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## **EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

# **CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

## **EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 External examiners are a key element in the University's pursuance of quality enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards.

They provide an objective view of the operation of the programmes they are associated with, and they enable comparisons with the standards of programmes offered in other institutions of which they have knowledge.

1.2 This paper sets out the procedure for the appointment of external examiners, the criteria for their selection and their duties.

### **2 External Examiner Nomination and Approval**

2.1 Each programme at the University shall have appointed to it an external examiner or external examiner team, the combined expertise of which is capable of overseeing the programme in total, with particular emphasis on those aspects which contribute to the award.

2.2 The remit of an external examiner may include any credit bearing short courses associated with the parent programme.

2.3 The external examiner/team shall comply with the requirements of the University and/or other awarding body and/or accrediting body associated with the programme.

2.4 For University programmes, the examiners shall comprise individuals with subject expertise in each major component of the programme. In instances where more than one external examiner is associated with a programme, one of the external examiners may be designated as the chief external examiner.

2.5 The rationale for the composition of the external examiner team shall be a subject for approval at the initial programme validation event.

2.6 Approval of the external examiner team should be sought for changes proposed to the programme via the modification or review procedures.

- 2.7 Approval by the University of external examiners is undertaken by the Examiner Nomination Panel and is the responsibility of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee acting on behalf of the Academic Board. Nominations should be made using an online form and require approval from the Deputy Dean of Learning and Teaching in the School in which the programme is offered prior to submission to the Quality Enhancement Directorate for transmission to the Panel and, subsequently, Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- 2.8 For external examiner appointments to begin in September/October, nominations should normally be approved at the latest by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee at its summer meeting.
- 2.9 The normal term of office for external examiners associated with University programmes is four years. Under exceptional circumstances and provided that it is justified, extension to five years may be approved. Requests from Deans of School for extension are made to the Examiner Nomination Panel.
- 2.10 In any of the above it is not normally acceptable for an external examiner to be reappointed to the same or a related programme. Exceptions to this may only be considered where the number of potential external examiners is restricted by the specialist nature of the programme. Under these circumstances, reappointment may be only on one occasion and not before a period of five years following the end of the previous period of office.
- 2.11 External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

### **3 Criteria for selection and approval of External Examiners**

- 3.1 In selecting external examiners for nomination, and in approving external examiners, evidence of the following shall be taken into account: -
- (i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;

- (ii) the competence and experience of the nominee in the context of the programme or part of the programme or group of programmes with which he/she will be involved;
- (iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- (iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- (v) the current position held by the nominee and its relevance to the programme;
- (vi) the experience of the nominee in undertaking relevant previous or current external examiner duties at the University or elsewhere, or undertaking duties similar to those of an external examiner;
- (vii) 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;
- (viii) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- (ix) the relationship between the proposed duties of the nominee, his/her qualifications/experience/examiner experience, and the role of the other members of the external examiner team. (It is not normally acceptable for an external examiner who has not had previous external examiner experience to be appointed other than under circumstances in which he/she will work within an experienced team or with some other form of guidance);
- (x) the research, scholarly and professional activities in which the nominee is or has been involved;
- (xi) fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements);

- (xii) meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;

**Note:** the appointment by the Professional Body or organisation of its own independent External Examiner/Assessor does not remove the requirement for the appointment of a programme External Examiner as determined in this section of the Academic Handbook.

- (xiii) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricular;
- (xiv) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience;
- (xv) any other factors which may be relevant to the nomination from an academic, professional, examining point of view; for example, if the programme is delivered collaboratively, selection and approval should take into account any related issues.

**Note:** that for franchised programmes the External Examiner should ideally be the same person as for the equivalent University programme.

