

STUDY GROUP ISCs UK & EUROPE

External Examiners Policy

Person specification

Study Group appoints external examiners who can show appropriate evidence of the following:

- i. knowledge and understanding of sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- 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 professional, statutory or regulatory bodies
- 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. comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate.

Conflicts of interest

Study Group does not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- i. member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution (Study Group) or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;¹
- ii. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;

¹ However, if the nominee is from another partner HEI in the network, an appointment can be made if the nominee works within a department of that institution that *does not receive students* from its ISC partner.

- 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 department in the same institution;
- ix. the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution for the same or cognate programme.

Terms of office

- a. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will (normally) be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.
- b. An external examiner may be *reappointed* in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- c. External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

Nomination of external examiners is by the Head of Centre, Centre Director or Head of Programmes following evaluation of applicants against the criteria for appointment. Appointment is subject to the approval of Academic Board and endorsement by the Academic Management Board (or equivalent) if expressly required under the relevant schedule of the partnership agreement. (See approval procedure below).

External Examiner Role

External examiners specifically ensure that:

- a. the academic standard for each programme and programme element is set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged in accordance with relevant external benchmarks;
- b. the assessment processes measure student achievement against the intended learning outcomes and are fair and equitably operated;
- c. the programmes and the achievements of students are of the appropriate standard to equip them for their intended degrees;
- d. programme staff receive expert external, independent opinion that can be used to assure the standards and enhance the quality of the programmes.

To carry out these roles, external examiners undertake the following tasks:

- a. provide feedback to programme teams on the design of assignments, examination papers and marking schemes;

- b. attend (either in person or remotely as required), as a minimum, the final Assessment Board(s) – PAB(s) – to provide advice, and to endorse the collective decisions of the Board;
- c. review a sample of assessed work. External examiners do not act as second markers and will not be used to reconcile differences between internal markers. It will not be appropriate for External Examiners to recommend adjustments to individual marks awarded in a sample of work. However, the External Examiner may ask to see a further set of marked assessments if this is necessary for effective quality assurance;
- d. submit a report in the prescribed format at the end of each cycle, which will be shared with staff.

External examiners' reports comment, analyse and reflect on the standards and quality of programmes as determined by student performance and the appropriateness of the assessment process to judge achievement of learning outcomes. External Examiners will report on:

- a. whether the standards set for the programme are appropriate with regard to the relevant external reference points;
- b. the comparability of standards with similar programmes offered by other institutions;
- c. the standards of student performance in assessments for those programmes they have been appointed to examine;
- d. the extent to which the processes for assessment and the determination of marks are sound and have been fairly conducted by the Assessment Board;
- e. the extent to which the recommendations of the Programme Assessment Board's Sub-committees are fairly taken into account;
- f. whether recommendations and action points in previous external examiner reports have been addressed and quality enhanced accordingly;
- g. any strengths and distinctive, innovative features of programmes of study
- h. whether sufficient evidence was received for the external examiner role to be fulfilled. (Where evidence was insufficient, details are provided)
- i. any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body
- j. their experience during their term of office (in final report only)

Approval procedure

1. The Head of Centre, Head of Programmes or Centre Director (or equivalent) will approach the proposed nominee. It is important that the requirements of the appointment are clearly described, including an indication of the expected workload. The nomination form is completed and appropriate signatures secured.
2. Nominations are approved by Academic Board with subsequent endorsement by AMB (or equivalent) if applicable. Approval by Academic Board Chair's action is permitted in cases where particular expediency is necessary.
3. The Centre (or College) will be responsible for informing the nominee of the outcome of the nomination and for issuing an appointment letter and agreement for signing (the Provider has issued a template for this), with details of tenure, areas of examining duty and related administrative matters. These documents will be accompanied by relevant Centre/College regulations and procedures, and all relevant module descriptors, programme specifications and any subject benchmark statements. A record of the appointment will be held in the Centre/College and by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Office who, on an annual basis, will submit a current external examiner log to Academic Board.
4. The agreement, (the template for which has been approved by HR, Legal and Academic Board), is issued to the external examiner detailing responsibilities, reporting commitments, fees and other payments.

