

# UNIVERSITY of CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

## APPENDIX 4

### External Examiners

#### Section 1 Roles and Responsibilities in External Examining

This section should be read in conjunction with 3f Conduct and Operation of Assessment Boards.

##### 1.1 The Role of the External Examiner

- 1.1.1 External Examiners are employed by the University to verify the standards of the University's awards and to ensure that the assessment process is sound and is fairly and consistently operated in line with its Regulations.
- 1.1.2 The University regards the securing of academic standards as a function of a partnership between the Chair of the Assessment Board and the External Examiner[s], the former using their discretion to seek guidance/advice from and to consult the External Examiner when appropriate.
- 1.1.3 External Examining procedures for Collaborative Provision will be consistent with the University's normal practices and procedures, and the University retains ultimate responsibility for appointment and functions of external examining.

##### 1.2. Types of External Examiner

- 1.2.1 There are **two types** of External Examiner:
  - i. **Subject** External Examiners
  - ii. **Chief** External Examiners
- 1.2.2 Subject External Examiners are appointed within a modular system to comment on assessment practices at Module level. They will be involved in the following areas.
  - i. Levels 5 & 6 of bachelors degree programmes.
  - ii. in the full programme for other awards [eg one year courses, foundation degrees, target DipHEs and postgraduate courses].

- iii. at levels 3 and 4 only where target (not exit) awards are made, and/or where Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies require External Examiner involvement.
- iv. for integrated degree apprenticeships, having a role in the internal quality assurance of gateway requirements being met, and where appropriate in the quality assurance of the EPA itself (in line with the University's Procedures for the Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment).

1.2.3 Award External Examiners are appointed by the University and will have a role in helping the institution to ensure that the assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line the institution's policies and regulations. Through Heads of Institute and Programme Leaders reporting to University Assessment Boards, the Award Examiners are made aware of any issues raised by Subject External Examiners in relation to threshold academic standards or assessment processes.

### **1.3 Role and Responsibility of the Subject External Examiner**

1.3.1 The Subject External Examiner's role is to enable the University to ensure that:

- i. standards of awards are comparable with those across the HE sector in the United Kingdom.
- ii. assessment requirements of modules leading to University awards meet learning aims and learning outcomes of those modules.
- iii. standards across the modules for which external examiners are responsible are comparable.
- iv. through the examination of modules, the achievement of programme aims and objectives contributes to the commercial, industrial and professional environment [as appropriate].
- v. assessment strategies and methods leading to University awards are in line with current best practice in the discipline concerned.
- vi. work leading to University (and professional) awards is assessed carefully, accurately and fairly by internal examiners with parity in the implementation of marking criteria to modules delivered on different sites/campuses and collaborative partner sites where applicable (including for the assessment of End Point Assessment where required).

- vii. (for integrated degree apprenticeships) gateway requirements are being met before being recommended for award and, where appropriate, the quality assurance of the EPA activity itself (in line with the University's Procedures for the Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment).
- 1.3.2 The Subject External Examiner is responsible for a number of modules which may be used exclusively on one programme or span different programmes.
- 1.3.3 The Subject External Examiner is expected to:
- i. verify the implementation of the overall assessment strategy for the module/programme.
  - ii. **approve** all provisional examination questions and rubric, before publication, for the modules/programme assessments and re-assessments for which they are responsible.
  - iii. scrutinise a representative sample, including work for collaborative partners where applicable, (agreed with the External Examiner) of each grade or class of degree, cases of failure and cases identified by staff as being of particular interest for examination scripts or coursework/dissertations for the modules/programme assessments for which they are responsible and confirm that the standards of marking and that the assessment criteria and standards have been correctly and accurately applied. (See Appendix 3b, section 7, Marking and Moderation Procedures).
  - iv. exceptionally, give an opinion on the marks of an individual student when asked to.
  - vi. provide an Annual Report on the particular modules to which they have been appointed, on the quality of learning opportunities afforded to students, the assessment procedures and assessment standards in the context of the programme and the national scene (including any End Point Assessment activity they have engaged in), drawing the University's attention to any matters of serious concern which put the University's standards at risk. They should also report on any good practice that they have identified.
  - vii. provide advice to programme teams, on and approve proposed minor changes to programme/module content or regulations to which the external examiner is appointed.