### 3.2 Conflicts of Interest

The University does not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- (i) a member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the University or one of its collaborative partners;
- (ii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
- (iii) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- (iv) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;

- (v) 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 or modules in question;
- (vi) former members of staff or former students of the University unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programmes;
- (vii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;
- (viii) the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the same institution unless the number of potential examiners is restricted because of the specialist nature of the programme/subject area;
- (ix) the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.

### 3.3 Additional factors, which shall be taken into account, are: -

- (i) current or previous links between the nominee and the programme or the University. Any such linkages which may affect the objectivity of the proposed external examiner should be explored in full. Where appointment of an external examiner who has current or previous connections to the programme, its students or staff is unavoidable, the benefits of the appointment and its rationale must be balanced with any risk to their ability to provide a fully independent perspective and the examiner shall be asked to ensure that in any dealings with the University in relation to his/her external examining duties, (external examiner reports, meetings of the Examining Board, etc.) he/she declares, as necessary, the nature of any interest in relation to issues raised, so that account may be taken of such interest.
- (ii) issues which may prevent the nominee from performing his/her external examiner duties, such as excessive travelling distance and excessive current examinerships/commitments;
- (iii) the availability of relevant expertise in particular disciplines, which may reduce the field from which nominees may be drawn;

- (iv) issues pertaining to the perceived shortcomings of nominees and, should an appointment be made, the actions which may be taken to overcome them;
- (v) where a programme is accredited by a professional body or organisation, any issues relating to the requirements of that body/organisation.

### 3.4 Exceptions and Special Cases

- (i) Where there may be a legitimate case for making an appointment that does not fulfill all the criteria, for example, an appointment from business, industry or the professions, the rationale including proposals for providing appropriate training and support must be approved by the Examiner Nomination Panel.
- (ii) Where a nominee has no previous experience as an external examiner, appointment should normally be made to a team of external examiners and/or with agreement that a more experienced external examiner will act as a mentor. When such arrangements are not practicable, then the appointment must be supported through assessing and then providing for the first-time external examiner's additional information and development needs, including mentoring by an experienced external examiner in a different field.

## 4 Remuneration of External Examiners

- 4.1 Scales of payment for external examiners are reviewed annually by the University.
- 4.2 Arrangements for the payment of fees and expenses for external examiners shall be made known to them by the Quality Enhancement Directorate.

## 5 Duties of External Examiners

- 5.1 This section gives the specific duties of external examiners as determined by the University. By way of introduction, the following guidance is included as recognised good practice and is generally applicable. However, some programmes where particular additional

requirements apply (e.g. ITT teaching practice) may specify further duties.

- (a) The role of the external examiner(s) is to ensure that justice is done to the individual student and that the standard of the award is comparable to those of other institutions, and where relevant, meets the requirements of associated professional and statutory bodies.
- (b) The external examiner is expected to:
  - (i) make impartial judgements on the basis of the work submitted for assessment, without being influenced by previous association with the programme, the staff, or any of the students;
  - (ii) compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere; he/she shall also be entitled to meet with students as agreed with the programme director and with internal examiners;
  - (iii) approve the form and content of proposed examination papers, programme work and other assessments that count towards the award in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the programme syllabus and regulations and in such a way that the external examiner(s) will be able to judge whether they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the programme and reached the required standard;
  - (iv) respond when consulted about any proposed changes to the supplementary assessment regulations, which will directly affect students currently on the programme;
  - (v) attend Examining Board meetings and have access to requested assessed work (including, for example, placement work reports etc.);
  - (vi) see a sample of work reflecting the full range of achievements of students (i.e. samples of failing work and work from each classification band, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels) and the full range of markers, in order to ensure that each student is fairly placed in relation

to the rest of the cohort; the extent of and method for determining such sampling shall be agreed between the programme director and external examiner, and the external examiner has the right to see all work;

- (vii) exercise, when appropriate, the right to recommend adjustment of the marks awarded by the internal examiners to the Examining Board (but not normally the marks of individual students), where appropriate;
- (viii) exercise, when appropriate, the right to conduct *viva voce* examinations to an agreed format, of candidates selected in conjunction and agreement with the programme;
- (ix) ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with the regulations for the programme of study;
- (x) attend the meeting of the Examining Board at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made and ensure that those recommendations are reached by means according with the University's requirements and normal practice in higher education. The External Examiner shall sign the results sheet to signify approval of awards made, that this limits any further considerations of awards unless any subsequent amendments are endorsed by the external examiner, and that processes have been undertaken in accordance with the University's conventions.

