

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' HANDBOOK 2022/23

Prepared by the Quality Assurance
and Compliance Office,
part of the Education Directorate



External Examiners' Handbook

Taught Courses of Study

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Introduction

The University requires the participation of at least one external examiner in the examining process for all its qualifications and we are grateful to you for taking on this role. You have been invited to join Kent as an external examiner because of your expertise and experience in teaching and examining in your subject or because of your related professional experience in the field. You may also have responsibility for managing similar courses at your home institution. Your feedback to us, as someone working in the discipline area, is valued and will be used to inform the academic Department's process of reflection on its performance.

The input and contributions of external examiners are of great importance to the quality management of Kent's courses, as they are the key means of ensuring that:

- the academic standard for each award and its component parts is set and maintained by the University at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
- the assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the intended outcomes of the course, and is rigorous, fairly operated and in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
- the University is able to compare the standards of its awards with those of other higher education institutions.

This handbook is primarily intended to help you understand and fulfil your role as external examiner. It sets out the expectations the University holds with regard to the examination processes with which you will be involved, and lists the type of support that is available to you, both from the academic Department/Division or the partner institution, as well as from central services based at Kent (see [Guidance for external examiners](#)).

You may find the following Regulatory Framework documents useful when carrying out your role:

- Formal up-to-date information on external examining at Kent is articulated in [Annex J: Meetings of Boards of Examiners](#) and [Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses](#) of the University's Code of Practice for Taught Courses of Study.
- Information regarding marking conventions can be found in [Annex 6: Marking of the Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study](#).
- Additional information for external examiners of courses of study at Partner Colleges leading to University awards can be found in [Annex L: Quality Assurance Procedures for Courses of Study at Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges Leading to University Awards](#), and in [Annex 12: Assessment and Classification Conventions for HNC and HND Courses of the Credit Framework](#).
- For examiners working with one of Kent's Validated Institutions, similar information can be found in [Annex L: Quality Assurance Procedures for Courses of Study at Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges Leading to University Awards](#).

Full documentation can be found on our website: [Code of Practice for Taught Courses of Study](#) and the [Credit Framework](#).

A digest of key information drawn from the above is published in the spring and a copy of this will be sent to you at that time.

You may also wish to consult the [QAA's External Expertise website](#).

Should you have any questions that are not addressed in this handbook, please contact either the academic Department you have been appointed to work with or the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office (qaco@kent.ac.uk).

Please note that fees will be paid when your annual report on the course of study to which you have been appointed has been submitted electronically.

External Examining: The Process Step-by-Step

On appointment

This handbook has been provided to enable external examiners to familiarise themselves with the assessment procedures in place at the University. Other information, such as student handbooks and course specifications, may be obtained from the relevant academic Department/Division/partner institution, either in hard copy or via the Department/Division/partner institution website, as appropriate. Such information will provide more specific detail about the course(s) of study that you have undertaken to examine.

Setting assignments and examination papers

The first responsibility that you are likely to be contacted about will be the reviewing of and commenting on examination question papers or other assignments. Your comments will be sought before the assignment or examination can be set.

Reviewing student work

As external examiner you will be asked to review and comment on student work that has already been assessed by University of Kent or partner institution. This work may be sent to you in advance of the Board of Examiners' meeting. Alternatively, if arrangements have been made for this, you may undertake this review whilst at Kent or at the partner institution, but before the examiners' meeting.

When looking at student work, you are expected to determine whether the academic standards are comparable, in your professional opinion, to what you would expect from a similar course in your own institution and, where applicable, in other institutions where you are an external examiner. Please note that you may not write remarks on the students' work, but are asked to record any comments on a separate sheet. You are, of course, welcome to quote from student work if you wish to use this for your feedback to the examination board. Please note that all student work must be returned to the Department/Division/partner institution, and arrangements will be made with you in advance on how to do this. All examiners should be aware that any comments relating to individual examination scripts, even if recorded on a separate sheet of paper, may potentially be made available to the student under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Board of Examiners' meeting

The academic Department at Kent or, where relevant, the partner institution will contact you in advance in order to establish a date for the Board of Examiners' meeting. You are expected to attend all Boards of Examiners' meetings at which recommendations on awards are to be made, with the exception of Sub-Board of Examiners' meetings convened exclusively to consider referred and deferred students. Should you not be able to attend the meeting of the Board of Examiners on the date proposed, you should discuss this with the relevant contact as soon as possible in order that an alternative date may be agreed.

