

Updated External Examiners Policy

Summary

Following Senate approval of the revised Assessment Regulations in July 2016 an exercise is being undertaken to align relevant related existing policy and guidance documentation. Updated policies are being considered by Education and Student Committee and forwarded to Senate for approval.

During the review of the Assessment Regulations, the section relating to External Examining was revised to remove text relating to policy and guidance. This text has now been relocated to the appropriate policy documentation.

There are currently three separate External Examiners policies; for:

- the appointment of External Examiners
- consideration of External Examiners' Annual Reports
- resignations, interruptions and premature termination of appointments on taught programmes.

It is proposed that the three policies are combined into a single document as outlined in the attached updated policy. The revised policy also incorporates additional text to clarify current practice, to set out an updated process for Boards of Studies consideration of External Examiner nomination forms and update the section relating to External Examiner resignations.

Following Education and Student Committee's consideration of this document, Senate is now asked to approve the updated External Examiners Policy.

One action required.

Recommended Action

Senate is asked to **approve** the updated External Examiners Policy.

Publication: Open



External Examiners Policy

Scope

Policy describing the institution's approach to:

- ✓ *the appointment of External Examiners*
- ✓ *consideration of External Examiners' Annual Reports*
- ✓ *resignations, interruptions and premature termination of appointments on taught programmes.*

Arrangements for the appointment of External Examiners for partnership programmes will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership

Senate Regulations Assessment Regulations ([Senate Regulation 19](#), section [5.6](#))

Date approved/re-approved

June 2012 (Senate) – updated September 2016

Date for review *To be reviewed on a periodic basis, with allowance for minor annual updates of roles and responsibilities by Education and Student Committee, as required*

To be read in conjunction with: *Senate Assessment Regulations [Section 5.6](#) External Examiners and Section 7 of the Quality Manual: External Examining*

1. Appointment of External Examiners

In line with national requirements (UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7, [February 2015](#)), the University's policy is that for each programme there will be an External Examiner who will take an overview of the Programme. There may be additional External Examiners appointed to cover particular academic areas within a programme to ensure adequate consideration of achievement, progression and award, as determined by the appropriate Board of Studies.

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External Examiners are drawn from institutions, industry and professions which align with, the particular programme content, to enable, appropriate scrutiny to be undertaken. They will be identified according to their knowledge and understanding of the area of study, and are expected to be competent and suitably experienced in relation to the appropriate design and operation of a range of relevant assessment methods in the subject.

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Nominations for potential External Examiners should evidence how individuals would be able to fulfil the range of duties for the role and Boards of Studies will consider the relevant professional and academic experience of nominees. Appointments will take account of any potential conflicts of interest which might affect, or which might be perceived to affect, the requirement for independent and impartial judgements by External Examiners. A former member of staff or student should not be invited to become an External Examiner unless a period of five years has elapsed since their departure from City. Further appointment criteria and guidance are set out within the External Examiners' Appointment Form and as published in the City Quality Manual. Where the criteria are not fully met, a Board of Studies may make a case and present a rationale for special consideration by the Deputy President and Provost.

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External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity. Re-appointment may occur in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

The Board of Studies responsible for the programme or specific part of a programme, or (for validated provision) Course Boards, consider nominations. Consideration is undertaken by Board members rather than by Chair's action and may be by circulation in advance of a Board if appropriate to avoid delay to the appointment process.

Appointments are made by Senate following nomination by Boards of Studies or Course Boards. Senate has delegated this function to Education and Student Committee and final sign-off is undertaken by the Academic Lead for External Examining on behalf of the Deputy President and Provost.

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Summary of Responsibilities

Student and Academic Services

- Identifies where appointments/reappointments are required
- Writes to External Examiners to confirm appointment
- Retains a log of all External Examiners on a central database.
- Provides an institutional induction as required

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Programme Director

- Identifies potential External Examiners and make recommendations to the Board of Studies
- Provides programme and School information to the External Examiner
- Arranges an orientation visit for new External Examiners as part of the School induction process

Boards of Studies

- Ensures the timely nomination of External Examiners for both new and continuing programmes. Nominations should be made before the end of one session for appointments (and reappointments) commencing the following session and arrangements made for a handover from the outgoing External Examiner to the incoming Examiner
- Identifies the number and roles of External Examiners required for effective scrutiny of the assessment and award of processes for programmes within their remit
- Approves recommendations for the appointment and the annual fees, for External Examiners in accordance with City guidance.

