



## External Examiners Policy and Procedure

### Context

The School engages External Examiners to provide impartial and independent advice and comment on the standards of its programme and student achievement in relation to these standards. External Examiners are an important source of guidance on best practice, and their advice supports the School in ensuring that it is continuously improving its teaching, learning and assessment practices. Their feedback is incorporated into ongoing monitoring of the quality of the School's provision.

External Examiners sit on the School's Board of Examiners, which considers and approves the results of students with regard to awards, modules and progression between the Levels of a Programme.

### Background

This Policy and Procedure has been developed in alignment with the core practices of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (2019), in particular:

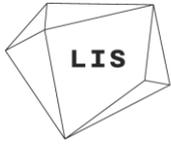
- *Standard 1* ("The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks");
- *Standard 2* (The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers);
- *Standard 4* ("The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent");
- *Quality 2* ("The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses").

It additionally draws upon the QAA's [Advice and Guidance on External Expertise](#) (2019) and Advance [HE's Fundamentals of External Examining](#) (2019).

### External Examiner roles and responsibilities

External Examiners are asked by the School to comment on:

- The alignment of the School's standards with UK-recognised standards in determining awards;
- The maintenance and application of academic standards through internal marking practices and assessment processes;
- The extent to which the School's assessment instruments enable students to demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes for the module(s) or programme they have been appointed to examine;
- The standards of student performance in the module(s) or programme they have been appointed to examine;



- The extent to which the School's students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level;
- The extent to which the School consistently and fairly implements its assessment policies, regulations, procedures and governance;
- The quality and standards of the School's programmes in relation to national sector benchmarks and in relation to their experience at other comparable UK higher education institutions.

Specifically, the duties of External Examiners are to:

- Scrutinise and approve all summative assessment instruments including coursework and examination papers;
- Evaluate students with a module result in the fail-grade band and review the results of students in the highest-grade band, either individually or using sampling; and review results from each grade boundary;
- Review samples of the work of students proposed for each category of award and for failure, in order to ensure that assessment criteria have been interpreted correctly and that there is parity of assessment across a student cohort;
- Make recommendations regarding the moderation of marks for a cohort of students on a module or programme either in relation to the consistency of marking or on matters affecting the conduct of assessment;
- Consider the reliability of the mode of monitoring the marks of module assessments and the final end-of-module component and report to the Board of Examiners on such revisions as they consider necessary;
- Report to the Chair of the Board of Examiners any candidate that they suspect may have been engaged in academic misconduct (a definition of which is set out in the School's [Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure](#));
- Attend the meetings of the Board of Examiners at which decisions on recommendations for module results, stages in programmes and awards are made and ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means in accordance with the School's requirements and normal practice in UK higher education
- Participate as required in the review of decisions about individual student awards;
- Submit an annual report on student performance and academic standards as well as on the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them to the Academic Council at the end of each year of the appointment;
- Report in confidence to the School's Chief Executive on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of the School's awards or on matters that remain unaddressed by the Programme Team.

External Examiners will be consulted by the School about sampling methods and will have access to all students' work submitted for assessment counting towards an award.

External Examiners will also be consulted on any proposed changes to the approved assessment regulations or assessment strategy which will directly affect students currently on a programme.



External Examiners may meet students and, where appropriate, assist in the conduct of a *viva voce* examination of candidates.

External Examiners may not recommend amending the marks of individual students within a sample without reference to the cohort population.

### **External Examiner Reports**

External Examiners are required to submit an annual report to the Academic Council on:

- Whether the standards being set are appropriate for the award by reference to any agreed subject benchmarks, national qualifications frameworks, programme specification or other relevant information;
- The extent to which the School's students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level;
- The quality of the students' work, and their knowledge and skills in relation to their peers on comparable programmes;
- The strengths and weaknesses of the students;
- The quality of teaching and learning, as indicated by student performance;
- The quality of the curriculum, course materials and learning resources;
- The quality and fairness of the assessments, in particular their design and structure, related to the stated objectives and intended learning outcomes of the programme/module;
- Good practice and innovation related to learning, teaching and assessment;
- The administration of the assessments, operation of the Examination Boards, access of External Examiners to essential materials, etc;
- The support for and communication with the External Examiner;
- Any areas for development;
- Whether any issues identified in previous External Examiners' reports have been addressed by the School.

Reports should be submitted on the School's standard report form for External Examiners but should not be constrained by these; External Examiners should feel free to add comments where appropriate.

