



Dublin International Study Centre

External Examiners Policy

Contents

External Examiners Policy	3
Section One: Policy Purpose and Scope.....	3
Section Two: Appointment of External Examiners	3
Person Specification.....	3
Conflict of Interest.....	4
Term of Office	4
Section Three: Role of the External Examiner	5
Section Four: Induction and Mentoring.....	5
Section Five: Mentoring Arrangements for First-Time External Examiners.....	6
Section Six: Reporting an Quality Assurance Integration	7
Section Seven: Use of Reports.....	8
Section Eight: Payment and Expenses.....	8
Section Nine: Termination and Extension	8
Document Control	9

External Examiners Policy

Section One: Policy Purpose and Scope

1. This policy outlines the procedures and principles for the appointment, role, responsibilities, and management of External Examiners at DISC. It applies to all DISC programmes validated by QQI, particularly the International Foundation Year (IFY), which is aligned with Level 5 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
2. The policy is aligned with:
 - QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
 - QQI Assessment and Standards (Revised 2022)
 - QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes (2017)
 - DISC's Quality Assurance Manual (QAM), particularly Chapters 4, 8, and 12.

Section Two: Appointment of External Examiners

Person Specification

3. External Examiners must:
 - Hold qualifications and/or experience above NFQ Level 5.
 - Demonstrate knowledge of QQI validation criteria, NFQ level descriptors, and standards for FET programmes.
 - Be familiar with QQI-aligned assessment practices and learning outcome-based evaluations.
 - Possess relevant professional or academic expertise.
 - Be fluent in English or have appropriate support in place where applicable.
 - Possess knowledge and understanding of sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance.
 - Possess relevant expertise and competence in the subject areas encompassed by the programme, or parts thereof.
 - Be suitably qualified and have experience in designing and administering a range of assessment tasks relevant to a subject, as well as in implementing assessment procedures.
 - Be familiar with the standard of achievement required for learners to attain a Level 5 award.
 - Aware of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
 - Possess relevant expertise and experience in enhancing the student learning

experience.

- Capable of adhering to all applicable employment legislation, including safeguarding requirements.

Conflict of Interest

4. DISC adheres to QQI's expectations regarding objectivity and independence of External Examiners. External Examiners must not have current or recent affiliations that compromise impartiality (as detailed in QQI's guidelines and DISC's QAM, Section 8.7).
5. DISC does not appoint External Examiners who fall into any of the following categories or circumstances:
 - Member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution (Study Group Ireland Limited) or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners.
 - Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or learner involved with the programme of study.
 - Anyone tasked with assessing colleagues who are enrolled as learners to the programme of study.
 - Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of learners on the programme of study.
 - 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.
 - Former staff or learners of DISC unless a period of five years has elapsed and all learners taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).
 - A substantial collaboration involving related programmes at another institution.
 - The appointment of a new External Examiner from the same department and institution as their predecessor.
 - The appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same institution for the same or cognate programme.

Term of Office

6. External Examiners are nominated by the Centre Director or the Deputy Director of Curriculum and Progression, following an evaluation of applicants against the established appointment criteria. The appointment is subject to the approval of the Academic Board.
7. The standard term of office for an External Examiner is typically four years, with the

possibility of a one-year extension subject to the centre's needs and their performance. Following the completion of the term, a minimum 'cooling off' period of five years must elapse before the examiner may be considered for reappointment. This ensures objectivity, prevents overfamiliarity, and supports the integrity of the External Examiner process. External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

Section Three: Role of the External Examiner

8. External Examiners ensure:
 - Assessments align with NFQ Level 5 standards and QQI-approved programme learning outcomes.
 - The assessment processes measure learner achievement against the intended learning outcomes.
 - The fair, valid, and reliable assessment of learners, in accordance with QQI's Assessment and Standards.
 - The programme and the achievement of learners are of the appropriate standard to equip learners for their intended degrees.
 - External benchmarking and comparability with national and international provision.
 - Constructive feedback is provided to programme staff to support continuous quality enhancement of the programme.
9. Specific tasks include:
 - Reviewing assessment briefs, sample scripts, and grading.
 - Attending final Programme Assessment Boards (PABs).
 - Submitting formal written reports at the end of each cycle (see Section 7 below).
 - Provide feedback to programme staff on the design of assignments, examination papers and marking schemes.
10. External Examiners do not act as second markers or adjust individual marks, but may request additional samples for QA purposes.

Section Four: Induction and Mentoring

11. All External Examiners:
 - Receive a comprehensive induction, which includes an overview of DISC's academic regulations, the QQI validation framework relevant to the programme,

and guidance on their role and responsibilities. As part of the process, External Examiners are also granted online access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to review teaching and learning materials, assessments and other relevant programme material.