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Academic Lead for External Examining

- Approves External Examiner Appointments on behalf of City's Education and Student Committee.

2. Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

City regards External Examiners and their reports as an important and integral part of institutional quality assurance, and a public reference point on quality and standards.

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External Examiners are expected to complete an annual report after the main Assessment Board(s) meeting within each academic session of their appointment. An online form is available for this purpose and Examiners are asked to submit this within two weeks of the relevant Assessment Board. Receipt of the report is acknowledged by Student and Academic Services, and triggers payment of the annual fee.

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The report will be available for discussion within City, and may be requested by certain external bodies, including the Quality Assurance Agency, and professional and statutory bodies. It is also made available in full to students and may be supplied to an incoming External Examiner.

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In their annual reports, External Examiners are particularly asked to provide commentary and judgements on:

- whether the standards set are appropriate for City's awards, by reference to published national subject benchmarks (where applicable), national qualifications frameworks, institutional programme specifications and other relevant information;
- the standards of student performance in the programmes or modules assessed, and on the comparability with those of similar level programmes in other UK higher education institutions;
- the extent to which the processes for assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted.

Guidance and advice on any aspect of practice and provision, including programme structure and content and assessment strategies, are also welcomed.

Examiners in their final year of appointment are asked to include an overview report on developments in the programme during their term of office.

An additional report concerning matters of significance and/or sensitivity may be sent in confidence to the President, if considered appropriate.

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All External Examiners' reports are read by a member of Student and Academic Services to identify items for response as well as areas of good practice or strengths within the programmes. They are then passed to Schools for consideration of the issues and preparation of a response.

External Examiners' reports are used to inform the Annual Programme Evaluation process.

Summary of Responsibilities

Student and Academic Services

- Receives and logs External Examiners' reports
- Processes payments and expenses
- Identifies issues for response
- Logs copies of responses to reports
- Reports on compliance to the procedure and common issues raised across the institution

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Programme Director

- Provides responses to issues raised in External Examiners' reports

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Board of Studies

- Approves the Programme Directors' responses to External Examiners' reports
- Annually, consider themes arising from reports received in their School.

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Secretary of the Board of Studies

- Writes to the External Examiner with a copy of the response
- Copies responses to Student and Academic Services

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3. Resignation, interruptions and premature termination of appointment of External Examiners on taught programmes

Appointments can be terminated prematurely by either side.

Termination by the External Examiner

Where an External Examiner wishes to resign prior to completion of their contracted term of engagement, they are requested to provide reasonable notice (at least 3 months) and complete their duties for the current year of appointment where possible.

Where an External Examiner is unable to complete their duties for the current year of appointment or wishes to interrupt for a defined period of time, interim arrangements with the same Examiner, or alternative temporary appointments, may be established.

Termination by City, University of London

Where the termination is instigated by City a recommendation will be proposed by the Board of Studies, or in the case of partnership provision via the governance arrangements detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement, and approved by Education and Student Committee (which has delegated powers from Senate in this matter). City can terminate the appointment on any of the following grounds:

1. Discontinuation of the provision for which the External Examiner was appointed;
2. Irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the External Examiner and the School or Validated Institution;
3. Persistent unavailability/inability to perform duties (e.g. non-submission of reports within a reasonable timescale and/or failure to attend an Assessment Board without good reason);
4. New conflict of interest following a change of role of the Examiner;
5. Other grounds, as applicable, put forward by the Board of Studies.

Summary of Responsibilities

Student and Academic Services

- Identifies where termination of an External Examiner contract may be necessary and informs the relevant Programme Director for notification to the Board of Studies
- Receives the notification from the Board of Studies for the termination of a contract for Academic Lead sign off
- Writes to the External Examiner to confirm termination of the contract
- Retains a log of all City External Examiners

Programme Director

- Identifies the potential need for the termination of the External Examiner contract and makes a recommendation to the Board of Studies

Boards of Studies

- Approve recommendations for the termination of contracts for External Examiners

Academic Lead for External Examining

- Approves the termination of the External Examiner appointment on behalf of Education and Student Committee

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