

QAA appointment criteria for External Examiners

Degree awarding bodies apply the following UK-wide set of criteria for appointing external examiners and make every effort to ensure that their external examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities defined by the institution.

Degree awarding bodies use the criteria to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to appointing external examiners or as soon as they arise.

Person specification

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

- I. knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
- II. competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof
- III. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
- IV. competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures
- V. 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
- VI. familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed
- VII. 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)
- VIII. meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies
- IX. awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
- X. competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Conflicts of interest

b. Degree-awarding bodies do not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- I. a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing body or one of its partners, delivery organisations or support providers, or a current employee of the appointing body or one of its partners, delivery organisations or support providers
- II. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
- III. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
- IV. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study

- V. anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question
- VI. former staff or students of the higher education provider unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)
- VII. a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another higher education provider
- VIII. the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and provider
- IX. the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same higher education provider.

Terms of office

- c. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.
- d. An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- e. External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.