Changes to an External Examiner appointment

- An External Examiner appointment may be extended by no more than one year, by the agreement of Academic Board. A rationale for such a proposal should be presented.

Premature termination of appointment

- Under certain circumstances, the appointment of an External Examiner may be terminated before the completion of his or her period of office. Premature termination may occur in the following instances:

Reason for Termination	Action
Serious illness	In consultation with the External Examiner
Resignation of the External Examiner	It is expected that the External Examiner will give the Centre/College reasonable notice of intention to resign to allow sufficient time for a suitable replacement to be found. External Examiner resignations are reported to Academic Board and, depending on circumstances, may need to be the subject of an escalation to the Provider.
Changes in the programme or programme structure which renders the appointment no longer applicable	<p>The Head of Centre/Centre Director (or Head of Programmes) will make a recommendation to Academic Board. If it supports the recommendation, Academic Board will terminate the appointment. The Head of Centre/Centre Director (or Head of Programmes) will notify the External Examiner, specifying the reasons for the termination and all records will be amended accordingly, in line with GDPR requirements.</p> <p>Where changes in the programme render the appointment no longer applicable, the Centre/College will give the External Examiner reasonable notice as far as possible.</p> <p>Where duties have not been fulfilled, it is expected that there will be documented evidence of steps taken by the Centre/College to address identified problems. In this case and for unprofessional conduct or irretrievable breakdown, the Centre/College reserves the right to terminate the appointment immediately.</p>
Non-fulfilment of External Examiner's duties, such as failure to provide annual reports or persistent non-attendance (either in person or remotely) at assessment boards	
Unprofessional conduct	
Irretrievable breakdown of relationship with programme teaching teams such as to disadvantage students on the programme.	

Induction of External Examiners

7. The QAE Office will arrange an annual External Examiners Induction webinar to take place in advance of the start of the academic year.
8. In addition, the Centre/College will arrange 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 students.
9. Opportunities will be provided to enable External Examiners to familiarise themselves with the Centre/College and its assessment procedures, and to agree their responsibilities, prior to the first assessment visit / remote attendance. The familiarisation process will include providing the EE with institutional information such as regulations, external examining and assessment guidelines and programme documentation, for example, student and programme handbooks, examination papers / assignment briefs and grade criteria.
10. Where programmes, pathways or modules are delivered fully online, VLE-based or blended, External Examiners will be provided with access to relevant learning materials on the online or VLE platform.
11. Support provided by the Centre/College will include regular updates on assessment policy and procedures, as necessary.

Mentoring arrangements for first-time External Examiners

12. Mentoring arrangements should be put in place upon the appointment of a nominee who has not undertaken an External Examiner role previously (at any institution) and should take place during the first year of their tenure.
13. It is the responsibility of the Centre/College to ensure that arrangements are in place in accordance with this policy, in a timely manner, that agreement has been confirmed from all parties in advance and that all parties are aware of the details of the arrangements.
14. Mentors should be experienced existing External Examiners and will normally be one of the existing team of External Examiners at the Centre/College who have completed a minimum of one year of their tenure. Where this is not possible, a suitable member of senior Centre/College staff should undertake the role.
15. 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 the Centre / College / Study Group;
 - 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.
16. Mentoring may be carried out virtually, (e.g. by telephone, email and/or remote conferencing), and/or face-to-face.

17. Mentoring arrangements are intended to supplement External Examiner induction processes and should not, therefore, be viewed as a replacement of such processes.
18. Currently there is no provision for payment of an additional fee for the role of mentor. However, this position will be kept under review.

