

# External Advisers Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 When proposing new programmes Schools should seek the views of an external subject specialist. This should be done in accordance with the requirements of the Programme Validation policy and process.
- 1.2 This policy does not over Periodic Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes. For more information about Postgraduate Research Programmes please see the alternative Policy located in the Quality Handbook.

## 2. When to appoint an External Adviser

- 2.1 A School is required to seek external involvement when it:
  - undertakes Programme Validation or Revalidation.
  - when major changes are made to the programme, as defined in the Modifications to taught programmes table.
  - requires clarity on the overall academic coherence of a programme.
- 2.2 When programme developments fall into the categories described above, the Director of Programmes is required to nominate, for approval by the School, an adviser from outside the University who is qualified to provide authoritative advice relating to its academic content and delivery.

## 3. Types of External Adviser

- 3.1 External advisors may come from other academic institutions, and/or from professional/employment backgrounds, as appropriate to the proposal under consideration.
- 3.2 External academic colleagues to provide subject expertise in relation to the programme curriculum.
- 3.3 Industry professional or employer representatives should offer a view on the value and relevance of the proposed programme in relation to industry, the profession and/or employer needs, giving close consideration to any work placement, work-based learning or employment-related aspects of the programme.

## 4. Selection and Criteria for Appointment

- 4.1 External advisors should meet the following criteria:
  - They should hold high academic qualifications, at least to the level of the proposed programme;
  - they should be familiar with current developments in the field of study concerned and through this experience, be able to make national comparisons about standards;
  - they should be familiar with the context for UK quality issues, including the QAA Quality Code and any relevant subject benchmarks;
  - they should have understanding and experience of current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education, including appreciation of issues

relating to diversity of students in higher education and the impact this has on their capacity to learn;

- they should have experience in academic quality assurance systems – for example, membership of validation/ professional accrediting panels, activity as external examiner, awareness of diversity issues in Higher Education;
- for programmes with a professional element, they should be aware of the educational requirements for the profession.

## 5. Conflicts of Interest

5.1 The University does not appoint as an External adviser anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- a member of a governing body or committee of the University, or a current employee of the University;
- anyone involved significantly in current or recent teaching/research collaborations with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, assessment or management of the programme for which they are appointed;
- anyone from the same institution as an External Examiner on the Board of Examiners for that award (s);
- a former member of staff, or former student, unless a period of at least five years has elapsed since their departure;
- any members of staff of the Accredited Institutions;
- a member of a governing body of a collaborative partner, or a current employee of a collaborative partner who has responsibility in the same (or a closely cognate) disciplinary area as the collaborative arrangement.

5.2 It may be appropriate for an External Adviser to be used more than once for a suite of programmes or similar programmes that are undergoing validation in different years. However, over reliance on a single external adviser should be avoided since it reduces the range of external involvement.

## 6. Process for Approval of Nominations

- 6.1 To gain approval from the School for the proposed External Adviser, the Director of Programmes should complete a nomination form. This should be submitted to the Deputy Head of School (Education). This should be completed in good time before the participation of the External Adviser needs to be confirmed.
- 6.2 If the proposed External Adviser does not fulfil all the criteria for nomination or if, in exceptional circumstances, it is proposed that a current external examiner be appointed as an external adviser, the Deputy Head of School (Education) should ensure that a specific rationale for the choice of external adviser is recorded and reported to SPC.

## 7. Appointment

- 7.1 On notification that the nominee has been approved, the Director of Programmes should contact the External Adviser to inform them of their appointment and outline their duties.
- 7.2 The Director of Programmes should brief the External Adviser about the University's academic standards as well as more general context for the programme development – for example, University policies relating to equal opportunities/diversity, proposed markets, etc.
- 7.3 The External Adviser will receive the following documents:
- [Framework for Taught Programmes](#);

- Programme specification and module profiles (generally core and compulsory modules will suffice, however new optional modules will require scrutiny);
- Evaluative report (for existing programmes undergoing revalidation).

7.4 The notification of appointment will contain a link to the approved [Privacy Notice](#)

## 8. Role and Participation of the External Adviser – new and revised programmes

8.1 To benefit fully from external involvement in programme design and approval, the Director of Programmes should seek input from the External Adviser at an early stage in programme design.

8.2 The remit of the External Adviser is to some extent determined by their background, and may not cover all the points listed below:

- where appropriate, to advise on the appropriateness of the academic standards set for the programme in relation to similar programmes elsewhere in the UK;
- where appropriate, to consider the relevance of the programme in relation to vocational/professional training and employment;
- consider (as appropriate to the scope of the event) the proposed organisation, character, coherence and curriculum of the programme including assessment processes, drawing on general practice and norms which are current in their own professional area;
- consider whether the intended programme aims and learning outcomes are realistic, attainable and set at an appropriate level, and that the programme is going to provide students with a high quality learning experience/academic qualification;
- raise issues concerning the clarity of the programme documentation, the programme under consideration, to comment on the relevancy of the programme content, bibliographies etc.;
- to consider the clarity of the programme documentation and how well this communicates the team's intentions;
- raise issues concerning the operation of the programme in relation to the regulations and general guidelines of the University and where relevant profession and regulatory bodies.

## 9. Right to Work

9.1 If the External Adviser has previously completed work for the University and has previously submitted three or more expense claims, they will no longer be considered a supplier under the (IR35) Regulations. In this instance, If their appointment is approved by the School, it will be necessary to check their eligibility to work in the UK. More information is available on the [General Information for Suppliers web pages](#). For further guidance please contact QSAT or the appropriate Faculty Finance team.

## 10. External Adviser Report

10.1 The External Adviser must complete a (separate) report on the proposed programme(s), which will be a necessary part of the documentation to be submitted to the Academic Scrutiny Group. In the absence of a report the proposal should not be considered.

10.2 The External Adviser's report will comment specifically on the proposal. A template is provided for completion (External Advisers Report Form).

10.3 In the Programme Validation process, the Academic Scrutiny Group will look for evidence that the Programme Proposer/Lead has responded to the report of the External Adviser. A response to the External Adviser should also articulate reasons for not accepting his or her comments (if required).

## 11. Fees and Expenses

- 11.1 The Faculty is responsible for paying fees and expenses to the External Adviser, which should be stated in the notification of appointment. Fees and expenses cannot be paid until the External Adviser submits an invoice to the University.
- 11.2 A sample invoice can be found in the General Information for Suppliers section of the University website [here](#).

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