- viii. communicate with Programme/Subject Teams without lengthy delay on matters concerning examinations and assessment.
- ix. (for integrated degree apprenticeships) sample student profiles to provide assurance that gateway requirements are being met before being recommended for award and, where appropriate, be directly involved in the quality assurance of the EPA activity itself (in line with the University's Procedures for the Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment).

## **1.4 Role and Responsibility of the Chief External Examiner**

1.4.1 The Chief External Examiner's role is to ensure that:

- i. through the application of Regulations, standards are maintained at a level comparable with that achieved in similar awards elsewhere in the UK.
- ii. the procedures are followed in a fair and proper manner with consistency in application of the Regulations and comparability of treatment for students in their interpretation across the University.

1.4.2 The Chief External Examiner is selected from the pool of Subject Examiners and is expected to:

- i. attend the University Progression and Awards Board.
- ii. ensure there is an experienced and objective input into the exercise of discretion by the UPAB through their understanding and knowledge of applying Regulations and experience of managing comparable situations elsewhere (including PSRB requirements).
- iii. provide an Annual Report.

## **1.5 Responsibilities of University Staff**

1.5.1 The **Quality Assurance Team (Academic Registry)** will provide the External Examiner with the current University Academic Regulations, and details on External Examiner fees and expenses when they are appointed. The QA Team will also:-

- i. issue annual guidelines for the content, structure and submission of reports.
- ii. issue guidelines for the level and payment of fees and expenses.
- iii. process external examiner expenses and claims.
- iv. monitor receipt of External Examiner annual reports.

- v. ensure that any confidential disclosures in External Examiner Reports are removed in the approved Blackboard publishable versions of such reports.
- vi. issue revisions to University Academic Regulations.
- vii. invite external examiners to an External Examiners Induction session.
- viii. draw attention where appropriate to significant issues raised in External Examiners' Annual Reports.

1.5.2 The **Academic Registrar** is responsible for:

- i. setting mark confirmation deadlines and the dates of University Progression and Award Boards in advance of the academic year.
- ii. confirming with Chief External Examiners the dates of the UPAB meetings they are required to attend.

1.5.3 The **Dean of Institute (through appropriate delegation to Programme and Module Leaders)**, is responsible for ensuring:

- i. timely completion of proposals for new nominations for external examiners which meet the requirements detailed in Section 2.
- ii. effective and timely communication with the Subject External Examiner by staff.
- iii. that the Subject External Examiner is provided with relevant definitive documents for the programme(s).
- iv. that the incoming External Examiner is provided with the last External Examiner's report.
- v. timely and appropriate briefing of the Subject External Examiner (on appointment and throughout their term).
- vi. the early agreement of timings and arrangements for the despatching of materials to the Subject Examiner throughout the academic year.
- vii. appropriate consultation with Subject External Examiner on possible minor changes.
- viii. that, where Subject External Examiners are required to scrutinise examination papers and scripts, this material is sent in reasonable time.
- ix. that all examination papers [questions and rubric] are approved by the Subject External Examiner before publication.

- x. the internal moderation of coursework titles and briefs through sampling by the programme team which is representative of the diversity of assessment items used.
- xi. that timely and detailed responses are provided to External Examiner's reports, with detail of any actions resulting (or reasons for not taking action) and for ensuring that the response is shared within the Programme Team and forms part of the Programme Annual Monitoring Report.
- xiii. that the QA Team approved version of relevant External Examiner reports are made available on programme-level Blackboard sites.
- xiv ensuring that the Annual Monitoring process takes account of the views of External Examiners as expressed in their reports.

1.5.4 The **Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Standards)** is responsible for ensuring that formal responses are made to issues raised by Chief Examiners in their reports and that where appropriate, issues are referred for appropriate action at University, Institute or Service level and are reported on through the University's monitoring processes.

1.5.5 **The Vice-Chancellor** is responsible for ensuring that responses are made to confidential reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

## **Section 2 Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract**

### **2.1 Criteria for Subject External Examiners**

- 2.1.1 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

2.1.2 Additionally, for External Examiners appointed to conduct quality assurance of End Point Assessment (for Apprenticeships):

.1 Where the EPA is the final assessment board, the Examiner must:

- understand the occupational standard and end-point assessment plan.
- be occupationally competent and hold professional registration with relevant PSRB (if appropriate).
- comply with the requirements of the IfATE and PSRB Approved Education Provider (if appropriate).
- be independent of the apprentice, and the employing organisation who are involved in delivering the apprenticeship.
- have not been involved in the teaching or on-programme assessment of the apprentice

.2 Where the EPA is a credit-bearing module, the Examiner must:

- be independent from the apprentices, employer, assessors and training provider(s) involved, and from the delivery of EPA, with no conflicts of interest.
- be impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the EPAO and its staff (including the governing body),

and any relevant employers and/or partners. If there is an exception to this it will be stated in the IfATE assessment plan.

