

Code: QA005

Title: **External Examiners – Taught Programmes**

Date: 04/12/2014

Approval: AC

**1.0 Purpose**

Assure quality and enhance academic standards of modules, programmes and awards through annual international peer review. *This policy does not cover External Examiners for Research degrees.*

**2.0 Description**

Extern examiners play a vital role in assuring and enhancing academic standards of modules, programmes and awards. While primarily involved in the review of assessment grades and standards, they also provide an important consultative and advisory function in the development of modules and programmes and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Assurance and enhancement of academic standards is best served by international peer-review.  Extern examiners should be appointed from internationally renowned Universities and Institutions.  Successive extern examiners should not be appointed from within the Republic of Ireland nor should successive extern examiners be appointed from the same institution.  Exceptions to these provisions must be clearly and comprehensively communicated when such an exception is being sought.

The recommendation for appointment of emeritus academics should provide details to their continuing connection with a University, or equivalent institution, and their continued currency with developments in the discipline.

Care should be taken in the nomination of all extern examiners that the nomination is made in a timely manner such that, in the event of the nomination for any reason not being approved, sufficient time remains for a suitable alternative nomination to be made. External examiners are required to be present on campus to conduct their examination and participate in the formal Preboard examination process.

2.1 Functions of Extern Examiner

* Assure academic standards and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
* Confirm that standards are comparable to universities internationally
* Assure fairness, validity and rigour of assessment at the University
* Review, moderate and where appropriate adjust grading
* Audit grades, distributions and samples of graded assessments
* Participate in practical, clinical or oral assessments of major projects, dissertations or theses
* Review learning outcomes and assessment techniques for modules and programmes
* Provide feedback on strengths witnessed and recommendations for change
* Audit student feedback process for modules and programmes and actions arising
* Participate in the Preboard examination process

# 2.2 Reports and Action Plans

# The Extern Examiner is required to provide an Extern Examiner Report on his/her findings during the examination process. The Subject Leader must then prepare an Action Plan that responds to reasonable recommendations in the External Examiner Report and copy this plan to the External Examiner and the Head of School.

2.3 Programme Reviews

Every programme in the University is subject to a detailed quality review (typically every five to seven years). Current external examiners may be invited to conduct this quality review as a separate activity to the normal external examination process. Programme review policy is covered by policy: ‘QA006 Taught Programme Reviews’.

**3.0 Responsibilities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Responsibility** |
| Council of Deans: | Owner |
| Subject Leader:  (a.k.a. Discipline Head, Programme Director, Professor, etc.) | Consult with Head of School and Dean of College regarding nomination of external examiners. Coordinate the external examination process. Reviewing External Examiner Report and developing Action Plans. |
| Head of School: | Reviewing Extern Examiner Reports and Action Plans. |
| Dean of College: | Nominating external examiners. Reviewing External Examiner Reports and Action Plans. |
| Standing Committee: | Approval of nominations for Extern Examiner. |
| Examinations Office: | Maintaining database. Corresponding with Externs. Processing Expenses. |
| Quality Office: | Receiving External Examiner Reports, filing and distribution. Preparation of Summary Reports. |

**4.0 Related Documents**

External Examiner Nomination Template

External Examiner Report Template

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**External Examiner Nomination Template**

**PLAIN TEXT EMAIL**

***From:*** *Dean of College****To:***[*roisin.mccormack@nuigalway.ie*](mailto:roisin.mccormack@nuigalway.ie)

***Cc:*** *Subject Leader*

***Subject:*** *External Examiner Nomination*

*Dear Colleague,*

*Following consultation with the subject leader,*

*I would like to recommend the following for appointment as Extern Examiner.*

*Nominated Extern (Title Firstname Lastname):*

*Institution Title:*

*Full Address:*

*Email:*

*Start Date (dd/mm/yyyy):*

*End Date (dd/mm/yyyy):*

*(normally four years)*

*College:*

*School:*

*Subject:*

*(Please be concise about Subject title and use this title on all correspondence)*

*Subject Leader Name:*

*Subject Leader Email:*

*Current Extern (Title Firstname Lastname):*

*Institution Title:*

*(If the proposed external examiner is from within the NUI or is an emeritus academic then state the explicit reasons here for their nomination in accordance with this policy)*

*Yours sincerely etc.*

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**External Examiner Report**

[Remove all text within square brackets in final report]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External Examiner:** | [Title Firstname Lastname] |
| **Subject:** | [Use precise ‘Subject title’ from previous correspondence] |
| **Academic Year:** | [yyyy/yyyy] |
| **Extern Meeting(s) Attended:** | [dd/mm/yyyy] |
| **Date of Report:** | [dd/mm/yyyy] |

*[We very much welcome your views. Please tell us any strengths or best practice you have witnessed and in particular your recommendations on how processes can be improved. Your comments and recommendations will be relayed to the relevant Subject Leader through the relevant Head of School and Dean. Programme directors are then asked to prepare an Action Plan and consult with you prior to your next External Examiner Report.]*

**Strengths**

*[Please list key strengths or good practice that you witnessed, as concise bulleted text. Dialogue, rationale and qualification are not necessary in this report and can be offered verbally to the subject leader if necessary.]*

* …

**Recommendations**

*[Please list key recommendations for changes as concise numbered text. Dialogue, rationale and qualification are not necessary. The subject leader can contact you for any clarification if required.]*

1. …

Continued overleaf…

**Criteria**

*[Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following criteria on a range from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating total agreement and 1 indicating total disagreement. Some criteria may not be relevant or were not addressed, in which case please leave blank. Where satisfaction is below 3, please make recommendations for change (on previous page) or make yourself available for further comment to the Subject Leader.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Modules** | **(1 to 5)** |
| Learning outcomes and content of modules were appropriately well-defined |  |
| Teaching techniques used for modules were appropriate |  |
| Grading of modules was fair and equitable and distribution was appropriate |  |
| Annotation of exam scripts and course work was appropriate |  |
| Laboratory facilities and material for practical and/or clinical assessment were appropriate |  |
| Student feedback was conducted for the modules and was appropriate |  |
| **Programme(s)** |  |
| Learning outcomes and content of programme(s) were appropriately well-defined |  |
| Grade distribution across relevant modules examined in the programme(s) was appropriate |  |
| Level of Failed or Absent candidates does not give cause for concern |  |
| Standards achieved by students were consistent with standards in other universities |  |
| Student feedback was conducted for the programme(s) and was appropriate |  |
| Programme is managed by an active Programme Board |  |
| **Thesis/Projects** |  |
| Thesis guidelines and appropriate supervision were provided for all students |  |
| Standard of thesis reports and effort were consistent with standards in other universities |  |
| **Miscellaneous** |  |
| Adequate access was given to all documentation and paperwork |  |
| Hospitality, meeting rooms and the external examination process was appropriate |  |

**Further Comments**

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[Please email this report to [qualityoffice@nuigalway.ie](mailto:qualityoffice@nuigalway.ie) within five working days of the completion of the work for the academic year. Also remember to complete your expense claim and forward to the Examinations Office, NUI Galway. Please note that expenses cannot be paid until your report has been submitted.

Thank you for your contribution to NUI Galway.]