Annual reports should be submitted no later than one month after the meeting of the Examination Board at which the awards or module results are decided.

A final report should be submitted where an External Examiner's period of office has expired. In addition to the matters addressed in the annual report, this final report should include an overview of their impression of the standards and quality of provision at the School, salient issues that have arisen during their period of office and any matters that should be brought to the attention of the incoming External Examiner.

External Examiner reports will be scrutinised at the Academic Council and an action plan agreed. The School will make any External Examiners' reports available in full to students,



with the exception of any part marked confidential by the External Examiner or a confidential report made directly to the Chief Executive.

The relevant module or programme leader will give detailed written feedback to External Examiners on action taken in response to their annual or final reports.

### **Reporting concerns**

#### *Confidential report to the Chief Executive*

An External Examiner may report confidentially directly to the Chief Executive at any time where they are concerned about standards and performance, particularly where they are concerned that assessments are being conducted in a way that jeopardises either the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the School's awards.

#### *Raising concerns with the QAA*

Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a School programme and has exhausted internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Chief Executive, s/he may raise the matter externally with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) under its Concerns Scheme.

### **Attendance at Boards of Examiners meetings**

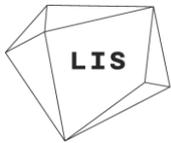
All External Examiners are required to attend relevant Board of Examiners meetings including any resit boards. Where unforeseen circumstances prevent an External Examiner's attendance either physically or virtually, the Registrar should be informed so that a decision can be made in consultation with the Chair of the Board as to whether alternative arrangements should be made for the Board. Where the meeting goes ahead without the External Examiner, s/he must provide a written report to the Board of Examiners confirming their involvement in the external examining process and their satisfaction or otherwise with it, together with any specific comments they may wish the Board to consider. The written report should be submitted in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners so that the External Examiner's comments can be formally considered and recorded.

Non-attendance by an External Examiner without good cause would usually constitute grounds for the termination of appointment.

### **Procedure for appointing External Examiners**

LIS delivers a single honours degree in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods with a limited pool of potential external examiners from which to recruit who have sufficient expertise, objectivity and independence to satisfy the requirements of the School's external examiner appointment criteria. Consequently, LIS has adopted the following approach to recruiting with integrity External Examiners.

The School will seek to have at least three External Examiners appointed to the programme. Three is an optimum number in relation to: spread of expertise, engagement with the



programme, provision of a sufficient and mutually supportive cadre of externality, efficiency of administration and communication, and economy of costs.

### *Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners*

During the recruitment stage, the principal set of criteria for choosing an examiner will include:

- having a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study;
- having a good understanding of the UK higher education sector and the agreed sector reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality;
- having experience in course design and student assessment at the level of the award;
- being experienced in designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the field of study, and in operating assessment procedures in assessing students in the field of study concerned;
- having the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development;
- being aware of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- being fluent in English;
- being experienced in acting as an External Examiner (where an External Examiner has less experience, they must be supported by the School in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring);
- having had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively;
- complying with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate.

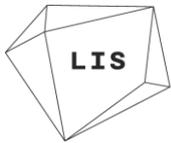
The Director of Teaching and Learning will maintain a Register of Appropriate Institutions for the Sourcing of External Examiners, which is a register of institutions in the UK which offer interdisciplinary programmes or relevant specialisms together with a link to or list of current faculty.

### *Avoiding conflicts of interest*

An External Examiner must be independent of the module or programme to which they are appointed to examine. In line with QAA guidance, an External Examiner should not be appointed if any of the following conflicts of interest are identified:

The School will not approve the appointment of anyone who:

- Is a member of a governing body or committee of LIS or its collaborative partners;
- Has a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;



- Is required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- Is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
- Is currently, or has recently been, involved in substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme or module(s) in question
- Would replace an External Examiner from the same department in the same institution;
- Is required to assess colleagues who are recruited to the programme of study;
- Is from the same department of the same institution as another member of that team of External Examiners;
- Is a consultant to the Module/Programme team, or if they contributed to writing the teaching materials;
- Has had further engagement with the School beyond their External Examiner responsibilities (unless approved by the Academic Council)

There must not be a reciprocal external examining arrangement involving cognate programmes in two institutions.