- be knowledgeable about, and competent in, assessing apprentice achievement in higher education at levels relevant to the subjects and awards to which their appointments relate.
- have broad and current knowledge, relevant experience and occupational competence in the area of work related to their appointment.
- have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the EPA, and has an understanding of degree apprenticeships.
- be able to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed EPA development.
- have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively.
- be able to engage in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EPAO to build relationships and provide guidance and support.

2.1.2 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 examiner's role.

2.1.3 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.

2.1.4 The External Examiner should not concurrently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examining appointments to prevent 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.

2.1.5 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.

2.1.6 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 institute in the same institution.
- ix. The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same institute of the same institution.

2.1.7 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.)

## **2.2 Criteria for Chief External Examiners**

2.2.1 A Chief 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.
- iii. current or recent involvement in chairing Assessment Boards.

2.2.2 The External Examiner must have recent external examining experience to indicate competence in decision making regarding decisions on individual student cases.

2.2.3 The External Examiner should not concurrently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examining appointments to prevent over-extending their examining duties.

2.2.4 External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutions and point 1.5 for Subject External Examiners is applicable.

2.2.5 External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and point 1.6 for Subject External Examiners is applicable.

## **2.3 Criteria and procedure for the termination of External Examiner appointments**

### **2.3.1 Expectations**

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. 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. (Award Examiners) attend relevant Assessment Board and participate in its decision making and provide a verbal report
- v. (Award Examiners) 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.

### **2.3.2 Grounds for termination**

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.
- 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.
- x. Where a conflict of interests arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

## **2.4 Procedure for the termination of external examiner appointments**

2.4.1 Where circumstances arise which meet the criteria for termination of an External Examiner's appointment, the Programme Leader must report the details to the Quality Assurance Team. The QA Team 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.

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

- i. Where reports are outstanding 8 weeks following the Assessment Board, the QA Team will contact the External Examiner.
- ii. Where reports remain outstanding [and providing there are no mitigating circumstances] the QA Team **may** commence the termination process and the fee will be forfeited.

## **2.5 The Resignation or Indisposal of an External Examiner**

2.5.1 Where an External Examiner wishes to resign from their appointment (eg for personal reasons), the respective Institute 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 Institute should also seek to ensure all outstanding reports are submitted.

2.5.2 Where an External Examiner is not able to fulfil their responsibilities, the Institute should, where feasible, make appropriate arrangements to ensure that all outstanding responsibilities (including the preparation and submission of the reports) are covered. The programme team should initiate a replacement nomination immediately.

## **Section 3 Guidelines for the selection and approval of potential External Examiners**

### **3.1 Criteria for appointment**

3.1.1 The criteria for the appointment of External Examiners are set out in Section 2. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide advice on the recruitment process and to point out factors to be taken into account when selecting and putting forward potential External Examiners for approval.

## **3.2 Timescales**

- 3.2.1 Institutes should plan well in advance for experienced External Examiners to take over from an existing examiner when their appointment comes to an end. The completed nomination form should be submitted to the Quality Assurance Team in the preceding academic year.

## **3.3 Recruitment of potential external examiners**

- 3.3.1 There are a number of ways in which potential External Examiners can be identified, for example:

- Other academic institutions operating similar programmes can be a source of potential External Examiners. (Institutes should take into account the University's wish to involve External Examiners from a wide range of UK institutions. Institutes should not limit themselves to those institutions with whom staff already have a close association or which are geographically near to this institution.)
- Institutes may wish to enquire whether the out-going examiner is able to recommend an appropriate successor from another institution other than their own.
- Professional bodies often publish their own list of approved External Examiners and professional associations (eg Association of Business, Council of Deans) which can be used as a source for nominations.
- Attendance at conferences, workshops, seminars, etc or acting on the validation panels at other institutions may yield possible contacts for potential future External Examiners, as may any links with other institutions for research purposes.

