

Guidance 4(i) Criteria for appointment of External Examiners

Introduction

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.

Nominees from backgrounds other than higher education, for example business, industry or professional practice, may not be able to fulfil all the criteria below but would nonetheless be able to make a significant contribution as an external examiner. Any exceptions to the criteria must be discussed with the Quality Manager (Externality) and approved by the Director of Academic Quality Service.

All External Examiners are usually appointed from October to September or November (for PG), 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, they can phase the appointments to enable the mentoring of new external examiners for that programme.

External Examiners are required to declare any interest in, or connection with, any student or staff member throughout the time of their appointment.

An External Examiner's permanent residence must be located in the UK, they must also be eligible to work in the UK and complete the appropriate right to work requirements for the university.

The External Examiner must be willing and able to provide the evidence as required by the checklist published by the Home Office.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checklist>

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

- 1.1 The External Examiner should have knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
- 1.2 Both the level and the subject of the external examiner's qualifications should generally match what is to be examined in the programme.
- 1.3 External Examiners appointed to programmes must meet any specified qualification requirements of the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

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:

- 2.1 The present (or last, if retired) post and place of work.
- 2.2 The range and scope of experience across higher education/ professions.
- 2.3 Current and recent active involvement in research/ scholarly/ professional activities in the field of study concerned.
- 2.4 Familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award which is to be assessed.
- 2.5 Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
- 2.6 Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

3. An External Examiner should have enough recent external examining, or comparable related experience, to indicate competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures.

While a nominee's standing and credibility may be determined in part by their seniority within their home institution, this does not preclude the nomination of other appropriately qualified individuals. If the proposed External Examiner has no previous/ recent external examining experience at the appropriate level, the nomination should be supported by evidence of:

- 3.1 Other types of 'externality' (e.g. as a PSRB auditor/ accreditor).
- 3.2 Significant experience of internal moderation or verification of assessment within their home institution. 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, perhaps on a related programme.
- 3.3 Other relevant and recent experience likely to support them in their duties, e.g. participation in their home institution's validation, monitoring and review activities.

4. An External Examiner should have fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s).

The proposed External Examiner should have:

- 4.1 The necessary language skills where tuition and/or assessment is not in English.
- 4.2 For overseas programmes/partners, 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. *See also Guidance 4iii Approval of external examiners who do not meet the criterion relating to UK Higher Education experience*

5. There should not be reciprocal external examining between Programmes / Departments across Middlesex and the External Examiner's own institution.

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 There should not be replacement of an External Examiner by an individual from the same institution unless in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.3 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.

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.

6. External Examiners may hold up to three substantive External Examiner appointments at the same time; this includes their appointment for Middlesex University.

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:

- 7.1 An appropriate balance between academic and professional practitioners, where possible.
- 7.2 A range of academic perspectives necessary to the programme represented in the external examining team.
- 7.3 A balance between individuals from universities and industry.
- 7.4 At least one practitioner with appropriate experience in the external examiner team for any programmes/modules which lead to a professional qualification.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 The phasing of appointments to the external examiner team should be structured to ensure continuity.

8. External Examiners should be impartial in judgement. It is preferred that over the past five years, they should not have previous close involvement with the University, or one of the University's Collaborative Partners which might compromise objectivity. Where there is a connection during the past five years an appointment may be permissible with the approval of the Director AQS.

Over the last five years, the proposed External Examiner:

- 8.1 Should not be a member of staff, a governor, or a student of Middlesex University
- 8.2 Should not be a near relative of a member of staff in relation to the programme or department the programme is housed in.
- 8.3 Should not be employed by one of the University's Collaborative partners.

- 8.4 Should not have a close personal, or contractual, relationship with a member of staff or student on the programme.
- 8.5 Should not be involved in teaching or delivery of seminars or lectures for the programme.
- 8.6 Where there is limited expertise, a recently retired in-house External Examiner may be approved for a collaborative validated programme at a partner institution.
- 8.7 Should not be an external examiner on a cognate programme in Middlesex University.
- 8.8 For newly validated collaborative partner provision, the existing External Examiner (under the previous awarding body) may be able to continue with their role for the remainder of their original term of office; the standard tenure for an External Examiner is four years and their previous time in post contributes towards this.
- 8.9 Personally associated with the sponsorship of students/graduates from the programme.
- 8.10 Required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme.
- 8.11 Able to influence significantly the future employment of students on the programme.
- 8.12 Should not be involved with student placements or training.
- 8.13 Employed by an HE institution which heads a consortium of FE colleges at which the programme is delivered.
- 8.14 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.
- 8.15 Involved in the development of the programme or any component parts, for example as an external consultant.