

Academic Regulations - External Examiners

Approved by: *Academic Committee*

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External Examiners

1. General Information

- 1.1 External examiners ensure that the University's standards and quality processes are appropriate and are of a standard comparable to those of other higher education institutions in the UK.
- 1.2 External examiners help to ensure that:
 - A. standards set for the awards are appropriate;
 - B. standards of student performance are comparable with similar courses or subjects in other HEIs;
 - C. the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are rigorous;
 - D. students receive equitable treatment and that the academic processes have been conducted fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s) and in line with Regent's University London regulations and policies;
 - E. distinctive features are acknowledged in the context of external knowledge and experience.
- 1.3 External examiners provide academic staff with the opportunity to reflect with other academics in the field and fulfil the requirements of the QAA and validating bodies. They are critical for the validating bodies to retain confidence in the quality and standards of the validated courses. These procedures are informed by the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance, External Expertise.
- 1.4 All academic staff at Regent's University London are informed of the roles and responsibilities of the external examiners and the levels of their authority.
- 1.5 The University will include the name of the external examiner, their position and institution in module or course information provided to students.

2. Appointment Procedure for external examiners

- 2.1 Nominations are made according to the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance, External Expertise. This covers the nominees' seniority, credibility and relevant experience, knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
- 2.2 Their academic qualifications/professional qualifications must be appropriate and to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or have extensive practitioner experience where appropriate.
- 2.3 All external examiners are expected to have competence and experience of designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures and examinations (either externally or internally).
- 2.4 All external examiners will have an awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.

- 2.5 External examiner nominations are drawn from a variety of institutional and professional contexts and traditions ensuring the courses benefit from wide-ranging external scrutiny. Where a course leads to a professional award, at least one appropriately experienced practitioner should be included among the examiners.
- 2.6 All external examiners will meet the applicable criteria set by professional statutory or regulatory bodies.
- 2.7 All external examiners will have a familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed.
- 2.8 All external examiners will have the necessary experience to enhance the student learning experience.
- 2.9 All external examiners will be fluent in English, and where courses 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).
- 2.10 Additionally, external examiners will not:
- A. normally hold more than two external examiner appointments for taught courses/modules at any point in time;
 - B. have worked or studied at Regent's University London in the last five years. Retirees may be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the discipline area in question;
 - C. be from the same institution as the previous external examiner;
 - D. be an external examiner from an institution which has been the source of examiners to the faculties of the University for a course covering the same or cognate subject areas in the recent past (normally five years);
 - E. be a member of staff, a governor, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff or student on the course, an examiner on a cognate course in the University or a member of a committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;
 - F. be in a close professional contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course of study;
 - G. be involved as external examiner for the course when it was approved by another validating body;
 - H. be a recent or current close working colleague of a key member of staff now teaching on the course to be examined;
 - I. be personally associated with the sponsorship of students on the course;
 - J. be anyone closely associated with placements or training;
 - K. be required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course;
 - L. be in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the course or likely to be involved with placements or training courses in their organisation involving students on the course;
 - M. be anyone involved in collaborative research activities with a member of staff;
 - N. be anyone who has been directly involved as an external member of the validation panel for the course.
- 2.11 A reciprocal external examining arrangement for the same subject area between the University and other institutions is not allowed.

- 2.12 The replacement of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same department in the same institution is not allowed.
- 2.13 No more than one external examiner should be appointed to a course from any one department within another University.
- 2.14 The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be four years, with a possible, exceptional extension of one year.
- 2.15 An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since their last appointment.
- 2.16 The appointment of an external examiner can be terminated by the University, approved at a senior level, if they fail to fulfil their obligations at the end of any single year of appointment.
- 2.17 Colleagues who are new to external examining or have professional experience relevant to a professional or vocational course can be appointed provided they are part of a team and mentored by another external examiner.
- 2.18 Where any potential conflict of interest cannot be satisfactorily resolved appointments will not be approved.

3. Nomination process

- 3.1 All nominations for external examiners must be submitted using the University's external examiner nomination form.
- 3.2 Completed nomination forms should be signed by the Director (Content) or nominee and then submitted to their Associate Provost for approval.
- 3.3 The Associate Provost will be required to approve and sign the paperwork. In the event of one member not being available to sign the paperwork, a suitable nominee should be appointed.
- 3.4 Once approval has been given by the Associate Provost the form should be passed to the Registry for scrutiny and subsequent approval at University level by the Head of Registry, or nominee from the Quality Office, on behalf of the Quality Committee.
- 3.5 The Registry will ensure that all external examiners are appropriately inducted.
- 3.6 The Quality Office will produce an updated report for each meeting of the Quality Committee on External Examiner approvals and changes.

4. Appointment Contract

- 4.1 Appointments for external examiners are usually for a period of four years. However, the term of office may be extended for up to twelve months in extenuating circumstances where there is a clear rationale.
- 4.2 A new external examiner will start either just before the previous one has completed their term or at the same time.