- 3.3.2 It is recognised that from time to time, there can be difficulties in finding suitable nominees who possess the relevant experience to undertake the role of an External Examiner. Programme Leaders should contact the QA Team for support (for example placing advert on mailing lists) in such instances.

## **3.4 Demonstrating that the criteria for appointment are met**

- 3.4.1 The criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and the candidate's ability to satisfy these must be taken into account when considering potential External Examiners. In exceptional cases the Institute may wish to propose a nomination for a Subject External Examiner who does not fully meet the criteria outlined in Section 2. The proposer must provide a detailed case with the nomination detailing the level of alternative

experience and abilities, and how they intend to support the new External Examiner in the first year of office.

3.4.2 The requirement for a formal mentoring arrangement will be identified as part of the approvals process.

3.4.3 It is important to demonstrate that, although a nominee may not fully meet all criteria, they must have an overall balance of experience and be able to judge comparability. The guidance in Section 5 provides detail of the range of evidence which needs to be provided in the supporting statement as part of the decision making process so that a judgement can be made about whether a nominee is appropriate, including on the basis of the overall profile if all the criteria are not fully met. Inexperienced External Examiners will be asked to confirm the support they have received from the Institute and/or the Mentor in their first year of appointment.

Note: It is necessary to demonstrate that a nomination meets the criteria for a Chief External Examiner to whom the mentorship scheme does not apply.

3.4.4 External Examiner nominations are approved by the Deputy Academic Registrar and Quality Assurance Administrator.

### **3.5 Statement of support**

Statements of support from the proposer for Subject External Examiners should cover the following:-

#### **Experience and Attributes**

The University will look for evidence of the nominee's:

##### **i. Professional Experience**

At least 3 years' relevant experience and normally 5 years. For academic staff, this should cover teaching, designing and operating a variety of assessment. Non-HEI nominees must have a high degree of specialist knowledge of the relevant field.

##### **ii. Education/Qualifications**

Qualified at least to the level of (and normally above) the subject area of the award for which the External Examiner will be responsible. Additionally, it would be helpful if there were evidence that the applicant is the holder of a recognised teaching qualification.

##### **iii. Skills and Abilities**

It is expected that academic nominees will have experience of assessment techniques which test a range of cognitive and/or practical skills. Evidence to demonstrate this could include:

- a. Scholarly activity in the subject area [eg conference papers, published papers, books or refereed articles].
- b. Ability to make comparison with similar provision [eg through validation experience or through experience of another institution or employer].
- c. Interest in curriculum development [eg through membership of programme development, team or internal review or validation mechanisms].
- d. External recognition [eg through membership of a professional association or industry awards].
- e. Involvement in subject benchmarking or internal/external quality review.
- f. Member of an organisation with a high reputation for quality and standards.
- g. Ability to communicate positively to influence quality enhancement.

iv. **Collaborative Provision**

Proposals for External Examiners for Collaborative Programmes must have previous External Examining experience. It is desirable for proposals for Collaborative Provision to have experience of collaborative activity.

## **Section 4 External Examiner Appointment Processes**

### **4.1 Process**

- 4.1.1 External Examiners are appointed through the delegated authority of Academic Board as employees of the University.
- 4.1.2 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.
- 4.1.3 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.
- 4.1.4 The Quality Assurance Team maintains a vacancy list and notifies Institutes of those External Examiner appointments

that are due to end and require a replacement to take up appointment.

- 4.1.5 All nominations must be submitted on the University nomination form, signed by the Head of LTSE and if appropriate, the Principal (or representative) of the Collaborative Partner institution.
- 4.1.6 The Head of LTSE 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 Academic Quality and Development for consideration of approval.
- 4.1.7 Once the nomination has been approved by the Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Standards), the QA Team will confirm the appointment in writing to the External Examiner, including detail of programme and specific modules, and enters details on the University's systems and register of External Examiners' appointments.
- 4.1.8 Where proposals are not approved, the proposer will notify the proposed External Examiner.

