This regulation applies to PU sites of delivery and all UK and international partnerships, unless exceptions to regulations have been formally approved.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINING WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY**

**Plymouth University**

**Process for the Selection, Approval and Appointment of External Examiners for Taught Programmes**

*(Amendments since 2014/15 bold and underlined)*

**Introduction**

The University's Regulations (and the regulations of external bodies, where appropriate) require External Examiners to be involved with all examinations and other forms of assessment which contribute to the students' final awards. External Examiners must therefore be involved in assessments of pre-final stages of programmes if there is a carry forward mark to the final award.

Normally one External Examiner will be appointed for each subject area. The range of modules for which s/he is to be responsible should not normally exceed 360 credits in any one academic year. If it is proposed that the number of credits exceed 360 (up to a maximum of 480 credits\(^2\)) the nomination should be accompanied by a rationale, which should include details of the size of the cohort/s concerned, and confirmation from the nominee that s/he is confident of being able to cover the workload.

Where there is identical provision on campus, or across partners, the same External Examiner should be appointed for these programmes wherever possible, subject to the above constraints regarding maximum workload.

The number of External Examiners will vary from programme of study to programme of study.

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1 Incorporating the former document ‘Criteria for the Selection and Appointment of External Examiners for Taught Programmes’.

2 The 480 credits may be made up of modules delivered in one institution or across a maximum of two partners irrespective of whether they are core or optional modules and of whether they are currently running.
Subject External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of four academic years, with appointments normally running from 1 August to 31 October (Undergraduate programmes commencing in September) and 1 August to 31 December (Postgraduate programmes).

Award External Examiners may be appointed for the full four year term or the appointment may be rotated between the relevant Subject External Examiners so that the role is potentially filled each year by a different Subject External. The proposed Award External Examining arrangements must be approved in advance by the External Examiners Sub-Committee. A Subject External Examiner will not normally be approved to act as an Award External unless s/he is in at least her/his second year of appointment with the University.

An appointment may be extended in exceptional circumstances, for example, where a programme is being withdrawn.

**Process of nomination and approval**

Guidance on the process for nomination, approval and appointment of External Examiners is available on the External Examiners Community at [http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk//extexam/eeappt/intranet.htm](http://staff.plymouth.ac.uk//extexam/eeappt/intranet.htm)

The External Examiners Community also includes links to national External Examiner databases which provide a useful source of information about potential nominees.

Overall responsibility for the timely nomination of external examiners to ensure sufficient opportunity for the required Home Office checks to be conducted in advance of their appointment, and for appropriate induction, remains with the Head of School/Partner HE Co-ordinator (or equivalent).

Following approval at Faculty/Academic Partnerships level, nominations are scrutinised by the Central Quality Office to determine the most appropriate approval route:

- nominations that clearly meet all the University’s appointment criteria will be considered by Chair’s action
- nominations that depart from the criteria in any way and require a supporting rationale, for example, if the nominee does not have previous external examining experience will be considered by two members of the Sub-Committee not being from the Faculty proposing the appointment. In the case of disagreement between members the final decision will lie with the Chair.
Criteria for the selection and appointment of Subject External Examiners

When making the nomination of an External Examiner, the Head of School (or equivalent) in consultation with other Heads of School (if appropriate) will ensure that:

- where there is a team of External Examiners for a programme of studies or leading to an award there is an adequate balance including:
  - examining experience
  - academic and professional practitioners
  - members from different institutions of higher education

- the nominee has achieved academic or professional qualifications in an appropriate subject and at a level appropriate for the modules/programme of study to be examined.\(^3\)

- the nominee is of an appropriate academic and/or professional standing to command the respect of colleagues and to maintain the comparability of academic standards in the context of higher education. Retirees can be considered provided they have sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.

- the nominee has sufficient recent experience of examining at the required level, preferably including experience as an external examiner, or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area concerned. For example, an external examiner for a Foundation degree should be capable of assessing whether a student is capable of proceeding to level 6 and therefore should have experience of teaching and assessing at level 6. Information on proposed arrangements for the induction and support of an inexperienced nominee should be included with the nomination form. The lack of previous external examining experience does not in itself normally bar the nomination of an otherwise suitable nominee provided that effective induction and briefing arrangements can be put in place to support the individual concerned, except in the case of an international partnership where a nominee for an Award External Examiner appointment must have previous external examining experience, as well as TNE experience. The appointment of a mentor may be a condition of approval in some circumstances eg for a Subject External Examiner appointment for an international partnership where the nominee does not have previous external examining experience.

