

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINING OF TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

- 1 The membership of the Board of Examiners for each course and for each undergraduate Honours subject includes one or more Course or Subject External Examiners. Their main responsibilities are to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that individual students are treated fairly.

Campus Progress and Award Boards of Examiners for undergraduate Honours combined programmes include a Chief External Examiner.

APPOINTMENT

- 2 External Examiners are appointed by Council on the recommendation of Senate after consideration of nominations from the boards of the faculties in the case of Course and Subject External Examiners, or from the Teaching and Learning Committee in the case of Chief External Examiners.
- 3 In recommending External Examiners for appointment Senate shall have regard to the following:
 - a) only persons of sufficient seniority and experience to be able to command authority and respect should be appointed. External Examiners should have had experience in examining at the same level at which they are to be appointed. Chief External Examiners must have experience of examining at Honours degree level;
 - b) if a proposed External Examiner has not acted in this capacity before, it is expected that an experienced External Examiner is part of the external examining team. Chief External Examiners must have had experience of external examining;
 - c) an External Examiner should not normally be appointed from a department/school where a member of the inviting University of Ulster school is serving as an examiner nor be replaced by an examiner from the same school/department. Similarly there should not be a reciprocal arrangement for courses in partner institutions;
 - d) during the preceding five years, an External Examiner should not normally have been a member of staff or student of the University, or of a partner institution where the course is offered by that institution, nor should he or she be a near relative of one of the candidates or of a member of staff concerned with the assessment, nor be closely associated with the sponsorship of students on the course/subject or with their placement or training. Nominations for re-appointment to the same course or subject or to a related course at the same level should not be made within a five year period;
 - e) normally each module is the responsibility of only one external examiner.
- 4 In discussing the role with prospective external examiners, Faculties should ensure that potential intellectual property issues, such as might arise from the need for commercial confidentiality, are discussed and any necessary consent obtained in writing.
- 5 Appointments are for a period of not more than four years in the first instance but may be extended for a period of not more than one year for a new course or subject or in order to provide continuity between successive groups of External Examiners. Exceptionally, a two year extension may be allowed in the case of a discontinued course. The appointment of Chief External Examiners shall not be extended.

- 6 A period of five years should normally have elapsed before a former External Examiner is nominated for reappointment to a course or related course at the same level or to an undergraduate Honours subject.

DUTIES

- 7 The duties of Course and Subject External Examiners include:
- a) consultation with the internal examiners, through the Course or Subject Directors, in relation to the approval and moderation of examination papers and other forms of assessment;
 - b) consideration of the standard of marking of examination papers and other forms of assessment and reporting to Boards of Examiners on such revisions of the marking as they consider necessary;
 - c) attendance at meetings of Boards of Examiners;
 - d) attendance with or without one or more internal examiners as determined by the Board of Examiners at viva voce examinations and oral examinations which are held at the discretion of the Board;
 - e) confirmation, by joint signature with chairmen of Boards of Examiners, of the pass and, if appropriate, classified lists of candidates including recommendations for the award of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions;
 - f) submission to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible in the first instance of reports on: the standards of the course or subject; the standards of assessment; the standards of student performance; and the comparability of the standards with those of similar courses; and the assessment schemes and processes. Account should be taken of the relevant national subject benchmarks and the national qualifications framework.
 - g) such other duties as the Senate may specify from time to time.
- 8 The duties of Chief External Examiners for combined undergraduate Honours degrees include:
- a) consideration of the standards of awards for combined undergraduate Honours degrees;
 - b) attendance at meetings of Campus Progress and Award Boards of Examiners;
 - c) attendance with or without one or more internal examiners as determined by the Campus Progress and Award Board of Examiners at viva voce examinations and oral examinations which are held at the discretion of the Campus Progress and Award Board of Examiners;
 - d) confirmation, by joint signature with chairmen of Campus Progress and Award Boards of Examiners, of the pass and classified lists of candidates including recommendations for the award of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions;
 - e) submission to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible in the first instance of reports on the standards of awards; the standards of student performance;

and the comparability of the standards with those of similar programmes; and the assessment schemes and processes;

- f) such other duties as the Senate may specify from time to time.