- 4.3 The courses and/or subject areas to be included in the external examiner's role will be clearly communicated in the appointment letter, and this information will also be recorded at the Quality Committee.
- 4.4 An external examiner's contract may be terminated where reports are not produced in a timely manner or to an appropriate standard, or due to failure to attend the relevant assessment Board(s), or a new conflict of interest arises, or due to the discontinuation of the course.

5. Monitoring the external examiner appointments procedure

- 5.1 Registry holds and maintains an external examiner database which contains contact details, length of contract and payment details for all external examiners. This is accessible to the Registry team. Registry monitors the appointments procedure and notifies the Quality Committee of progress regarding all external examiner appointments.

6. Induction of external examiners

6.1 Initial arrangements

The external examiner is supplied with:

- A. Regent's University London Academic Regulations detailing all QA procedures such as moderation policy.
- B. Course specifications for the course, including details of assessment.
- C. A briefing paper on University contacts and reporting lines.
- D. The previous external examiner's report.
- E. Dates for meetings of the relevant examining boards.
- F. The content and format required for the written report.

6.2 Induction meeting

External examiners are invited to a meeting at which they are briefed on the institutional procedures and academic regulations as well as being given information to explain what their duties and obligations are, including those relating to attendance and feedback, and any legal obligations. Details may also be shared regarding the developments and opportunities for discussion at course level. The external examiners will meet the relevant academic and Registry staff.

7. The external examiner's role

- 7.1 The Director (Content) and/or Course Leaders or their equivalent maintain contact with the external examiners. External examiners may be invited to observe the assessment of presentations or practical work and to sign off new ideas for the course assessment items or criteria and any other aspects of delivery.
- 7.2 External examiners review proposed assignments and examination questions and any proposed changes in the course.
- 7.3 They are also informed when they will be able to view work. All coursework and exam scripts can be made available to external examiners where possible, but they will normally be able to review a sample across the marking range. External examiners may not change individual marks within

a sample, unless an error has been identified by the external examiner which requires the change of a grade.

- 7.4 External examiners also attend the Examination Boards of the course, at which they are required to sign off the outcomes.
- 7.5 The external examiner will endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes they have been appointed to scrutinise.
- 7.6 On all UK validated courses, no recommendation for the conferment of a validated award of the University may be made without the written consent of approved external examiners prior to the confirmation of mark lists.
- 7.7 On any matter which the external examiners have declared a matter of principle, the decision of the external examiners shall either be accepted as final by the assessment board or shall be referred to the Quality Committee. Disagreements between external examiners shall be referred to the Quality Committee.
- 7.8 An external examiner, not from the content area, will be selected to attend the Progression and Finalist Board.

8. The Report

- 8.1 At the end of the assessment process, external examiners are required to submit an annual report. The report is submitted no more than one month after the final meeting of the assessment board.
- 8.2 The report includes comments on the following:
 - A. The overall performance of the students in relation to their peers on comparable courses.
 - B. The strengths and weaknesses of students in relation to previous years (where applicable).
 - C. The quality of knowledge and skills demonstrated by the students, both general and subject specific and including any work-based or work-related aspects. This should be seen in the light of QAA subject benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
 - D. The quality of teaching as indicated by student performance.
 - E. The structure, organisation, design, marking and fairness of all assessments and their compliance with Regent's University London quality assurance procedures.
 - F. The organisation and operation of assessment boards.
 - G. Comments on their own involvement in the process and feedback on whether issues previously raised have been addressed.
 - H. Other recommendations arising from the assessments.
 - I. Developmental needs for the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods and resources to support the course arising from the whole learning and assessment process.
 - J. Recommendations to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.
 - K. Any areas of good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment.

- L. The report is sent to the Head of Registry at Regent's University London. It is logged in the Registry and a copy sent to the Director (Content) for consideration by the Course Committee and the Associate Provost.

8.3 The University will make external examiners' annual reports available in full to students, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly, and separately to the Vice-Chancellor.

8.4 External examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Vice-Chancellor, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. The Vice-Chancellor will provide a response within a timely manner. If this response is not satisfactory to the external examiner then they may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional statutory or regulatory body.

9. Responses to the report

9.1 The external examiner's report is designed to enable the University to ascertain whether the course is meeting its stated objectives, and to make any necessary improvements. The Director (Content) and/or Course Leader or their equivalent, in consultation with members of the teaching team, will produce written feedback within one month in response to the issues raised in the report. The response will identify measures that are to be put in place and discussions to be had where recommended. The response is sent to the external examiner and to the Quality Committee.

9.2 The Registry team will produce a report on the general issues and themes arising from all the reports. This summary report will then be presented to the Quality Committee.

9.3 The University will ensure that student representatives are given the opportunity to be fully involved in the process, enabling them to understand all the issues raised and the University's response.