

What makes Liverpool unique?

The key to effective external examining is being able to transfer knowledge about assessment and students' learning from one institutional context to another.

Guide to the Process of Academic External Examining (HEA, 2005)

A key challenge for external examiners is gaining an appreciation for the context in which the modules or programmes that they are examining operate. When externals are appointed, there is an implicit assumption that experience of working in one (or more) HEIs has equipped the examiner with the knowledge required to judge taught provision in other institutions. However, there are inevitably things that make different institutions unique, and which can impact on teaching, learning and assessment within the institution. While externals generally report that an understanding of the department or school is more important than the institutional context, it may be useful to have a general feel for the type of institution one is working in and how that might impact on the particular discipline under consideration.

The structure of the University

General information about the University of Liverpool can be found on the University [website](#), but there are certain distinctive things about Liverpool that externals may need to be aware of. The University of Liverpool characterises itself as a research-led institution, where undergraduate and postgraduate students benefit from being taught by active researchers. The University offers 250 Undergraduate and 130 Postgraduate programmes, some of which are delivered on the University's [London campus](#)

The University of Liverpool comprises 14 Schools which are organised into three Faculties: [Science and Engineering](#), [Health and Life Sciences](#) and [Humanities and Social Sciences](#). Central Service departments which are likely to be of particular interest to external examiners include the Student Administration and Support Division (which has [webpages dedicated to supporting external examiners](#) as well as information on [exams and assessment](#)) and [The Teaching Quality Support Division](#), which is responsible for the Code of Practice on Assessment.

XJTLU

There are 6,000 international students on campus, and Liverpool's Chinese partnership, [Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University](#) (XJTLU) allows a relatively large number of Chinese students to study in Liverpool for part of their degree programme. The number of Chinese (and international students more broadly) at Liverpool has impacted on certain degree programmes more than others, and externals may wish to discuss the diversity of the student body (and how that is accommodated and managed in programmes and assessments) with course teams in Schools and departments.

On-line postgraduate degrees

The University of Liverpool is also Europe's largest provider of fully on-line postgraduate degrees, and offers a range of 25 postgraduate certificate, masters and doctoral degree programmes in collaboration with its e-learning partner, [Laureate](#). On-line degrees are available in Management, Information Technology, Law, Health, Psychology and Education.

Programmes, Courses and Modules

External examiners should be familiar with the terminology relating to the different levels at which they may work. It may be that different HEIs use the terms 'module,' 'course' and 'programme' slightly differently and so externals should check their understanding of the language being used.

At Liverpool, a '**module**' is defined as "a discrete component of a programme of study, having stated learning outcomes, teaching and learning opportunities to achieve those outcomes and assessment tasks to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes. Modules which are not designated 'mandatory', 'required', 'co-requisite or 'pre-requisite' [...] are de facto 'optional'. In some programmes, however, it may be a requirement that specified modules which are taken on an optional basis must be passed for a student to progress or be awarded a degree. In these circumstances, this should be made clear in the programme specification and in the information provided to students both at the time of module selection and at the commencement of teaching on the module"(from the glossary in the [Code of Practice on Assessment, Appendix C](#)). According to the same glossary, a '**programme**' is "structured teaching and learning provision leading to one or more awards".

'**Course**' is often the preferred term when referring to CPD provision, while '**component**' is often used to refer to non-modular (mainly clinical) provision. Definitions of courses and components are provided by the University's [Policy on Module Evaluation](#). A 'course' is "a credit-bearing standalone course, such as a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course", while a 'component' is described as "a discrete element or specific part of a non-modular clinical programme"