Examiners should not have too heavy a workload in respect of external examining duties. An External Examiner should normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

The Registrar will maintain the following registers:

- The Register of External Appointments of LIS Faculty;
- The Register of the Appointment of Current and Former LIS External Examiners and Advisers;

The Register of External Appointments of LIS Faculty must include any association with another institution that may give rise to a conflict of interest in recruiting faculty from that institution. Examples include but are not limited to:

- external examiner appointments;
- fractional appointments;
- visiting fellowships;
- research collaborations;
- membership of boards or committees.

The School regards the above (along with any other external activities in relation to research, scholarship and consultancy) as positive activities and attributes. Faculty are invited to declare such activities not only for the purposes of avoiding conflicts of interest but also, and perhaps more importantly, to catalogue staff development and support the ongoing pedagogical effectiveness of staff. However, the register is also an important regulatory tool in ensuring the recruitment of external examiners is appropriate.



To ensure the integrity of appointments, any proposed nomination of an External Examiner from an institution on the Register of Appropriate Institutions for the Sourcing of External Examiners must be checked against the Register of External Appointments of LIS Faculty and the Register of Current and Former LIS External Examiners and Advisers to ensure there are no perceived conflicts of interest or reciprocal arrangements.

#### *Other considerations in appointing External Examiners*

As far as is possible, External Examiners should be drawn from a relevant variety of institutional contents and traditions so that the programme benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny;

Before appointment, it should be confirmed that the nominee can credibly cover at least a third of the programme.

Consideration should also be given to whether the identity or location of the institution at which the nominee is employed raises issues of competition, or issues of cost.

The appointments of External Examiners will wherever possible be staggered so that there is always at least one experienced External Examiner familiar with LIS in the external examiner team.

In line with Advance HE's [Fundamentals of External Examining](#), LIS "may make arrangements for experienced External Examiners of their programmes to mentor new External Examiners". In such instances, the School will strongly encourage and resource external examiners to undertake Advance HE's [Professional Development Course for External Examiners](#).

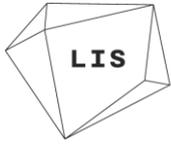
Nomination of External Examiners from outside of the UK may be considered on a case by case basis.

#### *Process for formal appointment of External Examiners*

A list of potential nominees for External Examiner will be identified by the Director of Teaching and Learning. Once identified this list of potential nominees will be scrutinised by the Registrar to ensure that they meet the requirements set out in the criteria for the appointment of External Examiners. Nominees will then be approached in order of preference of the Director of Teaching and Learning and where agreeable will be formally proposed to the Academic Council, which will then agree any formal appointment of an External Examiner.

#### **Retirees**

It is the School's expectation that External Examiner nominations should be submitted on behalf of individuals who have current substantive academic or professional posts. However, retirees can be considered provided they have retired recently and still have an affiliation with a UK institution of Higher Education. The Academic Council will consider the nomination provided that a robust case can be made for that person's continuing academic or professional currency for the duration of the proposed appointment



## **Terms of office**

New examiners should take up their appointments on or before their predecessor's' end of tenure.

External Examiners should remain available after the last assessments (including resit boards) with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent review of decisions.

The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one-year to ensure continuity.

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.

If External Examiners change jobs, a revised CV must be submitted to the Registrar to ensure that they are still eligible to externally examine the programmes for which they have been appointed.

The Academic Council must approve the allocation of any additional duties to an External Examiner. The Director of Teaching and Learning will alert the Registrar to proposals to increase the workload or remit of an External Examiner.

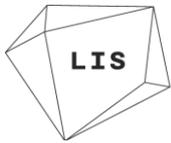
If an External Examiner retires whilst in appointment, they will remain as the External Examiner for the remainder of the academic year and up to two years following retirement. If the External Examiner continues to have an affiliation with a UK institution of Higher Education, they can continue to remain in post for the full duration of their contract.

## **Briefing and Induction of External Examiners**

In order for External Examiners to effectively moderate marks and interrogate standards at the School, they must be clear on their own role, on the School's academic regulations, and on the context and process of assessment. The School commits to establishing a dialogue with External Examiners whereby External Examiners are free and able to share best practice, feedback, concerns and recommendations. Proper briefing and induction of External Examiners is crucial in ensuring that they have sufficient understanding of the School's academic context and framework, and to support the development of a critical friendship between the School and its External Examiners.

Once appointed, all External Examiners will receive a briefing pack from the School's Registrar and will be invited to an induction event.

