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## **Guidance 4(i) Criteria for appointment of External Examiners**

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### **Introduction**

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Assurance committee has agreed the following criteria be used when appointing External Examiners to all Middlesex undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision that lead to Middlesex awards. This includes programmes/modules at FHEQ Levels 3 -7 for in-house, campus, accreditation and collaborative provision.

All External Examiners are usually appointed from October to September, normally for 4 years. Exceptional extensions of an appointment, for one year, may be accepted subject to a valid rationale.

If Faculties have more than one external examiner appointed to a programme or module, they can phase the appointments to enable the mentoring of new external examiners for that programme / module.

### **Subject assessment boards (1<sup>st</sup> Tier)**

**1. An External Examiner's academic / professional qualifications should be appropriate to the programme/module to be examined.**

Both the level and the subject of the external examiner's qualifications should generally match what is to be examined in the programme.

**2. An External Examiner should have appropriate professional / academic standing, expertise and breadth of experience for them to be able to maintain comparability of standards.**

Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- The present (or last, if retired) post and place of work.
- The range and scope of experience across higher education/ professions.
- Current and recent active involvement in research/ scholarly/ professional activities in the field of study concerned.

**3. An External Examiner should have enough recent external examining, or comparable related experience, to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area.**

If the proposed External Examiner has no previous/ recent external examining experience at the appropriate level, the application should be supported by:

- Other examining experience
- Extensive internal examining experience
- Other relevant and recent experience likely to support the external examiner role (e.g. as a PSRB auditor/ accreditor).

Proposed External Examiners without prior experience should complete a 'shadow year' and work alongside an experienced currently-appointed external, perhaps on a related programme. This initial period should include involvement in the final stages of assessment for the qualification.

**4. An External Examiner appointed to Collaborative Programmes, both in the UK and overseas, should have sufficient expertise and experience to enable them to carry out their role effectively.**

The proposed External Examiner should have:

- A good knowledge and understanding of English.
- The necessary language skills where tuition and/or assessment is not in English.
- Appropriate experience and knowledge of UK Higher Education.

Relevant external examining experience would normally include experience of teaching and assessing on UK HE awards or setting the standards of such awards. Where the External Examiner does not have experience of UK HE then the combined external examiner team for that collaborative partner should have an appropriate mix of expertise and at least one External Examiner with experience of UK Higher Education.

**5. External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that the programme benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.**

There should not be:

- More than one External Examiner from the same institution in the team of External Examiners, except where it involves a large number of discrete subject areas.
- Reciprocal external examining between Programmes / Departments across Middlesex and the External Examiner's own institution.
- Replacement of an External Examiner by an individual from the same institution.

**6. External Examiners should not be over extended by their external examining duties.**

The External Examiner should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two other substantial undergraduate/postgraduate External Examiner appointments.

**7. There should be an appropriate balance and expertise in any team of External Examiners.**

The proposed External Examiner should complement the external examining team in terms of expertise and examining experience. There should be:

- An appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners, where possible.
- A range of academic perspectives necessary to the programme represented in the external examining team.
- A balance between individuals from universities and industry.
- At least one practitioner with appropriate experience in the external examiner team for any programmes/modules which lead to a professional qualification.
- Sufficient and wide ranging external examining experience in the team as a whole to take an overview of the programme and ensure a consistent standard is maintained across subjects.
- The phasing of appointments to the external examiner team should be structured to ensure continuity.

The need to ensure continuity may be cited as a reason for requesting an extension of the appointment for a further year.

**8. External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the University, or one of the University's partner institutions, over the last five years which might compromise objectivity.**

Over the last five years, the proposed External Examiner should not be/ have been:

- A member of staff, a governor, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff in relation to the programme or department the programme is housed in.
- Involved in teaching or delivery of seminars or lectures for the programme.
- An external examiner on a cognate programme in the institution. Exceptionally, where limited expertise is available, a recently retired External Examiner may be approved for a collaborative validated programme at a partner institution.
- Employed by one of the University's partner institutions
- An External Examiner for the programme if it was previously approved by another validating body. Personally associated with the sponsorship of students from the programme.
- Required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme.
- Able to influence significantly the future employment of students on the programme.
- Likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation.
- Employed by an HE institution which heads a consortium of FE colleges at which the programme is delivered.
- Significantly involved in collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme or modules in question.
- Involved in the development of the programme or any component parts, for example as an external consultant.

Exceptions to the avoidance of reciprocal external examining occurs in subject/ programme areas where there is limited expertise. In these circumstances AQS asks Senior Faculty members for their confirmation the external examiner is objective and impartial in their role.

### **Faculty Assessment Boards (2<sup>nd</sup> Tier)**

In addition to the criteria for the appointment of an External Examiner to Subject Assessment Boards, the following criteria should be applied to External Examiners proposed for Faculty Assessment Boards.

- An External Examiner nominated to Faculty Assessment Boards should be selected from the pool of External Examiners appointed to Subject Assessment Boards within the Faculty.
- The proposed External Examiner should have appropriate and sufficient knowledge and experience of Middlesex University Subject Assessment Boards, normally at least 1 year, and should have attended a University induction training.

- External Examiners will be appointed to run in parallel to their existing appointment to the Middlesex University Subject Assessment Boards or for a period of 4 years.