External Examiner meetings with students

19. External Examiners are encouraged to meet with students, as it is considered good practice. As such, Centres/Colleges will take all reasonable steps to afford External Examiners the opportunity to meet with relevant students (either in person or remotely). It is not necessary for External Examiners to meet with the whole student body – a representative sample will suffice.
20. Any impression gained by External Examiners at such meetings will have no bearing on Assessment Board proceedings and any reference made by External Examiners to student feedback garnered at such meetings should be anonymised.
21. External Examiners should not be invited to observe taught sessions with students.

Reporting

22. 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 QAE Office 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.
23. 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 QAE Office. Individual staff and students should not be named in the External Examiner annual report as these are circulated (or made available) within the Centre.

Use of External Examiners' reports

24. Full and serious consideration is given to comments and recommendations made in External Examiner reports (by the Centre/College/QAE Team and where appropriate, the Provider). Where practicable and appropriate, immediate action should be taken. Outcomes, including proposed actions, are formally recorded and reported through annual programme review which is an ongoing process of review culminating in the Annual Monitoring Report, with actions reflected in and progressed through the Centre Action Plan.
25. External Examiners will be provided with a considered written response to their comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken by the Centre/College. These responses should be appended to the EE's report in the AMR. Not all recommendations have to be accepted, in which case a reasoned explanation should be provided.

26. The EE's report may be shared with student representatives through the appropriate committee(s).

Payment of External Examiners

Details of fees and expenses

27. External examiners are paid an annual fee of £500². Additionally, the Centre/College will pay expenses incurred for travel, accommodation and subsistence for visits.

28. All claims for expenses should be made at the end of each visit to the Centre/College. The fee will be paid on submission of a satisfactory annual report.

Document Version Control

Document Source		Academic Office	
Authorised to Approve		Academic Board	
Version	Date approved	Update by	Details
1	June 2015	N/A	N/A
2	July 2018	N/A	N/A
3	03/12/2018	Polly Bramhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction of minor typos • Amended deadline for the submission of external examiner annual reports from 6 weeks (following the PAB) to 4 weeks (following the PAB) – to align with instructions in the annual report template.
4	May 2019	Polly Bramhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended name from '<i>External Examining – Expectations & Guidance</i>' to '<i>External Examiners Policy</i>' • Updated nomenclature • Added reference to External Examiner Induction webinar (to run annually from Sept 2019)
5	Dec 2019	Polly Bramhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added 'External Examiner meetings with students' section
6	Aug 2020	Polly Bramhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor wording amendments to account for possible programme delivery and EE involvement at distance. • Inclusion of clause re providing EEs with access to learning materials on the relevant online / VLE platform, where appropriate. • Minor amendments to wording to improve accuracy and clarity.
7	Sept 2020	Polly Bramhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of 'Mentoring arrangements for first-time External Examiners' (clauses 12-18)

² While Centres/Colleges set their own fee levels, a guide amount is £500 per annum. This may vary depending, for example, on the number of visits an external is required to make to the Centre/College.

External Examiner Report Form

This form is designed to collect from external examiners the information necessary to confirm the standards of the programme(s) under consideration, the appropriateness of student achievement, and the integrity of the assessment process. It is intended for use with the External Examiner terms of reference. Deadline for the submission of the written reports no later than 4 weeks following the relevant PAB meetings for the September and January cohorts.

Please email your report to AcademicRegistry@studygroup.com, where it will be received by the Quality team. The Quality Team will log and check the report before passing it on to the relevant Centre/College for their attention and response.

The content of your report may be made available to students, so please avoid references to named members of staff or students and do not provide any non-public information about yourself.

If you wish to raise an issue with Study Group senior management immediately and out with this reporting process, please email the above Registry address and mark your communication for the attention of the Academic Registrar/Director of Quality.

External examiner details	
First name(s)	Click here to enter text.
Surname	Click here to enter text.
Title	Click here to enter text.
Title of current post	Click here to enter text.
Current employing institution	Click here to enter text.
Work email address <i>(leave BLANK if you only have a personal email account)</i>	Click here to enter text.
ISC/IC	Click here to enter text.
Pathway programme(s)	Click here to enter text.

