

**UNIVERSITY of CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

**APPENDIX 4d**

**Procedure for appointing External Examiners**

## **Procedure for appointing External Examiners**

### **1. Process**

- 1.1 External Examiners are appointed through the delegated authority of Academic Board as employees of the University.
- 1.2 External Examiner appointments are normally for a period of four years normally 1<sup>st</sup> October until 30<sup>th</sup> September, although there are some exceptions (eg pre-registration nursing programmes, postgraduate programmes). Newly appointed examiners will normally take up their duties on or shortly before the retirement of their predecessors. The appointment process is outlined in the flowchart at the end of this paper.
- 1.3 External Examining procedures for Collaborative Provision should be consistent with the University's normal practices and procedures. The University retains ultimate responsibility for the appointment and functions of external examining.
- 1.4 The Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC) and the External Examiners' Panel receive a presentation of the list of vacancies from the Chair of the External Examiners' Panel, thus notifying Departments of those External Examiner appointments that are due to end and require a replacement to take up appointment.
- 1.5 All nominations must be submitted on the University proforma, signed by the Head of Department and if appropriate, the Principal (or representative) of the Collaborative Partner institution.
- 1.6 The Head of Department checks the nominations against the criteria for appointment of External Examiners before signing to confirm that the proposal meets university requirements. The proposals are forwarded to the External Examiners Panel, which will grant approval as appropriate. The role and remit of the External Examiners Panel is detailed in Annex 1.
- 1.7 Once the nomination has been approved, AQD confirms the appointment in writing to the External Examiner, including detail of programme and specific modules, and enters details on the University's database/register of External Examiners' appointments.

### **2 Departmental Responsibilities**

#### **2.1 Subject External Examiners**

- 2.1.1 The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring the completion of proposals for External Examiner appointments for all programmes overseen by the Department (whether on campus or at partner institutions), ensuring that nominations for replacements or for first appointments meet the University's criteria for appointment and that recommendations for appointment are made promptly to the External Examiners Panel.
- 2.1.2 Where nominations are received from Partner Colleges (or other approved Partners) the University Programme Leader is responsible for scrutiny and,

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where recommended for approval, for forwarding to the Head of Department within one week of receipt from the Partner College.

- 2.1.2 All nominations should be supported by a written statement from the Programme Leader.
- 2.1.3 In exceptional circumstances, where a nomination does not meet the criteria for appointment, the Programme Leader must ensure that a detailed written statement accompanies the proposal with a persuasive rationale as to why the appointment should be approved and how the Examiner will be supported in their first year of office. Any such proposals will be identified in reports to the External Examiner Panel (see Appendix 4b and Annex 2 at the end of this section).
- 2.1.4 Where appropriate, the Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring that the criteria for appointment of the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) are met.
- 2.1.5 The relevant Programme Leader, or relevant member of the Programme Team is required to attend the afternoon session of the Induction Day for newly appointed External Examiners to meet them for the first time and introduce them to the programme, its organisation and management. This session should include:
  - (i) Discussion of comments from the outgoing External Examiner
  - (ii) Discussion of timescales for sending assessment titles for approval and work for moderation
  - (iii) Confirmation of Module Assessment Board dates and attendance requirements
  - (iv) Confirmation that the External Examiner has sufficient information on the programme and modules to which they have been appointed.
- 2.1.6 Programme Leaders should advise nominees of the criteria and process for approval and should not make any assurances or commitments to a proposed External Examiner, nor engage a proposed examiner in any formal activity, before the University approval process has been completed.

## **2.2 Award External Examiners**

- 2.2.1 AQD is responsible for ensuring that nominations for Award Examiners are provided (as in 2.1.1).

## **2.3 University Committees**

- 2.3.1 The Head of Department is responsible for ascertaining and chasing progress on outstanding appointments so that all the appointments are made in a timely manner. They should liaise with the Secretary of the External Examiners Panel on any outstanding appointments and their status throughout the year.
- 2.3.2 The Head of Department (or nominee) receives and scrutinises nominations to ascertain whether they meet the University's criteria for appointment before forwarding proposals to the Secretary of the External Examiners' Panel.
- 2.3.3 External Examiners appointed to collaborative provision must receive briefing and guidance sufficient for them to fulfil their role effectively.
- 2.3.4 Proposals approved by the External Examiners Panel will be reported to SSQAC. AQD will update the database and send out the formal

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appointment letter on behalf of the University following EEP approval, together with arrangements for additional support if appropriate.

- 2.3.5 Where proposals are not approved by the External Examiners Panel, the proposer will notify the proposed External Examiner.

### **3 Partner responsibility**

- 3.1 Where programmes are validated, as opposed to being franchised, the Partner's HE Coordinator or equivalent is responsible for ensuring that a nomination for an appropriate External Examiner is submitted in a timely manner to the host Department to be approved prior to it being forwarded to the External Examiners Panel.
- 3.2 In exceptional circumstances where a nomination does not meet the standard criteria for appointment the HE Co-ordinator must provide a written statement with a persuasive rationale as to why the appointment should be approved on this occasion.