## **4.2 Institutional Responsibilities**

### **Subject External Examiners**

- 4.2.1 The forehad of LTSE is responsible for ensuring the completion of proposals for External Examiner appointments for all programmes overseen by the Institute (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.
- 4.1.2 Where nominations are received from Partner Colleges (or other approved Partners) the University Programme Leader is responsible for scrutiny and, where recommended for approval, for forwarding to the Head of LTSE within one week of receipt from the Partner College.
- 4.1.3 All nominations should be supported by a written statement from the Programme Leader.
- 4.1.4 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.



- 4.1.5 Where appropriate, the Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring that the criteria for appointment of the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) are met.
- 4.1.6 The relevant Programme Leader, or relevant member of the Programme Team is required to make arrangements for the induction of Examiners to the programme and the programme team. The QA Team provides online University induction materials. The Programme Team's induction of the Examiner 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 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.
- 4.1.7 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.

## **4.2 Chief External Examiners**

- 4.2.1 The QA Team is responsible for ensuring that nominations for Chief Examiners are identified from the University's Subject Examiners.

## **4.3 Partner responsibility (Collaborative Provision)**

- 4.3.1 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 Institute to be approved prior to it being forwarded to the Quality Assurance Team for approval.
- 4.3.2 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.

## **4.4 Additional Subject External Examiners**

- 4.4.1 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 the QA Team **before** any agreement is made to a potential nominee. A full rationale for the appointment, signed by the Head of LTSE, is required.

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

4.5.1 The modules designated to an External Examiner may be varied through the change to remit process. Applications for changes to appointment or role should be made on the Change to Remit form.

4.5.2 An extension to an individual's term of appointment will be considered by only where there are exceptional circumstances for doing so, for example:

- 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.

4.5.3 The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will not be extended beyond 5 years.

4.5.4 The application should be set out on the relevant form with a full supporting rationale.

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

4.5.1 Where an inexperienced External Examiner is appointed, it is good practice to appoint 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 Institute 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 Institute has responsibility for proposing a mentor when the nomination is presented, together with (i) an indication that the mentor is willing to act in this capacity and (ii) an indication of the likely support required.

4.5.2 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. Indicative duties could 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
- (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.

4.5.3 The role of the mentor should not be an onerous task and 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.

4.5.4 The need for a mentor support should be identified as part of the nomination and approval process. 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.

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 the QA Team, outlining the possible duties
- (ii) the mentee Examiner would be advised of the arrangements and the scope of the support available via the letter of appointment from the QA Team

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

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

## **Section 5            Reporting procedures for External Examiners**

Please refer to Annex 2 for summary flowchart

### **5.1    External Examiner's Report**

5.1.1 The University attaches great significance to and values greatly the annual reports of External Examiners as they form a vital part of the documentation used within its Quality Assurance. Relevant staff, including those at a senior level, read reports carefully and give serious consideration to all issues raised. Reports are made available to students through programme Blackboard sites. The University seeks to ensure that appropriate action is taken and that the feedback/quality loop is closed. All External Examiners are advised of the action taken.

## **5.2 Completion and submission of the Annual Report**

### **Format and content of the Report**

5.2.1 External Examiners are asked to complete the annual report critically but fairly using the template and bearing in mind the points listed below. The report is for the University's use and consists of sections on the following with points to be commented on in each.

- i. The academic standards demonstrated by the students and where possible their performance in relation to students on comparable courses.
- ii. The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award.
- iii. Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.
- iv. Good practice and innovation regarding teaching, learning and assessment observed by the External Examiner.
- v. Organisation and arrangements in the assessment process.
- vi. Comments on the operation of End Point Assessment (where appropriate).
- vii. Other comments.

5.2.2 External Examiners for franchised Collaborative Programmes are asked to comment on each collaborative partner within the context of their report.

5.2.3 In their final report (ie in the final year of appointment), External Examiners are asked to include in it an overview on the progress that has been made during their period of the office. This information will also serve to inform the incoming External Examiner about the developments during the previous period review. Points on which the External Examiner can base their report are listed on the template.

5.2.4 If an External Examiner has serious concerns arising from the assessment process which put at risk the standards of the University or any relevant external awarding body, these must be raised through the formal mark confirmation process, for escalation.

5.2.5 Should an External Examiner wish to raise matters of particular importance or sensitivity, this can be done by way of a separate, confidential report addressed to the Vice Chancellor.

## **Submitting the Report**

5.2.6 The fully completed reports must be returned via email to the QA Team by 31 July or **within six weeks of the Assessment Board**. Payment of External Examiners fees will be conditional upon completion of the report.