When the relevant party contacts you regarding the timing of the Board of Examiners, they will agree with you how this will work. We have strict procedures for meetings of Boards of Examiners, and you will find that the Chair will adhere to these

closely. It may seem that the meetings are quite formal, but this should not stop you from commenting on an individual student's work, or the overall quality of awards or the examining process as you see fit. However, you should not propose the changing of any marks awarded to individual students in isolation, except where invited to do so by the Board (for details, see paragraph 15.6.1 of [Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses](#)). Before each meeting of a Board of Examiners, the Chair will convene a meeting of a small number of members of the Board of Examiners to agree recommendations to be made to the Board regarding students about whom medical or other concessionary evidence has been received, and to consider other matters as it deems appropriate. For example, the Board may determine at this stage which students it wishes to draw to your attention during the meeting.

During the meeting of the Board of Examiners the Board will confirm module marks for students and will seek your input regarding the quality and accuracy of the marking and the marks awarded. You may be invited to agree provisional decisions for referral and deferral students pending the results of the referred and deferred assessments. You will be asked to confirm these decisions at a later date, when the referral results are known.

Towards the end of the meeting the Chair and the Secretary will prepare a list of the results agreed by the Board and you will be asked to sign in confirmation of these. You will be given the opportunity to make any closing remarks on the examining process and the quality of awards, or any other matters you wish to raise. Your remarks will be recorded in the formal minutes of the Board.

Please note that Boards of Examiners operate a policy of anonymisation of student identities for the purposes of agreeing grades or awarding classifications. The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be responsible for ensuring that the identities of students shall not be made known to examiners at any Board during the proceedings for confirming marks and awarding credit, or when determining the progression or classification of students. Only when such proceedings have been completed in full may the identities of students be revealed to the examiners, if required (to facilitate, for example, the award of prizes). Decisions on students, however, may not be revisited after their identities have been made known to the Board. For further information, please refer to paragraph 6.2 of [Annex J: Boards of Examiners](#).

After the meeting

You will be required to submit an electronic report to the University within four weeks of the meeting (see page 8 for further details). External examiners are asked to complete their reports as fully as possible, in order that these may be of most use to the examining Department.

Once the Department has received your report in accordance with our internal procedures, the relevant colleagues in the Department/partner institution (and perhaps also from the Quality and Compliance Assurance Office, should your comments warrant this) will formulate a response to your report, which will be included on your online report submission. This response needs to be approved internally so there may be a delay in replying to you. This does not mean that your

comments are not being acted upon in the meantime, and the response will set out what actions are being taken in response to your feedback.

Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners

One of the key functions of the external examiner is to determine whether the standard of academic work undertaken by students of the University is comparable to what you would expect to find on similar courses at other institutions. However, we expect our external examiners to inform us on a wide variety of issues regarding the academic standards of our courses and the process of examination. Accordingly, the role and functions of external examiners are as follows:

- To participate as a full member of the Board(s) of Examiners of which they are a member.
- To monitor and report on the standards set by the University for its awards in the subject area concerned in comparison with those of other institutions.
- To confirm that standards are appropriate for qualifications at that level and in that subject.
- To ensure that awards are in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Characteristics Statements, Subject Benchmark Statements and where applicable Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) requirements.
- To review and comment, in advance, on examination question papers (including those for referrals and deferrals) which contribute to the classification of an award.
- To attend all meetings of the Board(s) of Examiners of which they are a member and at which decisions may be taken about awards to students, except as set out in [Annex J](#) of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses, Boards of Examiners, and, where considered appropriate, to endorse the decisions reached. Attendance by virtual means will be permitted only with the advance permission of the DVC Education and Student Experience.
- To monitor and report on the achievement of students.
- To monitor and report on the proceedings of the Board of Examiners and in particular on whether these ensure that students are treated fairly and consistently within institutional regulations and guidance.
- To monitor and report on whether assessment enables achievement by students of the stated learning outcomes to be tested.
- To comment on whether students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level and to comment on degree outcomes.
- To monitor and report on whether marking is undertaken rigorously and in accordance with assessment criteria, in particular by reviewing the marking of samples of student work (including work for referrals and deferrals).
- Where appropriate, to observe student work, for example in the performing arts (see note 1 below).