- Are supported by the QAE Office in line with the QAM (Chapter 8.7).
 - Are provided with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Centre and its assessment procedures, and to formally acknowledge their responsibilities prior to their first assessment visit. This familiarisation process includes the provision of key centre information such as academic regulations, guidelines on external examining and assessment, and relevant programme documentation. This may include learner and programme handbooks, examination papers, assignment briefs, and grading criteria, ensuring that the External Examiner (EE) is fully prepared to undertake their role effectively and in accordance with quality assurance standards.
 - Receive a briefing visit (or remote briefing meeting) for a newly appointed External Examiner as soon as possible after appointment, which may include meetings with staff and learners.
 - Will be kept informed of any updates to assessment policies and procedures.
12. All new External Examiners with no prior experience receive mentoring (Section 8.7, QAM).

Section Five: Mentoring Arrangements for First-Time External Examiners

13. Mentoring arrangements should be put in place upon the appointment of a nominee who has not previously served as an External Examiner, and this should be implemented during the first year of their tenure.
14. It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director of Curriculum and Progression to ensure that arrangements are in place in accordance with this policy. The mentoring arrangements should be agreed upon and confirmed by all parties in advance, ensuring that everyone involved is fully informed of the details.
15. Mentors should be experienced External Examiners, typically selected from the existing team at the Centre who have completed at least one year of their tenure. If this is not feasible, a suitably qualified member of senior management should assume this role.
16. The role of the mentor will be to provide a source of advice and guidance to External Examiners new to the role and may include advice and guidance surrounding (but not limited to) the following areas:
- The role and responsibilities of External Examiners.
 - Protocols surrounding assessment, marking and moderation, sampling and communication with DISC.

- Assessment Board procedures and the role of the External Examiner in this process.
 - Writing and submitting annual reports.
 - Developments and current issues relating to Higher Education relevant to external examining.
17. Mentoring arrangements are not intended to supplement External Examiner induction processes and should not, therefore, be viewed as a replacement of such processes.
 18. Mentoring may be carried out virtually, (e.g. by telephone, email and/or remote conferencing), and/or face-to-face.
 19. Currently there is no provision for payment of an additional fee for the role of mentor. However, this position will be kept under review.

Section Six: Reporting an Quality Assurance Integration

20. External Examiners are free to make whatever comments they see fit in exercising their expert judgement and can, if they wish, submit a report on matters of particular importance or sensitivity, for example, by making a confidential report directly to the Centre Director. Individual staff and learners should not be named in the External Examiner annual report as these are circulated (or made available) within the Centre.
21. The informal advice and assistance that External Examiners provide to academic staff concerning the development and delivery of their provision, forms an invaluable element in the ongoing process of quality improvement and critical self-analysis of the academic curriculum. External Examiners are also required to report formally in writing using a standard template. The report must be submitted to the Deputy Director of Curriculum and Progression no later than four weeks after the final assessment board (PAB) and, where possible, in electronic format. The template is distributed electronically to External Examiners at or before the assessment board meeting.
22. External Examiners must:
 - 1) Submit reports within four weeks of the final PAB using the prescribed template.
 - 2) The reports should include commentary on:
 - Standards against NFQ Level 5 descriptors.
 - Alignment with QQI validation criteria.
 - Effectiveness of assessment processes.
 - Student performance and progression.
23. These reports feed directly into:
 - Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs);
 - The Centre Action Plan (CAP);

- DISC's quality assurance cycle (QAM Chapter 12).

Section Seven: Use of Reports

24. Reports are reviewed by the Academic Board and the Quality Committee.
25. Formal responses are issued to examiners, including actions taken or justifications where recommendations are not adopted.
26. Reports are anonymised and may be shared with learner representatives through governance structures (QAM Chapter 9.4).

Section Eight: Payment and Expenses

27. External Examiners receive a standard annual fee and reimbursement for necessary travel and accommodation. Payment is conditional on timely submission of a satisfactory annual report.

Section Nine: Termination and Extension

28. Appointments may be terminated early due to illness, resignation, or non-fulfilment of duties. Extensions of one year may be granted to ensure continuity (QAM Chapter 8.7.5).

Document Control

Document name	External Examiner Policy		
Document owner	Deputy Director – Curriculum & Progression		
Approved by	Academic Board		
Approval date	March 2026		
Next review date	June 2026		
Version	1.0		
Policy applies to	DISC staff and External Examiners		
Related documents			
Version	Date	Update by	Details