was because of a new academic calendar for 2023/4 which amended the start of Term 2. For the transition to be successful we needed to hold additional Boards to ensure students were not being held up in receiving their confirmed outcomes. All students are now on modules sitting under the new academic calendar and the number of Boards has normalised. Please contact your School if they have not advised of the dates for assessment Boards across the remainder of the academic year.
* An area of challenge for all HEI’s remains balancing the opportunities offered by Generative AI and the issues associated with straying into academic misconduct. The University conversation has been ongoing across our Learning and Teaching Days for the last year and a number of events have been held to inform the discussion. We have now amended our academic misconduct policy to bring the penalty for inappropriate use of GenAI in line with other forms of misconduct. We have also produced materials which advise staff and students on avoidance of misconduct including publishing a position statement in the form of a [guide to use of AI.](https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/students/libraryservices/findingresources/) A fair use policy is in the pipeline and we continue to work on ways to incorporate the appropriate use of GenAI into our students learning experience.

All regulations and conventions can be accessed on our [web pages.](https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/students/studentenrolmentandadministration/academicregulations/)

After almost two decades with an integrated academic curriculum, represented as two 60 credit blocks of study in most academic areas, the University has taken the decision to move back to a modular structure. Academic Subjects are currently working on their plans for their Year 1 modules and will be looking forward to how these will scaffold Year 2 and Year 3 going forward. The University would very much appreciate your feedback on plans to take forward this exciting development. Your Subjects will be seeking your advice in the coming weeks if they have not done so already.

In a little more detail:

* Academic subjects have been asked to split their 60 Credit Level F/C blocks into 2, 30 credit modules with the assessments shared between them. This will enable new students to enter in 2025/6 on the new structure. There is some room to vary from this arrangement if there is a clear rationale; your subject will explain their direction of travel. If they have adopted something other than 30 credits modules subjects will be able to advise of the rationale. Changes will also be necessary to some of the underlying regulations including award calculation and operation of the Board system.
* The process of splitting Levels F and C will be minimally disruptive, but will generate a platform on which to build a curriculum at Levels I and H over the course of the 2025/6 academic year.
* Careful consideration will be given to the implications for PSRB’s and accreditation requirements and appropriate steps taken to keep the external body appropriately updated.

I will provide further updates in due course to keep you up to date with developments; we are still in the early stages of implementing the review. The University very much appreciate your support and guidance as teams progress through their curriculum review.

Finally, I feel it is also timely to remind you that the External Examiners Annual briefing slides are now available on our web pages, alongside our latest External Examiners handbook and forms.

<https://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/governance/academicquality/expectationsforstandards/>

I would ask that you review the slides and the handbook in the near future and confirm with your academic subjects that you have done this. If you have any queries having read the slides please do get in touch with me.

Please can I take this opportunity to remind you that all External Examiners are required to attend a School Continuation and Award Board on at least one occasion per academic year. For Undergraduates this is invariably summer, for Postgraduate Taught students this may be at any one of the tri-annual Boards. Attendance either in person or virtually is acceptable, please advise your Subject of your preference. Where examiners are absent the University requires them to have notified the School and carried out their duties in advance of the Board, and sent a report for consideration. Where provision is large, and made up of a number of subjects/awards, External Examiners may be more appropriately accommodated at subject meetings. Where this is the case School External Examiners must attend School Boards on behalf of the collective and Subject Examiners must continue to produce a report for the School Board. Again, please discuss these arrangements with your subject area in advance of the summer period.

Thank you in advance, for your ongoing support which is much appreciated,

With best wishes,



Dr Cathy Walsh, University Registrar