In the event that an external examiner is unwilling to endorse the results sheet on the basis of the above, the Examining Board and its Chair having given full consideration to the external examiner's viewpoint and nevertheless making awards recommendations which are at variance with that viewpoint, then the Chair shall immediately provide a full written account for consideration by the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor shall take whatever steps are necessary to resolve the situation within a timescale that does not prejudice timely student awards.

Attendance at Examining Boards other than the final Board (e.g. progression) shall be at the discretion of, and through negotiation between, the examiner and the School.

If an external examiner exceptionally cannot attend a meeting where his/her presence is formally required, they should be available for consultation by telephone or other means. In the case of illness or accident, the external examiner shall promptly communicate with the Chair of the Examining Board and shall dispatch to him/her, in accordance with his/her directions, all documents necessary for the due performance of the business of the meeting.

Attendance by an External Examiner at an Examination Board held at a partner overseas will be decided between the Partnership Office and the appointed Link Tutor / Moderator in consultation with relevant colleagues and with regard to the minimum criteria shown below. Considerations to be taken into account should include the engagement of the partner with QA processes and Cardiff Metropolitan University regulations, prior External Examiner Reports and responses, the size and practicality of transporting / uploading of samples, and the number of modules being sampled. Such decisions will be made prior to the start of the academic session during Partnership Group meetings.

The following criteria outlines the minimum attendance requirements for External Examiners at Examination Boards conducted at partners overseas (subject to FCO guidance)

- External Examiners may physically attend an Examination Board at the partner during their first year in appointment with the agreement of the University
- For new Collaborative partnerships External Examiners may physically attend at the partner the first Examination Board which considers work which counts towards overall programme classification (this would normally be level 5 and 6 provision for Bachelors programmes) if it is deemed appropriate by the University

(xi) participate as required in reviews of decisions about individual students' awards;

(xii) report to the University on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them;

- (xiii) report on whether the standards set are appropriate for the award by reference to published UK subject benchmarks, the UK qualifications framework, the programme specifications and/or other relevant information;
- (xiv) report to the University on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments, which put at risk the standard of the University's award(s);
- (xv) notify the University in relation to changes in circumstances which might affect the External Examiner's ability to fulfil his/her role effectively and impartially;
- (xvi) attend induction/training sessions as necessary.

## 5.2 General

- (i) For external examiners on new Cardiff Metropolitan University awards it is normal for involvement with the programme to begin before the programme has reached maturity and this would normally require involvement in the second year of the programme.
- (ii) Whether a Cardiff Metropolitan University or other award, reports of external examiners shall indicate shortcomings and/or recommend improvements as appropriate, for quality enhancement purposes.
- (iii) If possible, external examiner reports shall indicate the academic standards achieved by the programme and its graduates in comparison to those of similar programmes elsewhere in the UK.
- (iv) Where a team of external examiners is associated with a programme, the team members shall adopt a common and consistent approach in regard to any recommendations made.
- (v) External examiners may, by negotiation, be asked to perform other duties such as to discuss and approve programme modifications.

