



## External Examiner Policy

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**1. REVISION HISTORY AND APPROVAL**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Nature of change</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0	First Issue	JL	27/7/21
1.1	Additions of 3.1.7, 3.1.8, 4.3.4.4, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4 as well as amendments to 5.5.1, 5.2.2 and change to length of service for 7.1	EM/AC	8/8/2024

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1. A principal outcome of external examination is the introduction of an independent quality assurance element into the procedures for the assessment of learners. An external examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning. (QQI 2015, p1). External examining is one of the principal means for maintaining academic standards and is an integral and essential part of institutional quality assurance. (QAA, 2018, p4).

## **3. EXTERNAL EXAMINER AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- 3.1. An external examiner's role is to:
- 3.1.1. Assess the appropriateness of assessment methods
  - 3.1.2. Assess the appropriateness of intended learning outcomes (accurate and attainable)
  - 3.1.3. Benchmark learning outcomes against national standards and across other higher educational institutes in the same field
  - 3.1.4. Review and provide feedback on assessment tasks
  - 3.1.5. Jointly agree, as a member of the Board of Examiners, detailed assessment, award and learner final degree results.
  - 3.1.6. Submit a formal report and recommendations summarizing their findings.
  - 3.1.7. Review and approve chairs actions where required to ensure learners' awards are ratified at the earliest possible opportunity.
  - 3.1.8. Approve applications from potential learners who wish to join a programme with exemptions from specific modules or academic years of study due to previous completion of applicable prior learning.

## **4. NOMINATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINER**

- 4.1. Each programme will be assigned an External Examiner (or a team of External Examiners) and these are appointed according to the relevant validating body's criteria. See procedures for the nomination of External Examiners for both QQI and Middlesex University.
- 4.2. Nomination and appointment of an External Examiner is a rigorous process, one which ensures robust quality assurance and external expertise in relation to the assessment of learners. This should ensure that:
- 4.2.1. criteria for the identification, nomination and appointment of candidates are understood and accessible to all staff initiating appointments
  - 4.2.2. nominations are assessed effectively and rigorously
  - 4.2.3. any potential intellectual property difficulties, such as might arise from the need for commercial confidentiality, are resolved prior to the appointment. (QAA, 2018).
- 4.3. Criteria for the Nomination of an External Examiner (QQI)
- 4.3.1. Any member of the Faculty can nominate an External Examiner
  - 4.3.2. All nominations are presented by the Institute Link Tutor to the Academic Council for review and consideration.
  - 4.3.3. The Academic Council will review the nomination based on the following criteria:
    - 4.3.3.1 An External Examiner's academic qualifications should be appropriate in level and subject for examining the programme(s) to which they are appointed, i.e. the examiner should hold a qualification in the subject area (or a closely related area) at a level on the NFQ at least equal to the programme being examined.
    - 4.3.3.2 Each External Examiner's standing, expertise and experience should be such as to enable the fulfilment of his/her responsibility in the maintenance of the academic standards of the programme(s) in the context of higher education both nationally and internationally.
    - 4.3.3.3 An External Examiner should have a breadth of practical experience within their field of study to complement their academic knowledge.

