

Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract

UNIVERSITY of CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

APPENDIX 4b

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Note: The following criteria conform to the QAA Quality Code for HE, Chapter B7: External Examining (Oct 2011) and the Academic Regulations, Section J2. They will be reviewed regularly taking into account Sector norms and policies.

1. Criteria for Subject External Examiners

- 1.1 External examiners must show appropriate evidence of:
- i. Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality (declaration and HE experience section)
 - ii. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof
 - 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. 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
 - vi. Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed
 - vii. 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)
 - viii. Meeting applicable criteria set by PSRBs
 - ix. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
 - x. Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience
 - xi. In the case of collaborative provision it is also desirable that Examiners have experience of collaborative provision
- 1.2 If the proposed examiner has no previous external examiner experience at the appropriate level, the application should be supported by either:
- i. other external examining experience
 - ii. substantial internal examining experience
 - iii. other relevant and recent experience likely to support the examiners role
- 1.3 Someone without direct experience as an External Examiner should be appointed only if there is an experienced External Examiner who can act as a mentor. Normally the mentor would be someone from the same team as the new External Examiner but exceptionally, a mentor External Examiner from a related programme should be provided. More details on mentorship are included at the end of Appendix 4d.
- 1.4 The External Examiner should not concurrently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examining appointments to prevent

Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract

over-extending their examining duties. In particular External Examiners should not be prevented from attending Assessment Boards because of a conflict of dates with another institution.

- 1.5 External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts so that the programme benefits from a wide-ranging external scrutiny and to provide a balance of expertise appropriate to the modules/programme.
- 1.6 External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the institution, which may compromise objectivity. External Examiners falling into any of the following categories or circumstances will not be appointed:
 - i. Member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborating 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(s) or modules in question
 - vi. Former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
 - vii. A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
 - viii. The succession of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same department in the same institution
 - ix. The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution
- 1.7 To ensure impartiality in judgement, nominations for External Examiners must not previously have been involved in programme development at the University. External peers appointed to act as External Panel Members at validation may be nominated provided they meet the criteria detailed in section 1.1 and do not fall into any of the categories listed in section 1.6. External Team Members involved in the validation process may not be considered as External Examiners.

Note: The criteria for External Panel Members requires that they have not been involved with the development of the proposal nor currently professionally involved with members of the Programme Team.

2. Criteria for Award External Examiners

- 2.1 An Award External Examiner must have a deep understanding of assessment and experience in managing the assessment process and in applying Academic Regulations. This may be indicated by:-
 - i. the present post and place of work
 - ii. the range and scope of experience in managing the assessment process across Higher Education

Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract

- iii. current or recent involvement in chairing Assessment Boards
 - iv. authorship of an institution's Academic Regulations/Procedures
- 2.2 The External Examiner must have recent external examining experience to indicate competence in decision making regarding decisions on individual student cases.
- 2.3 The External Examiner should not concurrently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examining appointments to prevent over-extending their examining duties.
- 2.4 External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutions and point 1.5 for Subject External Examiners is applicable.
- 2.5 External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and point 1.6 for Subject External Examiners is applicable.

Note: Appendix 4d describes the appointment procedure. Guidance on the selection and approval process for External Examiners is contained in Appendix 4b.

3. Criteria and procedure for the termination of External Examiner appointments

3.1 Expectations

- 3.1.1 The contract of appointment for external examiners clearly states the duties which an external examiner is expected to undertake as defined in the Academic Regulations Procedure Appendix 4a. External Examiners have a responsibility for ensuring that standards and comparability are maintained, that justice is done to individual students and for judging whether students have fulfilled the objectives of the programme and reached the required standard. External Examiners are required to:
- i. approve the form and content of proposed examination papers and rubric
 - ii. scrutinise a representative sample of assessments
 - iii. communicate with Programme/Subject Teams without lengthy delay on matters concerning examinations and assessment
 - iv. attend relevant Assessment Board and participate in its decision making and provide a verbal report
 - v. sign the relevant results and recommendations lists from the Assessment Board. Signature may be withheld if the results have not been agreed
 - vi. submit an informative annual report to the University in accordance with the guidelines provided

3.2 Grounds for termination

- 3.2.1 The contract of appointment for external examiners may be terminated (Academic Regulations Section J2.2) on any of the following grounds:
- i. Failure to attend specified Assessment Boards without good cause. The University recognises that the University must give sufficient advance warning of the dates of Assessment Boards so that External Examiners are able to confirm their attendance and carry out their responsibilities

Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract

- ii. Failure to submit an annual report **within 3 months of the Assessment Board** as required. The University values and requires full and informative reports which follow the guidelines provided
- iii. Failure to undertake the External Examiner duties to the satisfaction of the University by providing inadequate scrutiny of proposed assessment tools and/or assessment outcomes and/or an unacceptable delay in corresponding with Programme/Subject Teams on matters concerning examinations and assessment
- iv. Cessation of, or non-recruitment to, a programme
- v. Changes to the level of a programme on re-validation and the External Examiner no longer meets the criteria for appointment
- vi. Changes in the circumstances of an External Examiner that constitute a conflict of interests
- vii. Unprofessional conduct
- viii. Failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair the integrity of the assessment process and the independence of the external examiner
- ix. Where a conflict of interests arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved

3.3 Procedure for the termination of external examiner appointments

3.3.1 Where circumstances arise which meet the criteria for termination of an External Examiner's appointment, the Programme Leader must report the details to the Academic Quality and Development Service (AQD). AQD will write to the respective External Examiner outlining the circumstances and asking for a response. If a satisfactory solution cannot be found, the appointment will be terminated.

3.3.2 In relation to the non-receipt of reports, the following applies:

- i. Where reports are outstanding 8 weeks following the Assessment Board, AQD will contact the External Examiner.
- ii. Where reports remain outstanding [and providing there are no mitigating circumstances] AQD **may** commence the termination process and the fee will be forfeited. The Associate Dean (Quality, Learning and Student Experience) will be notified.

4. The Resignation or Indisposal of an External Examiner

4.1 Where an External Examiner wishes to resign from their appointment (eg for personal reasons), the respective Department should request formal written notification from the External Examiner. Wherever possible, to avoid disadvantaging students, the resignation should take place at the end of the session but in any event, at least 3 months notice is required. The Department should also seek to ensure all outstanding reports are submitted.

4.2 Where an External Examiner is not able to fulfil their responsibilities, a Department should, where feasible, make appropriate arrangements to ensure that all outstanding responsibilities (including the preparation and

Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract

submission of the reports) are covered. The programme team should initiate a replacement nomination immediately.

5. Review of the process

- 5.1 This process will be reviewed regularly taking into account best practice and Sector policy.

Annex 1 – Mapping of Criteria to Nomination Form

Nature of Evidence	Nomination form reference
i. Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality (declaration and HE experience section	Declaration HE experience section 4
ii. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof	Section 4
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	Section 3
iv. Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures	Section 6 Section 7
v. 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	Section 2 Section 3 Section 4 Section 5
vi. Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed	Section 4 Section 6
vii. 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)	Section 2 Section 3 Section 4
viii. Meeting applicable criteria set by PSRBs	Section 8 Proposer's Declaration
ix. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula	Section 8
x. Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience	Section 8
xi. In the case of collaborative provision, it is also desirable that Examiners have experience of collaborative provision	Section 4