

Note of Guidance for Heads of School and Research Institutes:

Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate External Examiners

The external examiner system has operated in the University and the UK Higher Education sector for many years. The University's arrangements for external examiners conforms to the *QAA Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B7: External Examining*. The role of external examiner is considered as a very important part of quality enhancement and assurance to maintain academic standards at the appropriate level and to ensure that student performance is properly judged. The external examiner is a key member of the Board of Examiners and is consulted on, and may influence decisions on, course or programme structure and content. The external examiner moderates the examination process and submits an annual report, for which a fee is paid. External examiners are appointed for all taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and for research degree candidates. Specific criteria must be satisfied for appointment.

External examiners are appointed for a period of four years. The following information outlines the process of appointing a new external examiner and what action is required to be taken by the School.

Appointment of External examiners

Replacement

- When an external examiner's appointment is about to end, Senate Office will send the school/research institute a reminder that a new external examiner will need to be appointed. This is done **nine months** prior to the end of appointment date.
- Schools should approach possible candidates on an informal basis. The proposed examiner should be a member of academic staff in a higher education institution and have undertaken a normal range of teaching and examining duties for the last seven years. Please ensure that all potential candidates meet the following criteria:

Person specification

Degree-awarding bodies appoint external examiners who can show appropriate evidence of the following:

- knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of;
- academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;

- competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- 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;
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- 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);
- meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
- awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

The following criteria should be clarified prior to submitting a nomination:

- The nominee should not have been an external examiner for any undergraduate or taught postgraduate programme/course in the University of Glasgow at any time during the **five years prior** to the date of appointment.
- The nominee should not have been a member of staff of the University of Glasgow within the five years prior to the date of appointment.
- At the proposed date of appointment, the nominee should not hold an external examinership for undergraduate or taught postgraduate degrees in more than one other institution.
- At the date of appointment, no member of staff of the nominating School(s) should be an examiner for an undergraduate or taught postgraduate programme/course in the nominee's department/school.

If a candidate does not meet all the criteria listed above, please **contact Senate Office** for further advice.

If the Nominee agrees, the Head of School/Research Institute should complete the nomination form [EE1](#) for replacement or new appointments and submit it to Senate Office for approval. Please note that it is essential that the appropriate Right To Work documentation is attached at the nomination stage. Nominations which are submitted without this documentation will not be processed.

Once Senate Office approves the nomination, a letter of appointment is sent to the external examiner

Procedural

Under the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B7: External Examining schools and institutes are required to include the names, position and institution of their external examiners in module or programme information provided to students. External examiners are advised of this in their letter of appointment; however, schools/institutes should advise external examiners of where this information will be included. School/institutes should ensure that all students are made aware that it would be unacceptable to contact an External examiner directly. Similarly, schools/institutes should advise all their external examiners that any direct contact from students should be referred to the school/institute.

During an external examiner's appointment, the school/institute should:

- Maintain regular contact with external examiners – let them know what is expected of them and what they should expect to receive from the school/research institute and notification of key dates;
- Seek approval of any changes to courses;
- Respond quickly to any queries and/or comments;
- If the school/research institute is experiencing difficulty in contacting the external examiner or there is a lack of response from the appointee, contact the Senate Office for advice.

Examination Papers

Send draft examination papers to external examiners in sufficient time to enable them to propose any changes and/or time for discussion of proposed changes where necessary. Please check for typographical errors, etc., before sending to the external examiner. Where appropriate, solutions and a marking scheme for each question should accompany exam papers;

Board of Examiners' Meetings

Advise externals of date for Board of Examiners **as soon as possible**. Please note that, in accordance with the University Calendar [16.64](#), **all** examiners in respect of meetings of the Board of Examiners should attend in person **at least one meeting** of the Board per academic session.

Please also see [16.64](#) for guidance on Exam Board procedures where, exceptionally, the external cannot be present.

Scrutiny of Work

Consult on timetable for scrutiny of work – send sample scripts and other work to external examiners in advance of the Board of Examiners. External examiners should agree, in advance, with school/research institutes what constitutes an appropriate sample. They should receive sufficient evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent. This will normally require external examiners to be sent scripts and other work from the top, middle and bottom of the range, and, for Honours, all scripts of candidates assessed internally as First Class, borderline or fail;

Consider pro-forma identifying information being sent, including proof of marking/double-marking and commentary on how marks were reached (e.g. signatures of markers and commentary sheet);

Induction

Schools/institutes should ensure that new external examiners are invited to attend an induction session with the subject area on the day of the Board of Examiners meeting to discuss relevant information/issue related to the subject.

External examiners can access information pertinent to their role via the Senate Office webpages.

Changes to Appointment

For changes to an external examiner's remit or tenure of appointment, complete form [EE2](#). Please note that the tenure of an appointment can be extended by a further year only in exceptional circumstances.

External Examiner Reports

External examiners are required to provide an annual report each Session for the courses/programmes that have run (**please advise Senate Office if courses/programmes are not running or have been withdrawn**). External examiner Reports should be submitted using the University's on-line report submission system. Further details on this process are outlined in the letter of appointment.

When reports are submitted via the on-line system, copies are automatically sent to the school/institute administrator for forwarding to relevant members of staff within the school/institute. Senate Office staff will scrutinise the report and will contact the school/research institute by email if a school/research institute response is required to any concerns/issues that are raised. The response should be sent to the Senate Office (senate.external-examiners@glasgow.ac.uk) for consideration and forwarding to the external examiner, if appropriate. School/institute responses may be submitted using the [Response pro-forma](#) but this is not compulsory.

Reports are categorised using the following criteria:

Very satisfactory
Satisfactory
Satisfactory but some general comments made will prove helpful to course development. The school/research institute would wish to respond as part of the annual course monitoring process. Towards the end of the year the examiner should receive, for information, a copy of the annual course monitoring report.
Concerns have been raised that require attention. The school/research institute is asked to discuss the issue at the School Learning & Teaching Committee and report to the Senate Office within three months (8 wks in Semester 2) any action taken or the reasons for not taking action. The school/research institute's response is copied to the external examiner.
There is one further category, "spcl", which accompanies the main categories if a specific issue has arisen that applies at University or College level and generally lies outwith the school/research institute's responsibility.

We hope the above guidance will be helpful, but if you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact Lesley Fielding (lesley.fielding@glasgow.ac.uk) in the Senate Office.