## **Use within the University**

5.2.7 The External Examiner's report is an important part of the University's quality assurance process. In preparing their reports, External Examiners are protected by qualified privilege so the views expressed are the Examiners and not those held by anyone else.

5.2.8 The Examiner retains the copyright of the report but the University is entitled to use the report by way of implied licence. This may include publishing in part or whole.

5.2.9 External examiners should be aware that under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act the University is required to publish all information (not covered by exemption) if requested. In view of this it is important that External Examiners do not include in their report any reference to individuals by name.

5.2.10 External Examiner reports will be shared with students (with the exception of confidential reports).

5.2.11 External Examiners will be made aware that under the requirements of the Data Protection Act students can request a copy of any comments made on their scripts, or any reports made by External Examiners on their work, and if requested the University will be required to provide this information.

## **5.3 Guidelines for completion**

5.3.1 The following points should be borne in mind when completing the report

- i. No individual student or member of staff should be identified by name
- ii. The format of the report templates should not be altered in any way
- iii. Joint reports from External Examiners are not acceptable as the University prefers independent views to be expressed
- iv. In line with UK Quality Code for Higher Education, External Examiner reports will be shared with students through programme level Blackboard sites. The Quality Assurance Team within the Academic Registry undertakes

checks of all reports prior to publication to ensure that there are no inadvertent breaches of confidentiality.

## **5.4 Responding to the Report**

### **Subject Examiners**

- 5.4.1 The Programme Leader shall be required to provide a full and considered formal response to the Subject External Examiner's report. Responses are required to provide detail of any actions resulting from reports, or reasons for not taking action. Responses are required to be shared with relevant staff.
- 5.4.2 In the case of franchised collaborative provision, the University Programme Leader shall be responsible for responding to the Subject Examiner's report, with input from the Partner Programme Leader. In the case of validated collaborative provision the Partner Programme Leader shall be responsible for responding to the report and this must be approved by the linked University Programme Leader.
- 5.4.3 All responses must be provided to the Quality Assurance Team who will ensure that the response is sent to the External Examiner in line with agreed protocols. The report and response will be shared by the Programme Leader with relevant staff and will feed in to the University's annual monitoring processes. Subject External Examiner's reports should be shared with students through Blackboard sites.

### **Chief Examiners**

- 5.4.4 The Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Standards) shall be required to respond formally to Chief External Examiners reports. The QA Team will ensure that responses are sent to External Examiners in line with agreed protocols. The reports and responses will feed in to the University's annual summary of External Examiner reports considered by SSQAC.

### **Confidential Reports to the Vice-Chancellor**

- 5.4.5 The Vice-Chancellor shall respond to any confidential reports submitted to the University.

## **Section 6 Information for External Examiners**

### **6.1 Information provided from the Quality Assurance Team (Academic Registry)**

6.1.1 When confirming the appointment **the QA Team** provides the following to the External Examiner:

- i. Letter of welcome and confirmation of appointment.
- ii. Invitation to engage in online Induction.
- iii. Contact information.
- iv. Academic Regulations and Academic Procedures and Processes.
- v. Information on Expenses.
- vii. External Examiner Handbook .
- viii. Quality Handbook.
- ix. Procedures for the Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment (where appropriate).

6.1.2 Continuing External Examiners receive information at the beginning of each academic year which captures such changes that are made from year to year.

### **6.2 Information provided from the Assessment and Awards Team (Academic Registry)**

6.2.1 Once the appointment has been confirmed the Assessment and Awards Team will provide dates and times of Assessment Boards.

### **6.3 Information provided from the Academic Institute**

6.3.1 The Dean of Institute will ensure that additional information is sent by the Programme Leader to the External Examiner, to include:

- i. Contact details of the staff specific to the examining duties.
- ii. Contact details of other members of the external examining team.
- iii. Programme Specification(s).
- iv. Module Descriptors for those modules being externally examined.
- v. Programme Handbook and Module Guides.
- vi. Details of the assessment, verification and moderation processes for the relevant programmes to include grading and marking schemes.



- vii. Copies of previous report of the External Examiners and Programme Leader's Annual Evaluatory Report.
- viii. Detail of how to access Module/Programme Blackboard sites and other resources.
- ix. Detail of End Point Assessment arrangements (where appropriate).

## Annex 1 External Examiner Reports & University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes

