



External Examiner Policy

Criteria for the Selection and Appointment of External Examiners for Higher Education programmes

Truro and Penwith College strive to make scrupulous use of external examiners to ensure a clear maintenance of academic standards for all higher education provision.

All HEFCE funded Higher Education courses have an External Examiner (EE). Appointment and tenure of an EE follows the College and the Awarding Body's Regulations both are underpinned by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B7: External examining.

The College's Regulations (and the regulations of external bodies, where appropriate) require External Examiners to be involved with all examinations and other forms of assessment which contribute to the students' final awards. External Examiners must therefore be involved in assessments of pre-final stages of programmes if there is a carry forward mark to the final award.

Normally one External Examiner will be appointed for each higher education subject area at the College. The range of modules for which s/he is to be responsible should not normally exceed 360 credits in any one academic year.

Criteria for the selection and appointment of an External Examiner

When making the nomination of an External Examiner, the Programme Leader will ensure that:

- The nominated External Examiners for a programme of study leading to an award should:
 - ❖ have adequate experience in externality and examining
 - ❖ have academic and professional expertise in required subject area
 - ❖ be from a different higher education institution
 - ❖ have had no working relationship with the College or any teaching member at the College for five years prior to the appointment

- the nominee has achieved academic or professional qualifications in an appropriate subject and at a level appropriate for the modules/programme of study to be examined.¹
- the nominee is of an appropriate academic and/or professional standing to command the respect of colleagues and to maintain the comparability of academic standards in the context of higher education. Retirees can be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.
- the nominee has sufficient recent experience of examining at the required level, preferably including experience as an external examiner, or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area concerned. For example, an external examiner for a Foundation degree should be capable of assessing whether a student is capable of proceeding to level 6 and therefore should have experience of teaching and assessing at level 6. Information on proposed arrangements for the induction and support of an inexperienced nominee should be included with the nomination form.
- the nominee has knowledge of standards of academic assessment in the UK sufficient to make the required academic judgement about comparability of standards with other UK HE institutions. Potential nominees who do not have experience of delivering and assessing in UK HE should be briefed in advance of this requirement and their attention drawn to the relevant elements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- the nominee has expertise in the enhancement of the student learning experience and, where appropriate, awareness of modern developments in the design and delivery of the flexible curriculum. Where appropriate, the nominee meets the criteria set out by the professional or accrediting body.
- External Examiners are drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that individual subjects or programmes of study have the benefit of wide ranging external scrutiny. Normally there must not be:
 - ❖ reciprocal external examining between subjects or programmes or departments in two institutions (this means that an external examiner should not be appointed from another institution where a member of the College's staff is serving as an external examiner for a cognate programme);
 - ❖ replacement of an External Examiner by an individual from the same department in the same institution;
 - ❖ an External Examiner from an institution in which the subject area concerned has been the source of examiners in the recent past (normally five years).
- the nominee will not have such other extensive examining commitments that they cannot properly discharge their duties in respect of this College.

¹ At least the level of the qualification being examined.

- the nominee will be impartial in judgement and over the last five years the nominee normally must not have been:
 - ❖ a member of staff², a governor, a student or a near relative or partner of a member of staff in relation to the programme of studies or who had a relationship with any of the above;
 - ❖ an examiner for another cognate subject/programme in the College;
 - ❖ involved as an External Examiner for the subject or programme of study when it was approved by another validating body;

and over the last two years must not have been:

- ❖ involved in a close research collaboration with a member of staff associated with the programme/subject area;

in addition, the nominee must not be:

- ❖ personally associated with the sponsorship of students from the subject/programme;
- ❖ required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the modules or programme of study;
- ❖ in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the modules or programme of study³;
- ❖ likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation.

- An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since the end of their appointment.
- The nominee should be fluent in English and, where the programme is not delivered and assessed in English, fluent in the relevant language(s).
- The Programme Team Leader is responsible for ensuring that any potential intellectual property difficulties, such as might arise from the need for commercial confidentiality, are resolved prior to appointment.
- If the nominee does not meet any one of the above criteria a supporting rationale must be provided with the nomination form.
- An External Examiner must immediately notify Sarah Shobrook (PTL for Higher Education) in writing of any material change in circumstances which would lead to a breach of the conditions of appointment outlined above.

² A former member of staff or student may not be appointed unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).

³ A nominee may be involved in the recruitment of graduates, some of whom may be graduates of Truro and Penwith College. If this is a shared responsibility with other colleagues, however, this would not constitute 'significant' influence on the future employment of students.

Criteria for the selection and appointment of Award External Examiners

- The principal role of the Award External Examiner is to ensure that the College's regulations are being implemented consistently, fairly and in line with national standards and expectations for such processes. The Award External Examiner therefore needs to be fully conversant with the College's regulations and standard regulatory policies and practices across the sector.
- The Award External Examiner may also be a member of the appropriate group of Programme External Examiners. Nominees should be drawn from an academic background relevant to the discipline in which the awards being considered reside in order to ensure those taking on this role are appropriately qualified to make a judgement on the academic standard of the award and on student performance at award level.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINERS
FOR MODULES AND TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY**

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE

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EXTERNAL EXAMINERS FOR TAUGHT MODULES AND PROGRAMMES

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

External Examiners are essential to the academic well-being of the College. Their involvement ensures that...

- ◆ Standards are appropriate by reference to The UK Quality Code for Higher Education subject benchmark statements, the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the programme specification as per the awarding body requirements
- ◆ The assessment process measures student achievement against the assessed learning outcomes
- ◆ The assessment process is in line with the College's Assessment **Policy** and the Assessment policy of the awarding body where applicable
- ◆ The College's higher education awards are comparable in standard to awards of the same level conferred by other UK HE institutions
- ◆ The assessment process is operated fairly and equitably and in accordance with College and Awarding Body Regulations.

External Examiners must be appointed for all programmes leading to a higher education award delivered at the College. All of the College's programmes operate within a standard modular framework. For such programmes the College operates a two-tier assessment process which is reflected in the College's definition of the separate roles of Programme and Award External Examiners.

The **Programme External Examiner** is primarily concerned with the standards of assessment on a specific programme (the subject) irrespective of the study programme(s) or award(s) to which the modules are attached. The Programme External Examiner will be asked to comment on assessment processes, and on the standard, content and development of the modules within a programme. S/he will be a member of the Subject Assessment Panel which confirms or modifies module marks and ensures that the students are being assessed in accordance with the assessment programme and the intended learning outcomes for the modules.

Programme External Examiners do not attend Award Assessment Boards (unless they are required to do so by a professional accrediting body). Nor do they see or comment on student profiles. Their focus is on the standards in the programme.

The **Award External Examiner** acts as the "critical friend" of the Award Assessment Board, to ensure that decisions on progression or awards for students are made in accordance with the assessment regulations, and that justice is done to the individual student, taking account of any recommendations resulting from prior consideration of extenuating circumstances or assessment offences. For each named award with which s/he is associated, the Award

External Examiner will be asked to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not the College is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards and about the comparability of standards of student performance at award level with similar awards in other UK institutions with which s/he is familiar. S/he will be a member of the appropriate Award Assessment Board(s), which makes decisions on progression and awards on the basis of the module marks confirmed by the Subject Assessment Panel.

The Award External Examiner may also be a member of the appropriate group of Programme External Examiners.

2. THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRAMME EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

A Programme External Examiner can expect the College to

- ◆ provide sufficient information at the time of nomination to enable him/her to make an informed decision as to whether to accept the appointment, including the honorarium payable for the appointment
- ◆ provide briefing packs, with full access to all relevant documentation, and offer appropriate induction (including an explanation of the College's responsibilities for equality and diversity)
- ◆ clarify at the time of appointment the range of modules within the programme for which s/he is to be responsible (which should not normally exceed 360 credits)
- ◆ agree dates of meetings of Subject Assessment Panels with all the External Examiners well in advance
- ◆ agree with the Programme External Examiner(s) the means by which they are to be offered the opportunity to comment on draft examination papers
- ◆ provide draft assessments in accordance with those procedures, in sufficient time for the Programme External Examiner(s) to comment
- ◆ agree with the Programme External Examiner(s) the means by which they will be able to scrutinise assessment tasks in order to confirm (or otherwise) that the assessment strategy is appropriately enacted in the questions set and invite them to provide formal confirmation of this at the time of the Subject Assessment Panel meeting
- ◆ agree with the Programme External Examiner(s) procedures by which sample assessed work, including the criteria for sampling and the means by which material will be made available (eg by post in advance of the Panel, at the time of an interim visit, and/or in the College shortly before a Panel)
- ◆ include marks and appropriate comments on, or with, all scripts, projects and dissertations submitted to a Programme External Examiner for consideration
- ◆ report any case in which there has been a problem with an assessment affecting or potentially affecting a group of students (eg an unseen

examination paper has apparently been 'leaked', an examination has been seriously disrupted or students have been issued with conflicting information about a coursework submission date) and consult on appropriate remedial measures

- ◆ report any alleged breach of Assessment Regulations, confirm the means by which it has been investigated, and consult on the recommendations arising from that investigation
- ◆ enable him/her, where necessary, to alter the characteristics of marks distribution and, if there are inconsistencies in marking, to amend marks, provided that all scripts in the 'disputed category' ⁴ have been appropriately reviewed. The College would expect that proposed amendments to marks would be discussed and agreed at the Subject Assessment Panel.
- ◆ refer to the Award Assessment Board (through its Secretary and Chair) any major disagreement on a point of principle between Examiners (whether internal or external) which cannot be resolved.
- ◆ facilitate communication between Programme External Examiners and the Award External Examiner prior to the Award Assessment Board
- ◆ agree the mechanism by which responses will be provided to any issues raised in the annual report of the Programme External Examiner(s) and ensure that any comments from the Programme External Examiner(s) on the response are formally minuted at the Subject Assessment Panel
- ◆ consult him/her about proposed changes to programme-specific assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently registered on the modules for which s/he has responsibility
- ◆ provide a considered and timely response to any report received, outlining any actions that will be taken as a result.

⁴ External Examiners are not expected to double mark individual scripts or assignments. If a Programme External Examiner believes that standards of marking overall, or within a particular classification, are inappropriate, s/he may propose that all marks in that category be revised up or down, as the case might be. It would be expected that such a recommendation would be discussed with the module team in advance of the Subject Assessment Panel. If a Programme External Examiner, in reviewing sample scripts, identifies concerns about marks in individual scripts, they may not be revised unless the examiner also reviews comparable marks across the cohort (ie the issue may relate to classification boundaries, in which case all scripts or assignments falling within one or two marks of the boundary should be reviewed). Again, the College would expect that the issue would be discussed with the markers in advance of the Panel. Programme External Examiners would be expected to notify the **Subject Assessment Panel Chair** of any disagreement about marks in advance of their visit to the College or the Subject Assessment Panel.

The College will expect a Programme External Examiner to

- ◆ take up his/her appointment in full knowledge of College and Awarding Body regulations, policies and procedures and undertake to operate within them
- ◆ ensure that the standard of the programme assessment is maintained
- ◆ approve the assessment scheme for all modules contributing to a final award or classification. This will normally include approval of the form of coursework assessment and the form and content of examination papers, together with accompanying marking schemes
- ◆ confirm (or otherwise) that the assessment strategy is appropriately enacted in the questions set
- ◆ ensure that the assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved regulations for the modules/programmes of study
- ◆ ensure that students have been assessed fairly in accordance with the syllabus and regulations for the programme of study and have fulfilled the objectives of the module or programme at the relevant standard
- ◆ discuss with the subject team the types of disabilities within the current cohort and the adjustments made to support those students, including provision for alternative/inclusive assessments
- ◆ raise with the subject team other appropriate equality and diversity issues (covering disability, race and gender) relevant to the assessment of students
- ◆ review an appropriate sample of work submitted for summative assessment (usually encompassing a sample within each range of marks and a sample of project/dissertation work) and agree with the subject team the means by which that sample is to be selected
- ◆ discuss with the subject team any previously undetected suspected assessment/examination offence(s) discovered during the review of assessed work
- ◆ agree with the subject team an appropriate method for adjusting module marks as and when necessary (noting that the College does not have a policy on scaling or norm referencing of marks)
- ◆ be a full and equal member of the Subject Assessment Panel (which will also comprise the programme team leader or equivalent as Chair) ⁵
- ◆ attend meetings of the relevant Subject Assessment Panel at which consideration is being given to assessments which contribute to a final award.
- ◆ sign a declaration form as confirmation of agreement with the marks confirmed by the Subject Assessment Panel.

⁵ The College expects its Subject Assessment Panels to discuss issues fully in order that they can reach decisions by consensus. If an External Examiner disagrees in principle with a proposed decision, s/he should notify the Chair that s/he will be unable to sign the declaration in respect of that decision, so that the Chair can consider deferring the decision until the disagreement has been reviewed on behalf of College Board of Studies for Higher Education.

The Programme External Examiner has the right to...

- ◆ see and moderate all forms of subject assessment, including examination scripts, coursework, continuous assessment, project reports, design work and dissertation in order to fulfil his/her role
- ◆ request sight of the final stage results list for the programme with which s/he is associated
- ◆ raise any concerns arising from the assessments or relating to academic standards with the Chair of the Assessment Panel

The College does not expect a Programme External Examiner to

- ◆ act as a second marker
- ◆ amend the marks of individual students
- ◆ make use of viva voce examinations except where these have been arranged with the subject team in advance as a means of resolving concerns about standards of marking in a module.
- ◆ consider cases of extenuating circumstances (which will be reviewed at the Award Assessment Board)
- ◆ act concurrently as an advisor to a programme team on programme design, or be a member of any panel(s) established to review programmes(s) on which s/he examines.

3 THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AWARD EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

An Award External Examiner can expect the College to...

- ◆ provide sufficient information at the time of nomination to enable him/her to make an informed decision as to whether to accept the appointment, including the honorarium payable for the appointment
- ◆ provide briefing packs, with full access to all relevant documentation, and offer appropriate induction to the College
- ◆ agree dates of meetings of Award Assessment Boards well in advance
- ◆ report on proven examination and assessment offences and the penalties recommended by the Panel/Committee of Investigation
- ◆ involve him/her in discussions of students who may be required to withdraw from a programme because of unsatisfactory progress, academic or professional, or conduct considered to be unethical, unprofessional or dangerous (except where these issues have been resolved through the College Disciplinary Procedure)
- ◆ refer to the Academic Board any major disagreement on a point of principle between Examiners (whether internal or external) which cannot be resolved
- ◆ facilitate communication between Programme External Examiners and the Award External Examiner prior to the Award Assessment Board
- ◆ agree the mechanism by which responses will be provided to any issues raised in the annual report of the Award External Examiner and ensure that any comments from the Award External on the response are formally minuted at the Subject Assessment Panel
- ◆ consult him/her about proposed changes to programme-specific assessment regulations which will directly affect students currently registered on the modules for which s/he has responsibility
- ◆ provide a considered and timely response to any report received, outlining any actions that will be taken as a result.