### **4 Additional Subject External Examiners**

- 4.1 Requests for additional Subject External Examiners to cover new programmes/modules coming on stream or to accommodate growth in student numbers should be made in writing to AQD **before** any agreement is made to a potential nominee. To enable informed negotiations through the External Examiner Panel a full rationale for the appointment, signed by the Head of Department, is required.

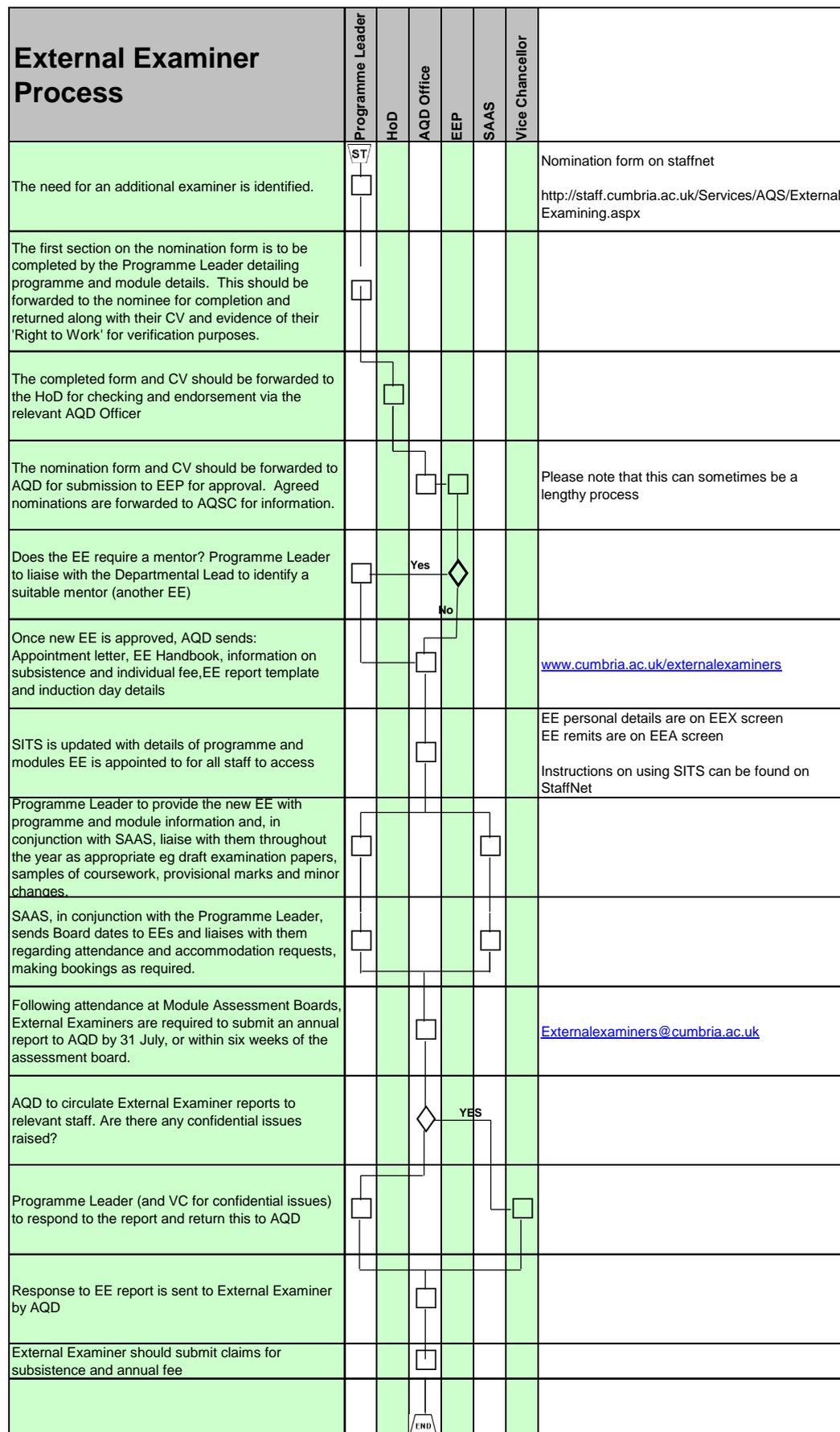
### **5 Changes to an External Examiner appointment**

- 5.1 The External Examiner's Panel can vary the agreed duties of an External Examiner. Applications for changes to appointment or role should be made on the relevant proforma.
- 5.2 An extension to an individual's term of appointment will be considered by the External Examiners Panel only where there are exceptional circumstances for doing so:
- i. where a programme/module will continue for one more year only to provide continuity where all current External Examiners are in their final year of appointment
  - ii. to cover the completion of a small number of remaining students on the programme.
- 5.3 The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will not be extended beyond 5 years.
- 5.4 The application should be set out on the relevant form with a full supporting rationale.

### **6 Review of the process**

- 6.1 This process will be reviewed regularly taking account of best practice and Sector policy.