- To monitor and report on whether students are offered appropriate opportunity to realise learning outcomes through work based learning, placement and employer links and its associated assessment.
- To discuss with internal examiners and to report on steps which might be taken to enhance the experience of students, the assessment process and the proceedings of the Board of Examiners.
- To report on good practice identified within the Department, relevant to the course(s) for which they act as the External.
- To submit an annual report to the University within four weeks of the main annual meeting of the Board of Examiners (i.e. where a course of study has more than one Board of Examiners meeting per academic year the annual report should not be completed until after the final meeting has taken place).

Prior consent is required from the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office where this will exceed a total of six visits in one academic year (see note 3 of [Annex K](#)).

In addition, Departments may invite external examiners to make recommendations to the Department (including, in particular, any steps which might be taken to enhance the experience of students, the assessment process or the proceedings of the Board of Examiners) and to the University (in relation to aspects of institutional policy).

You may find that the Chief Examiner raises prospective plans or policies for your comment. If the Department is developing a new course of study in your subject area, they may also seek your comments and suggestions on this.

Partner College Courses

University courses delivered by the Partner Colleges to Kent students include certificates, Higher National Certificates, diplomas, Higher National Diplomas, foundation degrees and top-up degrees. These courses are subject to the University's Code of Practice and Credit Framework. External examining for these courses should, therefore, be conducted on the same basis as for mainstream University provision.

Validated Institution Courses

The University validates courses of study at other institutions. This means that the other institution devises and delivers the course to its own students and that students who successfully complete the course of study are awarded a certificate, diploma or degree by the University. The University is therefore responsible for standards of awards and quality assurance of validated courses.

Institutional profiles with web links to validated institutions are [available on the QACO website](#).

All validated courses of study are subject to the Codes of Practice of the University of Kent. Likewise, all validated courses of study are subject to the University's [Code of Practice](#) and [Credit Framework](#).

External Examiners' Reports

Within four weeks of the Board of Examiners' meeting you are expected to provide a full report of your findings. This report will influence the critical thinking of the Department on the future development of the course(s) and its procedures for matters such as assessment, etc. The report is [accessible online](#).

Please note that external examiners' reports are not 'reserved' documents, unless you make a separate confidential report to the Head of Department or Vice-Chancellor. You are, therefore, asked not to identify students by name or refer to individual cases in ways that would make the student easily recognisable (such as by reference to an individual's disability). The reports will be read by a number of staff in the University/partner provider.

Completing the online report

Using the online report, you are asked to report on your experience as an external examiner for this University. You may find the following guidance useful in completing Section B:

Section B

3. The adequacy of the documentation provided. Such documentation will include detailed information about the relevant course(s) of study and systems of assessment by the Department concerned, such as a course specification, module specifications and the assessment strategy of the Department, as appropriate. You should also be provided with a sample of student work, Board of Examiners' meeting papers and details of the timing and location of the meeting.
4. Your participation in the assessment process. In the role of external examiner, you are a full member of the Board of Examiners. We would like to hear that your opinion was sought and acted upon at the correct time, and in an appropriate manner. Ideally you would also comment on the manner in which the process could be enhanced, should you feel this is appropriate.
5. Student achievement. We expect you to comment on the quality of the student work of the group of students, as well as on individual student work. You may wish to refer to the range of student achievement and its relation to the quality of marking by the Department. Again, we would like you to comment on how the achievement of Kent students compares to the achievement of students on a similar course elsewhere and we encourage you to make suggestions for improvement.
6. Whether the method of assessment makes it possible to test whether students have achieved the stated learning outcomes. The Credit Framework requires that students, before they can progress to the next stage, should pass at least 75% of the modules of their stage. Hence the reliable assessment of the achievement of the learning outcomes for a passing grade is most important. HNC and HND courses are graded on a fail/pass/merit/distinction basis according to the achievement of specified criteria and do not attract numerical marks.