- the nominee has knowledge of standards of academic assessment in the UK sufficient to make the required academic judgement about comparability of standards with other UK HE institutions. Potential nominees who do not have experience of delivering and assessing in UK HE should be briefed in advance of this requirement and their attention drawn to the relevant elements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

\(^3\) At least the level of the qualification being examined.
• the nominee has expertise in the enhancement of the student learning experience and, where appropriate, awareness of modern developments in the design and delivery of the flexible curriculum.

• **the nominee has an appropriate level of digital literacy (for example, familiarity with using Moodle (or a similar system), Skype and file sharing or repository tools (for example, MS OneDrive)) to enable effective engagement with the University’s Digital Learning Environment, with appropriate induction and support where necessary**

• where appropriate, the nominee meets the criteria set out by the professional or accrediting body.

• External Examiners are drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that individual subjects or programmes of study have the benefit of wide ranging external scrutiny. Normally there must not be:
  - reciprocal external examining between subjects or programmes or departments in two institutions (this means that an external examiner should not be appointed from another institution where a member of the University’s staff is serving as an external examiner for a cognate programme);
  - replacement of an External Examiner by an individual from the same department in the same institution;
  - an External Examiner from an institution in which the subject area concerned has been the source of examiners in the recent past (normally five years).

• the nominee will not have such other extensive examining commitments that they cannot properly discharge their duties in respect of this University.
  - External Examiners should not normally hold more than the equivalent of a total of two substantial appointments at the same time.
  - If a proposed External Examiner already holds two appointments, the Head of School will be required to provide a clear argument for the nomination being pursued. This should include a commentary on the amount of work, numbers of students and dates of meetings of Assessment Panels and Boards at other institutions to which the External Examiner is already committed.

• the nominee will be impartial in judgement and over the last five years the nominee normally must not have been:
  - a member of staff, a governor, a student or a near relative or partner of a member of staff in relation to the programme of studies or who had a relationship with any of the above;
  - an examiner for another cognate subject/programme in the University;

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4 A former member of staff or student may not be appointed unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s).
- a member of staff of any of the University's Partner Colleges
- involved as an External Examiner for the subject or programme of study when it was approved by another validating body;

and over the last two years must not have been:
- involved in a close research collaboration with a member of staff associated with the programme/subject area;

in addition, the nominee must not be:
- personally associated with the sponsorship of students from the subject/programme;
- required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the modules or programme of study;
- in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the modules or programme of study;
- likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation.

- An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years has elapsed since the end of their appointment.
- The nominee should be fluent in English and, where the programme is not delivered and assessed in English, fluent in the relevant language(s).
- The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that any potential intellectual property difficulties, such as might arise from the need for commercial confidentiality, are resolved prior to appointment.
- If the nominee does not meet any one of the above criteria a supporting rationale must be provided with the nomination form.
- An External Examiner must immediately notify Sue Gregory, Quality Assurance Adviser, Central Quality Office in writing of any material change in circumstances which would lead to a breach of the conditions of appointment outlined above.

Criteria for the selection and appointment of Award External Examiners
- The principal role of the Award External Examiner is to ensure that the University’s regulations are being implemented consistently, fairly and in line with national standards and expectations for such processes. The Award External Examiner therefore needs to be fully conversant with the University’s regulations and standard regulatory policies and practices across the sector.
- The Award External Examiner may also be a member of the appropriate group of Subject External Examiners. Nominees should normally be drawn from an

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5 A nominee may be involved in the recruitment of graduates, some of whom may be graduates of Plymouth University. If this is a shared responsibility with other colleagues, however, this would not constitute 'significant' influence on the future employment of students.
academic background relevant to the discipline in which the awards being considered reside in order to ensure those taking on this role are appropriately qualified to make a judgement on the academic standard of the award and on student performance at award level.

- In addition to the experience outlined above, nominees for the Award External Examiner role for Academic Partnerships would need to have appropriate experience of partnerships.

Home Office requirements

The Home Office expects universities to carry out right to work in the UK checks on all external examiners. The EE1 form completed at the start of the nomination process requires nominees to provide the necessary information to enable these checks to be undertaken. Further details of the procedure to be followed are contained in the document ‘External examiners and employment checks – Home Office requirements’ available via the External Examiners’ community at https://intranet.plymouth.ac.uk/extexam/intranet.htm