The College will expect an Award External Examiner to

- ◆ take up his/her appointment in full knowledge of College and Awarding Body regulations, policies and procedures and undertake to operate within them
- ◆ ensure that the Award Assessment Board is conducted in accordance with the approved regulations for the programme(s) of study and that students are treated equitably within those regulations
- ◆ ensure that all relevant extenuating circumstances and assessment offences relating to individual students have been taken into account in reaching decisions
- ◆ be a full and equal member of the Award Assessment Board (which will also comprise the Programme Team Leader for Higher Education, Higher Education Co-ordinator and Awarding Body Representative(s)).

- ◆ attend meetings of the relevant Award Assessment Board at which consideration is being given to progression to the final stage or to conferment of awards
- ◆ provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not the College is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards and about the comparability of standards of student performance at award level with similar awards in other UK institutions with which s/he is familiar
- ◆ act as a conduit for communicating overall good practice and/or concerns from the Programme External Examiners to the Award Assessment Board
- ◆ participate in discussions about the impact of extenuating circumstances bearing in mind the College's and Awarding Body Regulations, and the custom and practice of the Board in question
- ◆ sign a declaration form as confirmation of agreement with the decisions taken and awards conferred by the Award Assessment Board (but see footnote 8 below)
- ◆ provide a report within six weeks of the meeting of the Award Assessment Board, for consideration as part of the required evidence base for annual review
- ◆ formally endorse the results of resits/reassessment, either through her/his presence at the Referred Board or by post/fax. Alternatively, the Award External Examiner may sign a statement indicating that the Referred Assessment Board is authorised to process and confirm results without further consultation.

The Award External Examiner has a right to

- ◆ request sight of the final stage results list for programmes with which they are associated
- ◆ raise any concerns that academic standards are not being maintained, that justice is not being done to the students or that there is any matter of serious concern arising from the assessments with the Chair of the Assessment Board and/or the Programme Team Leader for Higher Education.

The College does **not** expect the Award External Examiner (or Award Assessment Board) to adjust marks agreed by the Subject Assessment Panel.

4. EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

External Examiners have a vital role to play in the monitoring of academic standards and in providing information on outcomes, as demonstrated through assessment.

Every External Examiner is therefore required as a condition of their appointment to complete and submit a report or the documentation required by their Awarding Body.

On receipt of an External Examiner's report Truro and Penwith College will

- save the report
- make copies available to the Senior Management and Team Leader for Higher Education
- make the report available to all members of staff teaching on the programme
- copy Award External Examiners' reports to relevant Programme External Examiners, and vice versa, for information
- send a written response in the format required by the College or the Awarding Body
- ensure that the HE PTL responds directly to issues raised by the Award External Examiner, whether these are programme specific or related to wider matters
- share the full report with students through the appropriate medium and appropriate student/staff committee structures to strengthen student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
- ensure that the report and response are considered by the relevant programme committee/s as part of the evidence base for annual programme review and that the External Examiner is sent a follow up action plan and subsequent updates, if appropriate.

External Examiners should note that if the College receives a request for a report under the Freedom of Information Act, then the report will normally be released, subject to omitting any reference to named individuals and deleting the name and contact details of the examiner concerned.

Individual students or staff should **not** be identified in the report. Examiners should note that where an individual is named in a report, if s/he requests copies of personal information held by the College Data Protection legislation, the College would normally release that information.

An External Examiner's report may have implications for the way in which the programmes are designed and delivered, but it is for the College rather than the External Examiner to consider what changes should be made.

5. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

In line with the relevant indicators of sound practice in Chapter B7: External examining of the QAA Quality Code, the College makes Programme External Examiners' details (name, position and home institution only,) and their report, available to students via the Digital campus. It is, however, made clear to students that they may not initiate contact with Programme External Examiners. If any such contacts are attempted then details, with copies of any correspondence, should be notified to the relevant Quality Administrator, who will liaise with the relevant Team Leader for Higher Education.

6. TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT

Termination of an External Examiner's Contract will follow the College and /or the Awarding Body's Regulations.