- 4.3.3.4 An External Examiner must not have worked with the appointed programme within the past 4 years
- 4.3.3.5 No known or disclosed conflicts of interest.
- 4.3.4. It is the responsibility of the External Examiner to declare an interest if placed in a position of making a judgement about any learner with whom there has been direct contact, such as:
  - 4.3.4.1 As a sponsor, relative or friend.
  - 4.3.4.2 As a close professional colleague.
  - 4.3.4.3 Having been involved with the supervision of the learner on placement or professional training.
  - 4.3.4.4 External Examiners appointed to programmes must meet any specified qualification requirements of the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
- 4.4. Criteria for Appointment of External Examiners (Middlesex University)
  - 4.4.1. Criteria are comprehensively covered in the policy document: External Examiner Nomination Criteria – MU.pdf
  - 4.4.2. All Middlesex University External Examiners must be residing in the UK for them to be considered for appointed to the role.
  - 4.4.3. There should not be a replacement of an External Examiner by an individual from the same institution unless in exceptional circumstances.
  - 4.4.4. Where a potential External Examiner has not previously served in a similar role they will need to demonstrate significant experience of internal moderation or verification of assessment within their home institution or previous involvement in institutional validation, monitoring and review activities. If there is no evidence of this, a ‘shadow year’ or a mentoring arrangement may be required where the External examiner would work alongside an experienced currently-appointed external.
- 5. SUPPORT FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**
  - 5.1. All External Examiner communication, expectations and workflow will be managed and supported through the Programmes Office.
  - 5.2. The Programmes Office is responsible for ensuring that the External Examiner is:
    - 5.2.1. In the case of UK-validated awards, trained by the validating body.
    - 5.2.2. In the case of non-UK validated awards, provided with role and function training.
    - 5.2.3. Fully briefed and inducted in relation to their roles and responsibilities, including an invitation to informally provide feedback to the programme team at any stage during their appointment
    - 5.2.4. Understands the online submission process, which includes access to all assessments and all relevant assessment documents
    - 5.2.5. Provided with a reasonable timeframe within which to conduct expected duties. A schedule of Boards and report timeframes is prepared before each academic year and communicated to the External Examiner
    - 5.2.6. Provided with all information necessary in order to fairly and accurately quality assure learner assessments, including the description and context of assessment, learning outcomes and overall programme outcomes
    - 5.2.7. Consulted with in relation to programme design and review on request of the Programme Leader
- 6. EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT**
  - 6.1. The External Examiner’s report is a vital ingredient in the monitoring of assessment and academic quality assurance across programmes.

- 6.2. On completion of an Assessment Board, the External Examiner is required to submit a formal report within 2 weeks of the Assessment Boards which includes an overview of the following:
  - 6.2.1. Programme Design: Content and Standards
  - 6.2.2. Learner’s Academic Performance
  - 6.2.3. Assessment Structure, Design and Marking
  - 6.2.4. Assessment Boards discussion points
  - 6.2.5. Role of the External Examiner
  - 6.2.6. Recommendations/Actions
  - 6.2.7. Good practice
- 6.3. External Examiner report outcomes (actions, guidance, feedback, etc.) is transferred to the Academic Council for follow-up by the Programmes Office post-boards.
- 6.4. Four weeks post receipt of an External Examiner report, the Head of Counselling & Psychotherapy will provide a formal response in writing via the Institute Link Tutor to all required stakeholders
- 6.5. A copy of the External Examiner’s report is published on the Learner and Staff areas of the College portal and discussed at Programme Voice Groups and All Lecturer’s Meetings.

## 7. LENGTH OF SERVICE

- 7.1. The duration of an External Examiner’s appointment will be for four years. An extension of one year may be permitted, if necessary, to allow for role continuity.
- 7.2. The College reserves the right to terminate an External Examiner’s appointment at any time.  
Exemplar criteria:
  - 7.2.1. failure to fulfil required obligations
  - 7.2.2. where a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved

## 8. DISCLOSURES

- 8.1. On nomination, the proposed External Examiner has the opportunity to declare any conflict of interest that would compromise their role as an External Examiner.
- 8.2. During their tenure, the External Examiner must keep the College informed of any changes in circumstances that may give rise to a conflict of interest so that appropriate action can be taken.
- 8.3. If a change in an External Examiner’s circumstances creates a conflict of interest, the External Examiner may need to tender their resignation, the contract may need to be terminated or the conflict of interest can be satisfactorily resolved.

## 9. LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Linked Policies	Assessment of Learners Policy QA Management Policy
Linked Procedures	Assessment of Learners Procedure External Examiner Procedure External Examiner Nomination Criteria