

External Advisers Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Programme Approval and Programme Review processes require that the development of the programme should be peer reviewed by at least one external adviser.
- 1.2 The use of external, impartial and independent expertise to inform programmes, is one way that the University ensures that the highest academic and quality standards are met and maintained.
- 1.3 This Policy defines the process of their appointment, details the expectation of their role and other administrative aspects. This policy does not cover the appointment of an external adviser for the Periodic Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Provision. Please see the Policy located in the [Quality Handbook](#).
- 1.4 A programme is required to seek external involvement when:
- it undertakes Programme Approval or Programme Review.
 - significant changes are proposed which were not included in the approved programme action plan.
- 1.5 When programme developments fall into the categories described above, the Programme Lead/Director of Programmes is required to nominate, for approval by the Deputy Head of School (Education) on behalf of the School an external adviser.
- 1.6 The primary external adviser will be from outside the University and meet the criteria for appointment listed in Section 2 below.
- 1.7 Additional external advisers may also be appointed if there is a particular pathway specialism or exceptional aspects to the programme design or delivery that would benefit from additional insight. Additional advisers may come from either academic institutions or from professional/employment backgrounds as appropriate to the programme under consideration.

1.8 To benefit fully from external involvement in programme design, the primary and/or additional external adviser(s) will be appointed and engaged at a stage that can offer the programme team the most benefit but, at the latest, during the programme development phase which commences immediately after the initial meeting with the AQSS panel.

2. Selection and Criteria for Appointment

2.1 External advisers should have contemporary knowledge of the expectations for quality and standards in UK higher education and, depending on the requirements of the programme, meet one or more of the following criteria:

- hold high academic qualification, at least to the level of the proposed programme or have significant professional experience;
- be familiar with current developments or employer needs in the field of study or thematic specialism for which they are appointed
- be aware of the educational requirements for the profession (for programmes with a professional element).

2.2 In addition, the primary external adviser should:

- through experience, be able to make national comparisons about academic standards;
- be familiar with the context for UK regulatory and quality issues
- have understanding and experience of current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in higher education;
- have an awareness of issues relating to diversity and inclusion in higher education and an awareness of how learning and support needs may be tailored for different groups of students
- have experience in academic quality assurance systems – for example, membership of professional accrediting panels, activity as external examiner;

3. Conflicts of Interest

3.1 To avoid conflicts of interest 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 who is currently acting as an external examiner on the Board of Examiners for the programme(s)
- anyone from the same institution as a current external examiner on the Board of Examiners for the programme(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 an Institution accredited by the University.
- a member of a governing body of an education partner or branch campus of the University, or a current employee of an education partner or branch campus who has responsibility in the same (or a closely cognate) disciplinary area as the education partnership arrangement.

3.2 An external adviser can be engaged more than once for a suite or cognate group of programmes. However, over reliance on a single external adviser should be avoided since it reduces the range of external involvement and may lead to excessive engagement or unbalanced influence over a period of time. Similarly reciprocal arrangements should be entered into with care.

4. Process for Approval of Nominations

4.1 The Deputy Head of School (Education) is required to consider applications for the appointment of an external adviser on behalf of the School. The Programme Lead/Director of Programmes will complete a nomination form.

4.2 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, or an external adviser is re-engaged, or the nomination may risk a reciprocal arrangement, the Deputy Head of School (Education) will ensure that a specific rationale for the choice

of external adviser is provided to and recorded by the School Programmes Committee.

5. Appointment and Right to Work

5.1 Once approved, the external adviser will be sent an appointment letter, will usually be via a letter which contains a link to the approved [Privacy Notice](#).

5.2 If an 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, and 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.

6. Induction of External Adviser

6.1 On notification that the external adviser nomination has been approved, the Programme Lead/Director of Programmes, will contact the external adviser to inform them of their appointment and outline their duties.

6.2 The Programme Lead/Director of Programmes, with support from the Faculty CQA Team, will:

- brief the external adviser about the University's Quality Management and Enhancement Framework and the PAR processes
- provide general context around the work being undertaken and the proposed timescales for completion of the PAR Process
- share the External adviser Report template;

7. Provision of documentation to the external adviser

7.1 The external adviser will be supplied with sufficient documentation to inform a reflective, impartial report that addresses the following:

- whether the intended programme aims and learning outcomes are/remain realistic, attainable and set at an appropriate level, and if the

programme will provide students with a high-quality learning experience/academic qualification;

- the clarity of the programme documentation and how well it communicates the team's intentions to its audience(s);
- the relevance of the programme content and assessment strategy
- the equivalence of the academic standards set for the programme in relation to similar programmes elsewhere in the UK;
- the relevance of the programme in relation to vocational/professional training and employment, employer needs, work placement, work-based learning or employment-related aspects of the programme;
- the operation of the programme in relation to the Regulations and Policy of the University and, where relevant, profession and regulatory bodies.

7.2 This documentation will include:

- programme documentation (programme specification (or equivalent)) usually extracted from the Curriculum Management System;
- module documentation, as determined between the programme team and the external adviser, to include only those necessary to provide context to the programme, and the enhancements proposed¹.
- the mapping undertaken to show where each programme learning outcome is assessed;
- programme roll-out action plan (new programmes) or the programme enhancement action plan (existing programmes).

7.3 And may also include:

- learning, teaching and assessment strategies, if not already received and evaluated earlier in the process;
- the programme teams completed mandatory Toolkits (usually only where relevant to the expertise of the external adviser);
- reports from the primary external advisor or other additional external advisers (if appointed);

¹ This may include any new modules or modules that have undergone substantial revision. The approval of new modules and the approval of changes to existing modules will follow the process required by the relevant School Programmes Committee.

- programme team reflections on student consultation and dialogue.

8. Role of the External adviser

- 8.1 The role of the external adviser will be determined by their background, the expectations of the discipline and the requirements of the programme team.
- 8.2 The programme team will engage with the external adviser(s) in an iterative dialogue, as well as keeping them abreast of discussions and decisions being made.
- 8.3 The External adviser(s) will draw on their expertise, general practice and discipline norms from their own professional area to support discussions relating to programme and assessment design, including consideration of:
- the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by the programme team and the suitability of the actions identified for programme development;
 - the organisation, character, and coherence of the programme(s)
 - the curriculum and programme content
 - the overall assessment strategy and other processes related to the learning, teaching and assessment of students.
- 8.4 It is not appropriate for the first contact with an external adviser to consist of the finalised programme documentation with a request for comment just prior to the AQSS programme approval or programme review approval panel.

9. Responding to the external adviser report

- 9.1 The external adviser report along with a response, is part of the documentation considered by the AQSS programme approval or programme review approval panel. In the absence of a report and response, the panel will be suspended and reconvened at a later date.
- 9.2 If an external adviser report covers more than one programme, all programmes must be listed on the report and it must be clear to which programme each comment relates.

9.3 Programme teams will provide a response to each point made by the external adviser and each recommendation made, which, if necessary, will include reasons for not accepting any recommendation. The panel will look for evidence that the Programme team has responded to each of the external adviser points and recommendations.

10. Fees and Expenses

10.1 The School is responsible for paying fees and expenses to the external adviser, the amount will be stated in the appointment letter.

10.2 There is no set fee for external advisers, and Schools, in negotiation with the Heads of Faculty Finance, can determine the fee depending on discipline norms and the scale or complexity of the work involved.

10.3 Fees and expenses cannot be paid until the external adviser submits an invoice to the University. A sample invoice can be found in the General Information for Suppliers section of the University website [here](#).

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