### *Briefing*



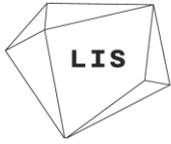
At appointment, all External Examiners will be sent an appointment letter setting out contractual arrangements (terms of appointment, responsibilities, provision for termination and required notice), accompanied by a briefing pack, which will contain:

- An overview of the School;
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
- The School's [General Academic Regulations](#)
- The School's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#);
- Expectations relating to External Examiners as set out in [QAA UK Quality Code for HE](#);
- Information on the programme and relevant assessment details (Programme Specification and Module Forms, with syllabuses, marking schemes and assessment criteria; assessment policies; School qualifications framework; internal moderation arrangements, students with disabilities, a copy of the most recent annual monitoring report for the relevant programme)
- Details of the School academic staff member to act as a primary contact for the External Examiner;
- Membership of the External Examiner team;
- Arrangements relating to the Boards of Examiners;
- Arrangement for submission of reports and payment of fees.

### ***Induction***

Induction will take place on the School campus, and will be led by the School's Registrar and a member of the faculty, nominated by the Director of Teaching and Learning. At the Induction the External Examiners will:

- *Be introduced to the School and its community:* External Examiners will visit the School campus, and, if desired, in-progress learning session(s). They will also meet School staff and students.
- *Receive administrative information:* The School will clarify roles and responsibilities (both for School and External Examiners), as well as set out its aspiration for its relationship with External Examiners (a "critical friendship"). The School will set out its assessments calendar, including a description of major External Examiner interactions throughout the year, and the likely workload. The School will clarify the rights of External Examiners to raise any serious matter with the Chief Executive, if necessary by means of a confidential report, and the duty of the School to provide a considered and timely response, outlining any actions that may be taken (as per [QAA UK Quality Code for HE](#)).
- *Learn how External Examiner reports are used at the School:* The School will set out how External Examiner reports are reviewed annually by the Academic Council both in and of themselves and as part of the Annual Programme Monitoring Procedure, and how the Registrar ensures that any agreed outcomes from these review are implemented. New External Examiners will receive copies of the previous years' External Examiners reports for the relevant programme and module(s).
- *Have an opportunity for open discussion of the School's programme:* There will be opportunity for External Examiners to ask any programme-related questions, as well as an open discussion about developments and opportunities at the programme level.



- *Evaluate and endorse the assessment approach:* The External Examiners will be provided with module materials on appointment so that they may evaluate and endorse the School's assessment instruments and marking criteria.

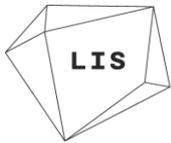
### **Termination of External Examiner appointments**

Grounds for termination of the appointment of an External Examiner must be reviewed by the Academic Council, which must agree to the termination. If possible, termination should occur at a natural point in the assessment cycle, such as after the last meeting of the Board of Examiners at the end of the academic year. The School reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an External Examiner at any time on the following grounds:

- Failure to attend Boards of Examiners without reasonable cause;
- Failure to produce reports in a timely manner or to an appropriate standard;
- Any other failure to fulfil their obligations as an External Examiner;
- New conflict of interest that cannot be resolved (e.g., due to change of the External Examiner's position subsequent to the appointment);
- Discontinuation of the programme.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed annually by the Registrar, with changes authorised by the Academic Council.



<b>Name of policy/procedure:</b>	<b>External Examiners Policy and Procedure</b>
<b>Document owner:</b>	Prof. Chris Maguire (Registrar)
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<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Andrew Redford (Head of Quality)
<b>Audited by:</b>	
<b>Date of Audit:</b>	Academic Council
<b>Date of next review:</b> (annually unless otherwise agreed)	03/2020 - approved
<b>Related documents:</b> (eg associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies)	<p>Assessments Approval Procedure</p> <p>Register of External Appointments of LIS Faculty</p> <p>Register of the Appointment of Current and Former LIS External Examiners and Advisers</p> <p>Register of Appropriate Institutions for the Sourcing of External Examiners</p> <p>External Academic Expertise Framework</p>

<b>Version Control</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Brief summary of changes</b>
1	Prof. Chris Maguire (Registrar)	14/01/2020	Original draft
2	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	10/02/2020	Pulling together all existing policies on external examiners; clarification of procedure for appointment and termination
3	Prof. Chris Maguire	17/02/2020	Minor corrections and amendments to the text.
4	Academic Council	16/03/2020	Approved
5	Andrew Redford (Head of Quality)	22/06/2021	Minor wording changes