We would also like you to consider whether the assessment relates appropriately to the topics, skills and content of the module that it is intended to measure.

Should you feel this is not the case, we would like you to clarify how the Department should remedy this.

7. Whether marking is undertaken rigorously and in accordance with assessment criteria. If you feel that there are comments to be made regarding the marking practices of the internal examiners (such as the use of the full marking scale, use of all classifications where appropriate, validity of marking, and comparability of marking between internal examiners, etc), we would encourage you to include these in this section of your report.

Most, but not all, Departments use marking sheets that set out the assessment criteria referring to the scripts or coursework that is being assessed. In either case, we would like you to confirm whether the assessment criteria are correctly and consistently applied, and sufficient weighting is given to each of the criteria.

8. Any good practice you have identified within the Department (e.g. strengths or distinctive/innovate features in relation to standards and assessment processes). Are there any examples of good practice that might be flagged for dissemination within the University?
9. Whether students are offered appropriate opportunity to realise learning outcomes through work based learning, placement and employer links and its associated assessment (if applicable). We expect you to comment on whether any work-based learning opportunities or placements undertaken as part of the course of study are appropriate for the related learning outcomes and whether students are adequately demonstrating the appropriate skills and knowledge and achieving the learning outcomes through the corresponding assessment.
10. Whether there is effective employer/work-related engagement and contribution in the curriculum to support the students' learning experience for a Foundation Degree award or if steps might be taken to enhance this (if applicable). The emphasis of a Foundation Degree award is on vocational skills and knowledge and the application of these within an industrial/work environment. Please comment on whether the employer/work related engagement utilised on the course is sufficient and effective in supporting students in their learning and is applicable to the course level outcomes.
11. Whether there is effective integration between academic study and work-based learning (if applicable) for students to have the opportunity to experience a holistic course through study of a Foundation Degree in the award subject. We would like to hear your views on whether you feel that any work-based learning utilised within the course is underpinned by the academic study elements. Do the vocational and academic constituents integrate well together to form a holistic curriculum and student experience, or is the work-based element seen as more of an additional building block that is attached to the academic course?
12. Professional Body Requirements

Are there any issues relating to the course(s) that are raised by specific PSRB requirements or accreditation? External examiners of courses of study in architecture will be asked to complete an additional form confirming whether RIBA/ARB criteria have been met.

The Place of External Examiners' Reports in the University of Kent's Quality Assurance Systems

External examiners' reports will be read by the Head of Quality Assurance and Compliance at the University of Kent. In exceptional cases, you may wish to address an additional confidential report to the Director of the Division or the Vice-Chancellor.

Reports of external examiners will be considered under 'non-reserved' business and, therefore, should not contain any identifiable references to students.

The Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will forward your report to any partner institution that has responsibility for the delivery or assessment of the course(s) you have examined. The Quality Assurance and Compliance Office, the relevant Divisional administrator(s) and the relevant Director of Division (or nominee) will also read your report.

Reports of external examiners will be considered by the Division Education and UG Student Experience Committees and Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience Committees, as relevant. Any comments or suggestions made by the external examiners will be discussed by the Department and an explicit decision made about whether or not to introduce changes. An appropriate member of academic staff will collate a response to your report, which will be added to your online report, after it has been checked by the Division. This response will set out how your comments have been acted upon, or why the Department has felt it not appropriate or possible to act on your recommendations. Should the content of your report warrant it, other staff in the University may also receive your report for action or response. Your feedback may lead to further discussion or review of policy and practice. These procedures are set out in [Annex K](#) of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses, see Section 9.