The Chief External Examiner shall not have responsibility for the approval and moderation of assessment within subjects nor for the determination of results of candidates in modules.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- 9 New Course and Subject External Examiners are expected to commence their period of appointment with an induction.
- 10 The general duties of Course and Subject External Examiners are prescribed in the Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study. The University has agreed that External Examiners need not be involved in the examining process for Level A/1 undergraduate degree modules which do not contribute to a final award. All other modules, and Level A/1 modules which contribute to an exit award, require the involvement of the relevant external examiner.

In order that Course and Subject External Examiners can fulfil their duties, the Course or Subject Director shall ensure that:

- a) all draft examinations papers and coursework assessment schemes for the modules in each External Examiner's area of responsibility are approved by the External Examiner in advance; (the deadline for submission of draft examination papers to External Examiners is week 3 of the semester. Final versions are submitted to the Examinations Office by week 8). External Examiners have the authority to approve all coursework. The nature and extent of involvement must be discussed and agreed in advance;
- b) External Examiners have access to all examination scripts and coursework for the modules in their area of responsibility;
- c) where it is agreed that the External Examiner should see a selection of the scripts and coursework, the principles for such a selection are agreed in advance; External Examiners are given enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent; External Examiners should see a sample from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range. They should see the work of borderline candidates. They should also see all work assessed internally as first class or distinction or as failures;
- d) where a viva voce examination is held for some of the candidates, the principles for the selection of candidates and the form which the examination will take are agreed with the External Examiners;
- e) External Examiners are entitled to attend all meetings of Boards of Examiners of which they are members. They shall be present at all meetings where the performance of candidates which contributes to the final result is being considered. In the case of linked postgraduate Diplomas and Master's degrees, the Faculty may determine in accordance with approved procedures whether the External Examiners attend for one or both award stages.

The approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible shall be obtained for alternative arrangements when an External Examiner is unable to fulfil the attendance requirements specified in the Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study.

- 11 The Chief External Examiner for combined undergraduate Honours degrees shall not have responsibility for the approval and moderation of assessment within subjects, nor for the determination of results of candidates in modules. The general duties of the Chief External Examiner are prescribed in the Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study. In order that the Chief External Examiner can fulfil his or her duties, the campus Director of Combined Studies should ensure that:
 - a) the Chief External Examiner is able to attend the meeting of the Campus Progress and Award Board of Examiners;
 - b) the Chief External Examiner is provided with generic award regulations for the combined Honours degrees. (Subject Directors should identify the modules where condonement of failure is not permitted in Major, Main or Minor subject strands);
 - c) where a viva voce examination is held for some of the candidates, the principles for the selection of candidates and the form which the examination will take are agreed with the Chief External Examiners.
- 12 Where there is a disagreement in the Board of Examiners about results or classifications the view of the External Examiners shall prevail (subject to University and course regulations). Unresolved disagreement between External Examiners shall be reported to the Senate.
- 13 The signature of the External Examiners must be included on the course result sheets for candidates.

REPORTS

- 14 Course and Subject External Examiners are encouraged to discuss with the internal examiners the structure and content of the course and the assessment schemes and procedures.
- 15 External Examiners are required to submit a written report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible within one month of attending the last meeting of the Board of Examiners in each academic session. They are asked to report as appropriate on the topics in 7 f or 8 e).
- 16 Reports of Course and Subject External Examiners are distributed to faculties and partner institutions in the first instance for consideration during the annual review of the operation of the course. It is open to External Examiners to submit to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, in addition to the annual report, a confidential communication about the course(s)/subject with which they are involved.

The reports of Chief External Examiners are considered by the appropriate Campus Co-ordinating Group and the Teaching and Learning Committee.