



Code: QA005  
 Title: **Role of External Examiners – Taught Programmes**  
 Date: 04/12/2019  
 Approval: Academic Council (ACS/19/A5/8.2)

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES RE THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS IN CONSEQUENCE OF COVID-19: SPRING AND SUMMER 2020.

### 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 and are required to be present on campus to conduct their examination and participate in the formal Pre-board examination process.

*Due to the conditions that apply during the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement that external examiners be present on campus is suspended for the period March-September 2020. Module coordinators will make alternative arrangements with existing external examiners to ensure that the academic standards continue to be assured.*

#### 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 Pre-board examination process

#### 2.2 Reports and Action Plans

The Extern Examiner is required to provide an External Examiner Report on his/her findings during the examination process. This report should not make any references to resource requirements. External Examiner Reports are confidential, and must be submitted directly to the Quality Office, NUI Galway and to no other office internally within the University or externally. Reports must be submitted in word format within

five working days of the External Examiners visit to NUI, Galway. Reports will be circulated to relevant stakeholders, e.g. Head of Schools, Deans and Registrar. Heads of Schools are responsible for circulating reports to the relevant subject/discipline leaders or Programme.

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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.

Action plans are discussed at Programme Board meetings or equivalent and must involve the Head of School. Action plans must be incorporated in to the operational plan for the coming year.

All External Examiner reports are reviewed by the Registrar and Deputy President and any recurring issues/common themes arising may be addressed through a thematic quality review.

### 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
Registrar and Deputy President	Owner Review External Examiner reports
Subject Leader: (a.k.a. Discipline Head, Programme Director, Professor, etc.)	Recruit External Examiner and co-ordinate the External Examination process. Consult with Head of School and Dean of College regarding nomination of external examiners. Review External Examiner Reports and developing Action Plans.
Head of School:	Review External Examiner nominations with Subject Leader and Dean. Review External Examiner Reports and Action Plans.
Dean of College:	Approval/Nomination of External Examiners. Review External Examiner Reports and Action Plans.
Standing Committee:	Approve/Decline External Examiner nominations.
Examinations Office:	Correspond with External Examiners, issue initial documentation. Maintain External Examiner internal database. Processing Expenses.
Quality Office:	Receive External Examiner Reports, filing and distribution.

### 4.0 Related Documents

- External Examiner Report Template (attached)
- **QA278** Nomination and Approval of External Examiners - Taught Programmes
- **QA226** Payment of External Examiners Expenses
- Workflow/Process diagram included as *Appendix A* in QA278



## 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]  
**School:**  
**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.]*

<b>Modules</b>	<b>(1 to 5)</b>
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	
<b>Programme(s)</b>	
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	
<b>Thesis/Projects</b>	
Thesis guidelines and appropriate supervision were provided for all students	
Standard of thesis reports and effort were consistent with standards in other universities	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
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 External Examiner's visit to NUI Galway. Also remember to complete your expense claim and email the completed form to [externs@nuigalway.ie](mailto:externs@nuigalway.ie). Please note that expenses cannot be paid until your report has been submitted.

Thank you for your contribution to NUI Galway.