## 6 External Examiner Reports

- 6.1 External Examiners shall prepare a separate report for each programme for which they are responsible on at least an annual basis. Such reports shall be on a standard template required by the University and shall be submitted to the Quality Enhancement Directorate. External Examiners' reports are not normally subject to confidentiality and should not, therefore, refer to students by name. Copies of external examiner reports shall be sent to the Quality Enhancement Directorate. Copies shall then be sent to the Quality Operations Manager who shall identify any issues raised by the external examiner, and shall make these known to the Deputy/Associate Dean of School with responsibility for the programme.
- 6.2 The Deputy/Associate Dean of School shall ensure that such issues are discussed and action taken/proposed at Programme Committee level. Such discussion and action shall be transparent in the associated Programme Enhancement Plan (PEP) Report.
- 6.3 Programme Directors shall respond in writing to External Examiners on any issues raised which require action, as above, stating what measures have been/will be taken (and thereafter monitoring the effects of such measures as required). In instances where following thorough examination of a recommendation or suggestion of an external examiner the Programme Committee does not accept such recommendation or suggestion, then clear reasons for non-acceptance shall be communicated to the External Examiner. Copies of this correspondence shall be sent to the Quality Operations Manager. A copy shall also be lodged in the Quality Enhancement Directorate.

The procedure for responding to external examiner reports must be embedded firmly within the schools' calendar of activity, as follows.

- Programme Teams devise an action plan from issues arising in external examiner reports.
- Programme Directors respond directly to the External Examiner(s), normally by the first School Learning & Teaching Committee following the examining board, and provide copies of the completed response form to the Deputy/Associate Dean and the Quality Enhancement Directorate for quality and action monitoring purposes.

- The Quality Enhancement Directorate provides an annual overview report on external examiner reports to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

6.4 Where an External Examiner exceptionally wishes to raise matters of particular importance and/or sensitivity, which he/she feels to be inappropriate to raise through normal reporting mechanisms, he/she may raise such matters in writing to the Vice-Chancellor.

## **7 Information supplied to external examiners**

7.1 The Quality Enhancement Directorate shall supply newly appointed External Examiners with the following:

- information pertaining to the nomination, tenure and duties of External Examiners;
- relevant extracts from the extant University Academic Handbook;
- information on the payment of fees and expenses;
- a copy/copies of the appropriate report form;
- for new External Examiners appointed to existing programmes, a copy of the previous External Examiner's final report.

7.2 Additionally, the School shall supply external examiners with information pertaining to the programme to include copies of: -

- the programme document and programme specification;
- relevant information from the student handbook;
- placement handbook (where appropriate);
- dissertation handbook (where appropriate);
- any appropriate benchmark information;
- requirements of associated professional/statutory bodies; • for collaborative programmes, the nature of the collaborations.
- appropriate information pertaining to the programme's cognisance of current Cardiff Metropolitan University Student Engagement Strategy.

7.3 Other information of use to an examiner includes:

- programme enhancement plan;
- validation or most recent review report;
- reports by external bodies as appropriate.

7.4 External examiners shall be supplied with such information as they may require to ensure that the academic standards of the programme are maintained, with particular reference to those parts of the programme, which contribute to the final award classification. Programme Directors shall ensure that such information as agreed with the external examiner, is forthcoming. Examples will include (subject to the nature of the assessment programme): -

- draft formal examination papers within the external examiner's field
- examples of marked scripts
- examples of assessment exercises • dissertations and other major pieces of work.

7.5 The methodology of selection for examples of work shall be agreed between the external examiner and the Programme Director.

## **8 Premature Termination of External Examiner Tenure**

8.1 Where there are demonstrable indications that an external examiner is not performing his/her examining duties to the University's satisfaction, the University shall take remedial action up to and including the early termination of the external examiner's tenure.

8.2 Unsatisfactory performance includes non-attendance at Examining Boards where attendance is required without making agreed alternative arrangements and non-return of/or inadequate examiner reports.

8.3 In instances of unsatisfactory performance, the External Examiner shall be notified on the authority of the Director of Learning Enhancement and requested to correct the identified deficiencies.

8.4 If, following the above, unsatisfactory performance continues, the Director of Learning Enhancement may terminate the tenure of the External Examiner through formal written notice.