

Guidance IG(ii)

Criteria for the approval of external examiners – supplementary information

- (a) An external examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate to the level of the field/subject area to be examined.

Both the level and the subject of the examiner's qualifications should generally match what is to be examined in the field/subject area.

- (b) An external examiner should have appropriate standing, expertise and experience to maintain comparability of standards.

Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- the present (or last, if retired) post and place of work
- the range and scope of experience across higher education/professions
- current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the field of study concerned

- (c) An external examiner should have enough recent external examining or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area.

If the proposed examiner has no previous external examiner experience at the appropriate level, the application should be supported by either:

- other external examiner experience
- extensive internal examining experience
- other relevant and recent experience likely to support the external examiner role

If an external has no previous external examining experience in a UK HEI institution but is joining an experienced examiner (team), the new examiner will be given additional support in the first year of appointment. This will take the form of a mentoring arrangement with an experienced external examiner and will be a condition of the approval of the appointment by the EEAB. The new examiner will be required to attend one of the University's induction days and during local induction, by the Faculty, will be invited to share contact details with the mentor to ensure appropriate support is available. The new examiner will be informed of these requirements within the appointment letter.

The EEAB will also approve additional duties for the experienced external examiner to carry out the role of mentor, for one year only. The mentor will be required to attend the relevant assessment boards with the new examiner. The experienced examiner will be informed of these requirements within the additional duties letter and will receive an additional fee. The faculty will also be required to liaise with the mentor on these arrangements and to share contact details of the new external examiner.

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- (d) External examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that the field/subject area benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.

There should not be:

- more than one examiner from the same institution in the team of external examiners, except in a complex scheme, involving a very large number of discrete subject areas
- reciprocal external examining between fields or departments in two institutions
- replacement of an external examiner by an individual from the same institution

There should not normally be:

- an external examiner from the same cognate area, in an institution, which has been a source of examiners for the same team or a team for a cognate subject/study in the recent past (normally five years)

- (e) Examiners should not be over-extended by their external examining duties.

The examiner should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examiner appointments.

If the examiner appears to exceed this norm, the proposer must provide supporting arguments, for example, that the phasing of assessments alleviates the workload during an academic session.

- (f) There should be an appropriate balance and expertise in the team of external examiners to ensure that account is taken of the academic range of the field/subject area and the need, as appropriate, for professional, industrial and other contributions.

The external examining experience in the team as a whole must be sufficient and wide ranging.

The phasing of appointments to the team should be structured to ensure continuity.

- (g) External examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the institution which might compromise objectivity.

Over the last five years, any proposed new examiner should not have been:

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- a member of staff, a governor, a student, or a relative of a member of staff or a student in relation to the field/subject area
- an examiner on a cognate course in the institution

The proposed examiner should not be:

- personally associated with the sponsorship of students
 - required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the field/subject area
 - in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the course
 - likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation
- (h) External examiners should have appropriate experience and knowledge of UK Higher Education (teaching and assessing on UK HE awards).
- (i) External examiners must be conversant in English and also (where applicable) in the language of tuition and assessment. Where an examiner is required to speak a foreign language, this must be stated in Schedule 1 of the Institutional Agreement.
- (j) For franchised provision, the external examiner(s) will usually be the same as for the in-house provision and/or the other provision in the network, to enable comparability of standards across the provision. For validated provision, a dedicated external examiner will usually be appointed.
- (k) External Examiners must be eligible to work in the UK and therefore all new examiners will be required to provide confirmation of their status, prior to appointment.

Single external examiners and teams

- 1 Individuals with no previous external examining experience are welcomed by the University provided they bring with them other relevant experience. However, inexperienced external examiners will normally only be appointed if they can join a team of experienced external examiners and be mentored by an experienced external examiner for the first year of appointment.
- 2 Wherever possible, the University appoints at least two external examiners to a full field/assessment board and welcomes the appointment of practitioner external examiners as well as academic appointees. In modular schemes, which may have complex, tiered, assessment board arrangements, one external examiner may be associated with each MAB across a range of closely related subjects, each with a MAB and all reporting to a single PAB.

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The appropriate balance of academic and practitioner external examiners will be considered on an individual basis for each field.

- 3 The division of responsibilities within an external examiner team must be clearly defined at the time of appointment and must be made clear to the team members in writing. The main considerations should be:
- the external examiner team should be able to audit the standards of achievement of students for all of the learning outcomes specified for their field/programme of study;
 - practitioner external examiners should have the experience to contribute to academic judgements on professional practice and related matters and on academic standards (eg. from knowledge of the abilities in practice of award holders from similar programmes) and be able to comment on the fairness of assessment schemes and regulations and their implementation. Normally a practitioner external examiner with no prior experience of external examining or working as an academic in an HEI should work alongside an experienced external examiner for at least one year;
 - the external examiner team should have the breadth of experience to be able to audit procedures and processes as well as standards.