A copy of the report made by an external examiner at the conclusion of their period of office and the Department's response will be sent to an incoming external examiner by the Department/Division.

Briefing

Recently appointed external examiners are invited to attend a staff development session on how meetings of Boards of Examiners are conducted, with particular attention to the procedures and conventions in use. This briefing session is normally held in the spring each year, in both Canterbury and Medway or online. If you would like to attend one of these sessions please contact the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office at gacotraining@kent.ac.uk.

Fee and Expenses

You will find enclosed a sheet showing current fee structures. Payment request forms for fees and expenses will be sent to you by the Quality Assurance and

Compliance Office or by the Department prior to the start of the examination period. These are also [available to download](#).

Payment of fees will be made on receipt of your annual report(s). Please ensure that you provide your home address, National Insurance Number (if you have one) and your date of birth, together with bank account details as the University is unable to make payment without this information.

Attendance fees are paid when an external examiner is required to attend a meeting/performance/oral examination in addition to the normal visit for the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Attendance fees will not be paid for informal visits to Departments, however, expenses will be reimbursed.

Payment and Staff Connect

External examiner payment request forms are processed by the University of Kent's Pay Office and are paid on a monthly pay roll. Should you have any queries regarding the payment received please direct them to RLPayPen@kent.ac.uk.

The University of Kent utilises an online system which enables staff to view and update personal details and view and print payslips and P60s. This Staff Connect system is also the means by which external examiners are able to view details of the payment of their fee and expenses.

To access Staff Connect go to <http://staffconnect.kent.ac.uk> and login using Google Chrome and the University of Kent IT account username which was sent to you with details of your appointment. You may have already changed the password to view modules on Moodle or to submit a report through EERSS.

Your pay document can be accessed either via the Pay Documents widget or via the My Pay Documents link in the left-hand menu. Please note that access to Staff Connect is limited to approximately 60 calendar days after your last day of employment with Kent. We recommend that you print out payslips as soon as you receive notification of payment.

Should you require any support with your Kent staff IT account or in using Staff Connect, please contact the University Information Services Helpdesk on 01227 824888 or email helpdesk@kent.ac.uk. You will need to explain that you are an external examiner and quote your Kent employment number provided in your appointment letter.

Change of Circumstances

It would be helpful if external examiners could inform the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office directly (via examiners@kent.ac.uk) of any change of circumstances, for example, change of institution or role, in order to keep our records up to date.

Web Links

Guidance for External Examiners: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/policies-and-procedures-examinations-guidance#conventions>

Code of Practice for Taught Courses: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses>

Annex J: Meetings of Boards of Examiners:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-j>

Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-k>

Online Report: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/external-examiners-and-advisors/external-examiner-report-submission>

Annex L: Quality Assurance Procedures for Courses of Study at Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges Leading to University Awards:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-l>

Annex R: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-r>

Credit Framework for Taught Courses:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework>

Conventions for Award and Classification of Qualifications: (see Section 12)

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/policies-and-procedures-examinations-guidance#conventions>

Qualification Level Descriptors:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-2>

Limits on Credit Transfer and/or RCL:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-3>

Credit Framework Marking Conventions:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-6>

Assessment and Classification Conventions for HNC and HND Courses:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-12>

Viva Voce Examinations: These procedures apply equally to students under the Credit Framework or Part II Examination Conventions:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-8>

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

How to Find the University, and Further Contacts

For further information, please contact:

Quality Assurance and Compliance Office
Rutherford College
University of Kent
Canterbury
Kent
CT2 7NX