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**ANNEX 1**

**EXTERNAL EXAMINERS PANEL**

**Parent Committee** / Student Success and Quality Assurance  
**Reporting to:** Committee (SSQAC)

**Duration:** Permanent establishment

**Purpose / Terms of Reference:**

- To consider and approve nominations (and changes to remit) for external examiners against the content and level of the course provision and the criteria for appointment; as set out in the academic procedures and processes;
- To advise the AQS Committee on any quality assurance matters concerning external examiners;
- To retain oversight of the External Examiner appointment process, including monitoring of vacancies.

**Membership:**

- Director of Academic Quality and Development (Chair)
- Associate Dean (Quality & Student Experience)
- Two nominated staff representatives (Senior Lecturer) from the Deanery (to be nominated by the Executive Dean)

**Reporting method:** Minutes to AQS Committee for information.

**Panel Secretary** Academic Quality and Development Administrator

## **ANNEX 2**

### **Mentorship Arrangements for new External Examiners**

#### **1. Circumstances in which mentor support may be required**

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7: External Examining (Dec 2011) indicates that where an inexperienced External Examiner is appointed, institutions may wish to consider appointing an experienced External Examiner as a mentor to provide independent advice and guidance. Where relevant, a new External Examiner will join an experienced external examining team. However when the nominee will be working in isolation, the Department is required to allocate a mentor to offer support on the University's processes in their first year as External Examiner. The mentor must be an existing and experienced Examiner and preferably be associated with a similar cognate subject area. There may be a range of circumstances in which mentoring is appropriate. The following reflect typical arrangements:

- (i) Where the External Examiner is an external professional expert of standing in a relevant field, but lacking significant experience of teaching and assessing in HE
- (ii) Where the subject area to be examined is a new field in HE, and where there are no examiners of seniority in that field
- (iii) Where an examiner is new to external examining.

As indicated above, the Department has responsibility for proposing a mentor when the nomination is presented to the External Examiner Panel (EEP), together with (i) an indication that the mentor is willing to act in this capacity and (ii) an indication of the likely support required.

#### **2. Role of the Mentor**

2.1 Existing experienced External Examiners in a related area would be designated to mentor/support new colleagues during their first year of appointment, on a flexible basis according to the needs of the appointee.

2.2 Indicative duties should include:

- (i) establishing contact with the mentee External Examiner and acting as the first point of contact
- (ii) providing information and advice about current issues in HE and the discipline (where appropriate) that are relevant to external examining
- (iii) advising on approaches to moderation including applying criteria, assessing consistency of marking, sampling across grade boundaries, dealing with borderlines, fails (particularly for External Examiners from non-HEI settings)
- (iv) moderation across sites (and across collaborative partner delivery where necessary)
- (v) advising on dealing with draft examination papers, coursework titles, assessing the appropriateness of questions/titles in terms of coverage of topics/learning outcomes, level of challenge, rigour, ambiguity, fairness etc

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- (vi) advising on assessment processes within professional contexts
- (vii) advising on the process for approving new or modified modules (minor change)
- (viii) advising on the role and perspective of the External Examiner in Assessment Boards (in relation to moderation, extenuating circumstances, malpractice as appropriate), and common scenarios that arise at Assessment Boards
- (vix) advising on the context and appropriate content of verbal and written reports
- (ix) clarifying details, providing support, building confidence, reassuring.

2.3 The duties would therefore be specific to the actual examining work. Regulatory and procedural issues would continue to be communicated as currently via documentation from the Academic Quality & Development Service, and academic subject areas, by the Induction Day, and via the link with the relevant University programme leader.

### **3. Commitment required**

- 3.1 The role of the mentor should not be an onerous task and basically involves the mentor providing an independent, experienced point of contact for advice and guidance. It is expected that most communication will take place via e-mail or telephone but this can be flexible according to the needs of the mentee, and may include:
- (i) an initial meeting between mentor and mentee
  - (ii) a shadowing experience of mentor by mentee in an examination board.

### **4. Process of Appointment**

- 4.1 The need for mentor support would be identified as part of the nomination and approval process by EEP.
- 4.2 When assigning a mentor, consideration should be given as to whether reports from the proposed mentor have been timely, constructive and thorough, and that there has been satisfactory attendance at Assessment Boards.
- 4.3 If approved, the appointment would then be formally recognised by the University, and the following actions taken:
- (i) the mentor Examiner would receive a formal letter of appointment from AQD, outlining the possible duties under 2.2 above
  - (ii) the mentee Examiner would be advised of the arrangements and the scope of the support available via the letter of appointment from AQD
  - (iii) new External Examiners (who have been appointed a mentor) will be expected to attend an induction day.

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4.4 The role of the mentor would normally last from appointment of the new External Examiner, until submission of their first annual report.

### **5. Remuneration**

5.1 To enable the mentorship role to work effectively it is recognised in terms of remuneration.

5.2 Travel costs will be available for an initial meeting, plus shadowing at one Assessment Board.

### **6. Review of the process**

This process will be reviewed regularly taking account of best practice and Sector policy.