Academic standards Please list the full title of each programme of study for which you were appointed. For each programme, please indicate whether:	
(a) you are satisfied that the threshold standards set for RQF level 3 / FHEQ level 4 or 6 (Delete as appropriate) are appropriate and have been met;	
(b) you are satisfied that the achievement of students for each Pathway programme are comparable with that at other institutions with which you are familiar.	
Pathway programme: Click here to enter text.	Threshold standards are appropriate Yes or No Student achievement is comparable Yes or No
Pathway programme: Click here to enter text.	Threshold standards are appropriate Yes or No Student achievement is comparable Yes or No
Pathway programme: Click here to enter text.	Threshold standards are appropriate Yes or No Student achievement is comparable Yes or No
Pathway programme: Click here to enter text.	Threshold standards are appropriate Yes or No Student achievement is comparable Yes or No
Pathway programme: Click here to enter text.	Threshold standards are appropriate Yes or No Student achievement is comparable Yes or No
If you answered 'no' to any of the above sections, or have any concerns about the standards or student achievement, please comment here and indicate any improvements you consider necessary: Click here to enter text.	
Please comment on any concerns you may have about the standards of individual modules or assessments, and indicate any improvements you consider necessary: Click here to enter text.	
Please comment on the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s) and level of award, in relation to FHEQ level 4/6 level 3 / RQF level 3 (delete as appropriate) where appropriate: Click here to enter text.	
Please comment on the appropriateness of the assessment strategy for the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) and the level of award: Click here to enter text.	
Please comment on the achievement of students in relation to their peers on comparable programmes at other institutions: Click here to enter text.	
Please comment on whether the assessment processes have measured student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) and have been conducted in line with the assessment regulations: Click here to enter text.	

<p>Quality of learning opportunities</p> <p>Please comment on the way in which the design of the curriculum enables students to attain the programme's intended learning outcomes:</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Please comment on examples of good practice and innovation that you have identified in relation to learning, teaching, and assessment:</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Please suggest any areas for improvement that could enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students, including any recommended improvements to the learning materials on the online / VLE platform, (where appropriate):</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>

<p>Administrative arrangements</p>
<p>Did you receive all the necessary information on the programme(s) of study and component modules?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Did you receive sufficient evidence of intended assessment patterns and instruments to agree the appropriateness of the assessment strategy for each module?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p> <p>Were you able to comment on the assessments set for students?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Did you receive sufficient material to form a view of whether internal marking properly assessed student performance against appropriate standards?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Did you receive appropriate access to non-written assessment and/or any live assessment events?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Did you receive an appropriate opportunity to meet with students (either in person or remotely)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>

<p>Are you satisfied that the PAB meeting was conducted effectively?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are you satisfied that accurate information and appropriate opportunity for discussion were provided?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are you satisfied that any issues raised in previous reports have been considered appropriately by the centre/college?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Any comments: Click here to enter text.</p>

<p>Newly appointed external examiners</p> <p>Please comment on the ISC's arrangements for your appointment and briefing:</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>
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<p>External examiners completing a term of office this year</p> <p>Please provide an overview on developments during your term of office:</p> <p>Click here to enter text.</p>

Thank you for serving as an external examiner and for submitting your report.

ISC/IC actions:	
Report received by ISC/IC	Click here to enter date.
Report sent to University	Click here to enter date.
ISC's response sent to external examiner	Click here to enter date.
Report sent to Registry	Click here to enter the date

Template Version Control

Document Source		Academic Office	
Authorised to Approve		Academic Board	
Version	Date approved	Update by	Details
1	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	N/A
2	Aug 2020	Polly Bramhall (SQO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addition of requirement to include any recommended improvements to learning materials on online / VLE platforms, where appropriate.• Minor amendments to wording to improve clarity.