

# External Advisers Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Programme Approval and Review process requires that the development of the programme should be peer reviewed by at least one External Adviser. This Policy defines the process of their appointment, details the expectation of their role and other administrative aspects.
- 1.2 This policy does not cover the appointment of External Advisers for the Periodic Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes. Please see the alternative Policy located in the [Quality Handbook](#).
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 The primary External Adviser should be an academic staff member in the discipline, but from outside the University, with knowledge of the expectations for quality and standards in UK higher education.
- 1.6 Additional Advisers may also be involved who provide specialism in particular aspects of programme design or delivery. Additional External Advisers may come from other academic institutions or from professional/employment backgrounds, as appropriate to the programme under consideration.
- 1.7 Industry professionals or employer representatives should offer a view on the value and relevance of the proposed programme in relation to industry, the profession or employer needs by giving close consideration to any work

placement, work-based learning or employment-related aspects of the programme.

- 1.8 To benefit fully from external involvement in programme design, the External Adviser should be appointed and engaged at an early stage and, at the latest, immediately after the initial meeting with the AQSS panel to enable participation in discussions as the action plan for the programme develops.

## **2. Selection and Criteria for Appointment**

2.1 External Advisers should meet 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
- for programmes with a professional element, they should be aware of the educational requirements for the profession.

2.2 In addition, the primary External Adviser should:

- through this 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, including appreciation of issues relating to diversity of students in higher education and the impact this has on their capacity to learn;
- have experience in academic quality assurance systems – for example, membership of professional accrediting panels, activity as external examiner, awareness of diversity issues in Higher Education;

## **3. Conflicts of Interest**

3.1 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 of 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 Over reliance on a single External Adviser should be avoided since it reduces the range of external involvement, however, it may be appropriate for an External Adviser to be used more than once for a suite of programmes or similar programmes.

## **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 should 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, the Deputy Head of School (Education) should ensure that a specific rationale for the choice of External Adviser is provided and recorded by SPC.

## 5. Induction of External Adviser

5.1 On notification that the External Adviser has been approved, the Programme Lead/Director of Programmes, with support from the CQA Team, will contact the External Adviser to inform them of their appointment and outline their duties<sup>1</sup>.

5.2 The External Adviser should also be provided with the following:

- Programme Approval and Review Process documentation
- Framework for Taught Programmes;
- Programme specification and module profiles (generally core and compulsory modules will suffice, however new optional modules will require scrutiny)
- External Adviser Report template
- Proposed timescales for completion of the Programme Approval or Review Process

5.3 The Programme Lead/Director of Programmes, with support from the CQA Team, will brief the External Adviser about the University's academic standards as well as providing more general context for the programme development.

## 6. Role of the External Adviser

6.1 The remit of the External Adviser is to some extent determined by their background, but will cover some or all of:

- participating in discussions relating to programme design, including consideration of 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;
- commenting on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by the programme team and the suitability of the actions identified for programme development

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<sup>1</sup> The notification of appointment will usually be via a letter which will contain a link to the approved [Privacy Notice](#)

- considering whether the intended programme aims and learning outcomes are realistic, attainable and set at an appropriate level, and if the programme is going to provide students with a high-quality learning experience/academic qualification;
- considering the clarity of the programme documentation and how well this communicates the team's intentions; raising issues concerning the clarity of the programme documentation, the programme under consideration; commenting on the relevance of the programme content assessment strategy etc;
- advising on the appropriateness of the academic standards set for the programme in relation to similar programmes elsewhere in the UK;
- considering the relevance of the programme in relation to vocational/professional training and employment;
- raising 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.

## **7. External Adviser Report**

7.1 The External Adviser must complete a report for each programme or cognate group of programmes, which, along with a response, will be a necessary part of the documentation required for approval. If a report covers more than one programme, it must be clear which programmes that the comments relate.

7.2 External Advisers can expect to receive a response to each point raised and each recommendation made, which, if necessary, will include reasons for not accepting any recommendation. The Approval Panel will look for evidence that the Programme Lead/Director of Programmes has responded to each of the External Adviser points and recommendations.

7.3 In the absence of a report and response, the Approval Panel will be suspended and reconvened at a later date.

## **8. Right to Work**

8.1 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, 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.

## 9. Fees and Expenses

9.1 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.

9.2 A sample invoice can be found in the General Information for Suppliers section of the University website [here](#).

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