

## **Guidelines for Departments on the Nomination and Appointment of Taught Course External Examiners**

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### **Nomination Process**

1. During the year the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QA) team will write to departments requesting nominations for external examiners for the forthcoming academic session.
2. Nominations must be made using the university's external examiner nomination form which is available to download at the following link:  
  
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/external-examining/>
3. CVs of nominees are not accepted so it is important that the nomination form is completed in full.
4. Nominations will be presented to the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience). Once considered, the QA team will inform departments of the decision and will initiate the process to confirm the appointment with the external examiners.
5. External examiners are appointed normally for a period of four years only. In exceptional circumstances an external examiner may be re-appointed to serve a 5th and final year, for example, to ensure continuity in particular for collaborative courses, in cases where the subject matter is only taught at a limited number of institutions or to act as a mentor to a new external who has no previous external examining experience.
6. External examiners should not normally hold more than two external examiner appointments for taught courses at any point in time.

### **Criteria for Appointment**

7. The external examiner should normally have:
  - a. Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
  - b. Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
  - c. Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined and/or extensive practitioner experience, where appropriate;
  - d. Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and running assessment procedures;
  - e. 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;

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- f. Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
  - g. 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);
  - h. Where applicable, have met criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
  - i. Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
  - j. Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
8. In addition to this, Departments should note that former staff (including those with honorary appointments) and students can only be appointed as external examiners after a period of **not less than five years** has lapsed and all students taught by or with the proposed external examiner have completed their programme(s).
9. Proposed external examiners that have retired, can be considered if they provide sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question and with current developments in higher education teaching, learning and assessment.
10. Where the nominee has no previous experience as an external examiner for taught programmes in any institution, appointment should, wherever practicable, be made to a team of external examiners and/or with agreement that a more experienced external examiner will act as a mentor. Please see *FAQs for Departments on Mentorship* for more information.

## Other important points to note:

11. An external examiner who has previously acted as a taught course external examiner for the university may only be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances, and only after a period of five years has lapsed since their last appointment;
12. Reciprocal arrangements involving cognate programmes at other institutions are not allowed;
13. The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution is not allowed, including within a team of examiners;
14. The appointment of more than one external from the same department of the same institution is not allowed;
15. Departments should balance the benefits of engaging someone who is already familiar with the programme and its rationale, perhaps through approval of the programme, with any risk to their ability to provide a fully independent perspective;
16. To avoid potential conflicts of interests, external examiners should not normally be appointed if they are any of the following:
  - a. A member of a governing body or Committee of the appointing institutions or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;

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- b. Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
  - c. Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
  - d. Anyone who is, or will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
  - e. Anyone who holds an honorary contract with the university.
17. Care should be taken when making nominations for external examiners with significant involvement 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. In cases where this arises, the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) will carefully assess the risk involved in making this appointment.
18. Proposed external examiners will also be asked to declare if they are aware of any potential conflicts of interest as part of their acceptance to act as external examiner for the university.

## **Eligibility to work in the United Kingdom**

19. To comply with Home Office legislation, the university has a legal obligation to ensure that all those undertaking work have the legal right to do so. Therefore, when selecting a nominee for appointment as an external examiner, it must be ensured that the nominee is working legally in the UK.
20. Departments should ensure that where relevant, eligibility is raised with the prospective examiner at the nomination stage.

### **Postgraduate only external examiners**

21. Examiners that only consider postgraduate programmes are not currently required to have Right to Work (see below) in the UK. Where an examiner is not currently working in the UK or Ireland, they must ensure that they have the relevant visa, if required, to visit the university when they are required to do so. Details of visa requirements can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor/visit-as-an-academic>

### **Undergraduate external examiners**

22. Examiners that consider undergraduate provision, including those that also have postgraduate provision under their remit, are required under current UK legislation to have the Right to Work for their appointment. For full criteria, please see the university guidance concerning evidence of eligibility to work in the UK which can be found at:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/compliance-and-immigration/immigration/right-to-work/>

23. Examiners are not permitted to undertake any work until their Right to Work checks have been completed by the Casual Worker Team and the contacts have been confirmed.

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24. Please note also that this check must be completed for all nominees, regardless of their nationality or current employer.

## Role and responsibilities

25. Further details about the role and responsibilities of external examiners can be found in the academic regulations available at:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/regulations/>

And on the External Examiners website:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/external-examining/>

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