

## 15 APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

---

- 15.1 The university is responsible for appointing external examiners to its degree provision and these procedures are designed to ensure that proper consideration is given to the nomination and appointment of external examiners. This section is applicable to all taught degree provision, including that delivered under a collaborative arrangement with an external partner.
- 15.2 Where provision is accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), the university will comply with that PSRB's requirements relating to external examiners.

### ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 15.3 The role of external examiners is to provide assurance on:
- whether academic standards are set and maintained at appropriate levels
  - whether the assessment process is appropriate, rigorous, equitable, effective and conducted in line with policies, regulations and guidance
  - whether the standard of student performance is properly judged against the level set, and
  - the comparability of the standard and level of student achievement with those in other higher education institutions.
- 15.4 All external examiners will be expected:
- to make their judgements impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment
  - to attend relevant meetings of the board(s) of examiners of which they are members
  - to endorse explicitly the outcomes of the assessment processes they have been appointed to scrutinise, provided that they are satisfied with these outcomes
  - to report annually to the university in accordance with guidance provided
  - to report to the Principal, in confidence, on any matters of serious concern about the academic standards or quality of provision.
- 15.5 External examiners will be appointed to comment and report on all assessments which count towards an award approved by the university. To this end, all modules at SCQF Levels 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and all approved programmes of study will be allocated to an external examiner.
- 15.6 External examiners may undertake their role in the capacity of:
- Tier 1 External Examiner - for module resulting and programme delivery issues
  - Tier 2 External Examiner - for awarding and progression.
- 15.7 Tier 1 External Examiners will:
- be consulted on the form and content of proposed coursework and examinations and other assessments and reassessment that count towards an award, so that all students may be assessed fairly in relation to the regulations and in such a way that the external examiner will be able to judge whether they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the module and reached the required standard
  - have access to an agreed sample of all summatively assessed work on the modules they are responsible for
  - moderate the marks awarded by internal examiners, and
  - consider all available information relating to modules they are responsible for, and to raise any issues at the Tier 1 Board of Examiners.

- 15.8 Tier 2 External Examiners will be expected:
- a. to ensure that recommendations for award and progression are reached in accordance with the regulations, and
  - b. to participate as required in any review of decisions about individual students' outcomes taken during their term of appointment.

## **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 15.9 The Faculty Board of Study is responsible for the appointment of external examiners, and will do so in accordance with the criteria and procedure below.
- 15.10 Each Faculty will determine the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 External Examiners it requires, and the range of expertise they should collectively provide. External examiners may be appointed as either Tier 1 or Tier 2 External Examiners, or both. If an individual is appointed as both Tier 1 and Tier 2 External Examiner, these appointments will be made under separate contracts, to cover the additional reporting and attendance at meetings required.

## **CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 15.11 Tier 1 External Examiners' academic and/or professional qualifications and experience will be appropriate to the subject areas to which they are appointed. Tier 2 External Examiners will be from an academic discipline which is in the broad cognate area of the programmes to which they are appointed.
- 15.12 In considering nominations, the Faculty will expect to see evidence of at least some of the following areas of knowledge, qualifications and experience. Not all external examiners will be expected to meet all criteria:
- a. knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
  - b. competence and experience in the relevant subject areas
  - c. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
  - d. competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures
  - e. sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers
  - f. familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed
  - g. fluency in English (or Gaelic, where appropriate)
  - h. meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, where relevant
  - i. awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
  - j. competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
- 15.13 The Faculty will seek to ensure that no conflicts of interest arise, and hence will not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:
- a. member of Court or the governing body of any of the academic partners or one of their collaborative partners
  - b. a current employee or any of the academic partners or one of their collaborative partners
  - c. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study

- d. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
- e. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
- f. anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
- g. former staff or students unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
- h. a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
- i. the succession of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same subject area in the same institution
- j. the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same subject area of the same institution.

15.14 If an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during the term of an external examiner's appointment, the Academic Registrar must be notified of the circumstances at the earliest opportunity.

## **EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

15.15 External examiners are required to report annually to Academic Council, using the appropriate proforma, to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- the academic standards set for awards, in relation to external reference points
- the assessment process in relation to modules and programmes to which they have been appointed
- the comparability of academic standards and the achievements of students in the university with those in other UK higher education institutions
- good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment
- opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

15.16 External examiners are required to submit an electronic copy of their report via email, due by 31 August each year. No fees will be paid to an external examiner until the report has been received.

15.17 External examiners' reports will be discussed with relevant staff and student representatives, and will be made available to students. A response will be sent by the Faculty to each external examiner, addressing the issues raised in the report.

15.18 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee will receive an annual analysis of all external examiners' reports to consider recurrent and institutional-level issues.

## **TERM OF APPOINTMENT**

15.19 External examiners are normally appointed for a period of four years. Appointments will normally come into effect on 1 September. In exceptional circumstances the Faculty may extend the initial appointment for a period of no more than 12 months.

15.20 External examiners may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

15.21 External examiners may normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments at any one time, whether or not these were within the same institution.

## **TERMINATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' CONTRACTS**

- 15.22 The university reserves the right to terminate the contract of an external examiner who, without due cause, fails to submit a report, or otherwise fails to carry out the duties of their appointment. In such circumstances, the Deputy Principal will notify the external examiner of the termination in writing.
- 15.23 An external examiner's contract may also be terminated if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, or if the relevant provision is discontinued.