Email: qaco@kent.ac.uk

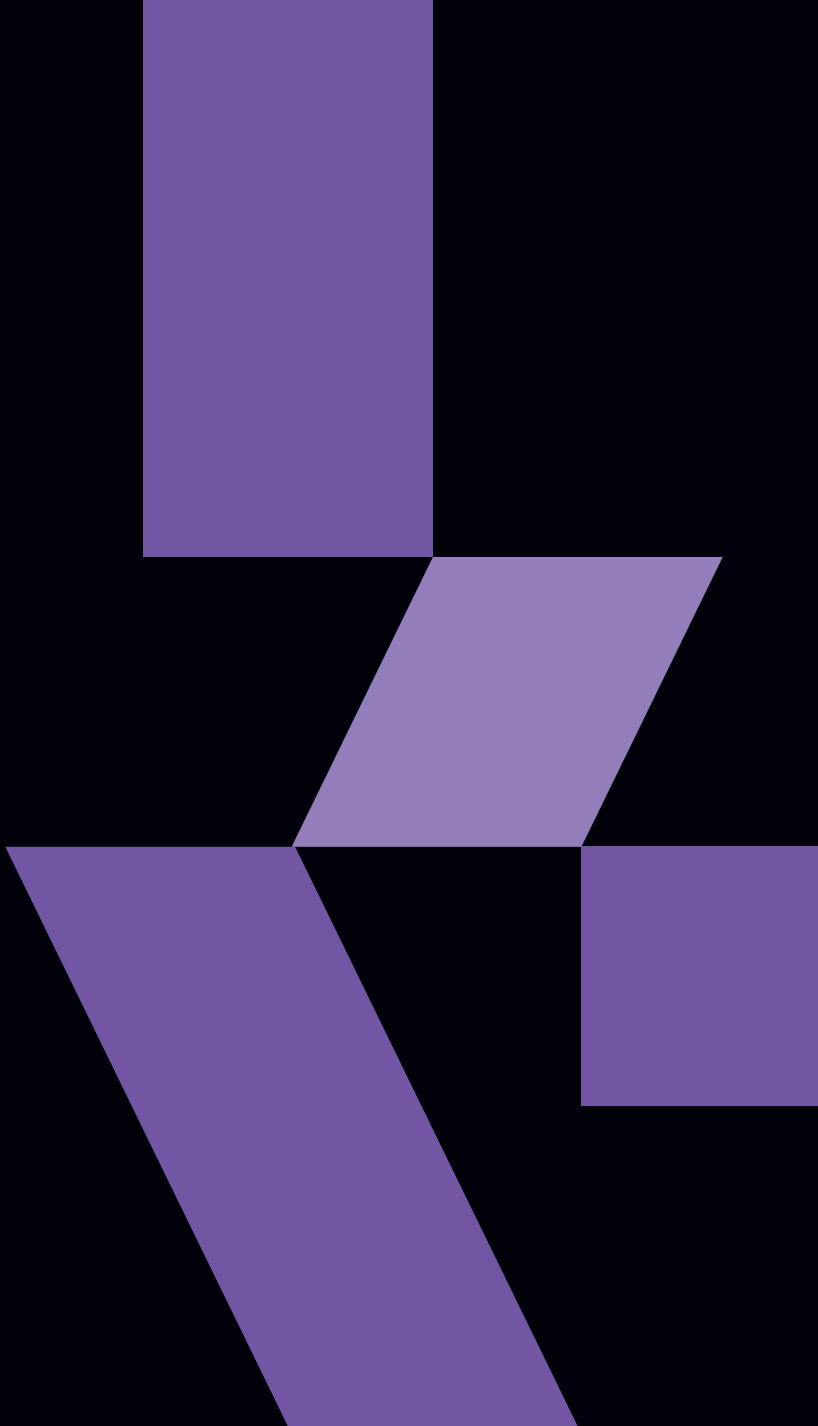
Directions for travel to the University campuses: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/maps/>

Directions for travel to Partner Colleges:

Canterbury College: <https://www.ekcgroup.ac.uk/colleges/canterbury-college>

North Kent College: <https://www.northkent.ac.uk/contact>

Validated Institutions: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/collaborative-partnerships/validated-institutions/validated-institution-profiles>



This Handbook is written as a guidance document for all External Examiners appointed to examine University of Kent taught courses of study. Academic Department may supplement the handbook with additional material relevant to their course of study, such as grading criteria and so on.

Quality Assurance and Compliance Office
University of Kent, Rutherford College, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX
E: qaco@kent.ac.uk www.kent.ac.uk/education/external-examiners-and-advisors

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