

Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners to Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes, UCC

Dear Colleagues,

This is a briefing note from the **External Examiner Sub-Committee (EESC)** on the procedure for the nomination and appointment of External Examiners for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes and the role they are expected to play in the assessment process.

The External Examiner Sub-Committee (EESC)

The EESC is a sub-committee of the Academic Council's Academic Development and Standards Committee (ADSC). The EESC's **Terms of reference** are:

On behalf of Academic Board to:

- a) Approve nominations for External Examiners for taught programmes ensuring compliance with appointment procedures and to recommend nominations to Academic Board for onward submission to the National University of Ireland (NUI) for approval.
- b) Consider and refer regulatory issues or matters of principle relating to External Examiner appointments to the Academic Board for consideration as appropriate.
- c) Maintain a register of External Examiners and ensure external examiners are duly appointed to all taught UCC awards.
- d) Consider and suggest options for enhancing institutional engagement with External Examiners and their role at UCC.
- e) Prepare an annual consolidated report in consultation with the Registrar on matters identified by External Examiners in their reports or as a result of quality improvement processes in UCC and propose policy or procedural adjustments as appropriate.
- f) Ensure that Colleges respond as appropriate to its annual review of External Examiner reports, alerting the Registrar to urgent matters requiring attention.

Nomination of External Examiners

External Examiners are **nominated** by Heads of School/Departments/Disciplines and **approved** by the EESC acting on behalf of the ADSC and Academic Board/Academic Council. These nominations

are monitored by the Head of College/or nominee.¹ **Completed External Examiner Nomination Forms should be forwarded to the Academic Secretariat by email to externexaminers@ucc.ie. Paper copies are not required.**

Nominations must be made on the prescribed form and are available at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/academicsecretariat/externs/forms/> and must include a brief statement on the suitability of the proposed appointee. Nominations which do not include such a statement will be referred back to the academic unit.

External Examiners are appointed for a maximum of three academic years. Externs may be nominated to serve for an additional year but no further extensions will be permitted. Externs should **not** be re-appointed to any programme/course within the same academic unit unless there has been a gap of **at least five years.**

The closing date for the nomination of new Externs is **15 September 2017.** That date may be varied in the event of resignations/terminations or other exceptional events. The EESC will consider such nominations throughout the year.

The criteria for appointment as an External Examiner are as follows:

1. An External Examiner's academic and professional qualifications should be appropriate to the subject area being examined.
2. External Examiners should have high academic standing and expertise, with the experience to adjudicate on comparability of standards.
3. There must be no conflicts of interest, whether personal, professional or commercial, that would undermine or be seen to undermine the independence of the proposed External Examiner and their role as an External Examiner. **Former UCC students and staff members can only be appointed as an External Examiner after a period of not less than ten years has passed since leaving the institution.** In exceptional circumstances the EESC will consider nominations of former staff and students with a gap of between five and ten years.
4. It is desirable to appoint External Examiners from different institutions and/or departments rather than a single institution/department.

¹ The nominee appointed will likely be the Chair of the relevant College Teaching and Learning Committee or equivalent and the name of the individual should be reported to the Registrar

5. If the nominated Extern is retired, there should be evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.
6. Should an Extern not be in a position to fulfil their term of appointment the process for replacing External Examiners within their appointed term follows the normal appointment process.

NUI Senate has statutory responsibility for appointing External Examiners. It is the responsibility of the Academic Secretariat to notify the NUI of an External Examiner appointment and to provide the External Examiner with a letter of appointment, general guidelines on their role and duties, and details regarding procedures around fees and expenses claims.

The Role of External Examiners

The role of the External Examiner is:

- To assure academic standards and advise on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- To ensure that the academic standards of programmes, modules and awards are consistent with the academic outcomes specified and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally.
- To guarantee the fairness, validity and rigor of assessment at the University.
- To provide feedback on the quality of programmes and modules and the overall learning experience in the subject area, and on how teaching, learning and assessment may be enhanced.
- To review and enhance the assessment process but not routinely to act as an additional examiner. The conduct of assessment and the determination of marks, grades and awards is a matter for the internal examiners acting with the support of and the advice of the External Examiners.
- Where applicable External Examiners are expected to exercise their functions with due regard for professional standards and the requirements of regulatory bodies.

Circumstances may arise – for example a difference of opinion between internal examiners – when it is appropriate for an Extern to act as a second or additional marker. But when an Extern is involved in the assessment of a subset of the student cohort, it is important to ensure that those students are assessed against the same overall standards and criteria as other students. The final decision in

relation to the award of marks or grades rests with the Examination Board and Academic Board and Council of the University in accordance with the statutes and regulations of the University.

To enable them to fulfil their role academic units should provide External Examiners with:

- Full information on the programmes and modules under examination, including assessment strategies, methods of assessment, and the way in which the results of individual papers or other units of assessment are aggregated, averaged or profiled to produce an overall result.
- Copies of any relevant assessment procedures, guidelines or statutes.
- A sufficient sample of graded assessments to confirm standards and to make any relevant recommendations on learning outcomes, assessment and grading practices. In addition, all student work that contributes to the overall final assessment shall be available on request to External Examiners.
- A detailed breakdown of marks for each module moderated and, where appropriate, information on the distribution of grades for courses or modules.

External Examiners are expected to visit the University at least once during each year of their term of appointment and may engage in discussions with Schools/Departments or key committees within Schools/Departments at any time during their appointment.

External Examiners are required to provide an annual report to the University on assessment standards and procedures, together with any observations on necessary improvements. Academic units are sent copies of these reports and are required to complete a form detailing their response to Extern comments. Both sets of reports will be forwarded to the relevant colleges for information and comment and will be reviewed by the EESC as part of its annual report.

Please note that the fees of External Examiners should not be paid until after the receipt of their annual report, which should be submitted following the summer examinations and before the beginning of the academic year.

Note: It is the responsibility of the local academic unit (and not the Academic Secretariat) to process fees and expense claims once the External Examiner has visited and submitted their report. Local units should contact their College Financial Analyst with queries around the payment of External Examiner fees and expenses.

Where an External Examiner has significant concerns they may provide a confidential report to the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic.

Further information on External Examiners can be found at:

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/academicsecretariat/externs/>

External Examiner Sub-Committee

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