External Examining Policy

Registry Services

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1. Introduction

1.1 External examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining nationally comparable standards within autonomous Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors and provide informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and important part of institutional quality assurance.

1.2 This policy explains the University's approach to external examining, inclusive of:

- External examiner nomination and appointment
- External examiner roles and responsibilities
- External examiner annual reporting
- External examiner payment and expenses

1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the associated procedures and guidance for external examining activities.

1.4 The University's End Point Assessment Policy should also be consulted with regards to external input specific to apprenticeship End Point Assessments (EPAs).

2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to all provision within the University's taught academic portfolio that leads to the award of credit, including apprenticeships and technical education, credit-bearing short courses and taught academic provision delivered at DMU Leicester, DMU London, DMU Dubai, and in collaboration with UK and Transnational Education (TNE) collaborative partners. Research degrees are not covered by this policy.

2.2 Whilst the university recognises the importance of DMU staff partaking in external examiner duties at other institutions, this policy does not cover members of DMU staff who themselves act as an external examiner.

3. Glossary

3.1 **Programme** – an approved unique course of study that provides a coherent learning and assessment experience that normally leads to a qualification of the university.

3.2 **Module** – a self-contained, formally structured unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

3.3 **External examiner** – an independent and impartial subject expert and external adviser who provides informed comment and external scrutiny on the standards set by the University, their comparability to those standards set at other higher education institutions (HEIs), and student achievement in relation to those standards.

4. Responsibilities

Academic Board

4.1 The University's Academic Board is responsible for overseeing the scholarly activities of the University. This includes responsibility for the policies and procedures for the assessment of the academic performance of students, including the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners, oversight of the academic standards and quality of the University's taught academic provision, and oversight of the content of the University's curriculum.

Academic Quality Committee

4.2 The University's Academic Quality Committee is responsible, on behalf of Academic Board, for overseeing the implementation of the University's External Examining Policy and the outputs of external examiner appointment and induction, marking and moderation, and external examiner annual reporting (including oversight of any serious concerns raised by external examiners), and external examiner termination of appointment procedures.

Academic Quality Services

4.3 The University's Academic Quality Services team are responsible for the development and maintenance of the External Examining Policy and for managing external examiner appointment and induction, external examiner annual reporting, co-ordination of responses to serious concerns raised by external examiners, and external examiner termination of appointment procedures.

External Examiner and External Roles Appointments Panel

4.4 The University's External Examiner and External Roles Appointments Panel is responsible for approving the appointment of external examiners and external roles, including approval of nominations, extension of time and reallocation of duties, and termination of external examiner appointments and other external roles.

External Examiners

4.5 External examiners are responsible for providing independent and impartial scrutiny and advice on curriculum development and design, academic standards, and assessment

Faculties and branch campuses

4.6 The University's faculties and branch campuses are responsible for sourcing and nominating new external examiners to fill vacancies and are responsible for managing marking and moderation procedures and ongoing interactions with external examiners during their term in office.

Note: collaborative partner roles and responsibilities for managing marking and moderation procedures and ongoing interactions with external examiners will be articulated in the relevant service level agreements.

5. General principles/Policy statements

5.1 **General principles**

External examiners ensure that:

- Taught academic awards granted by the University are comparable in standard to those of other HEIs and comply with national threshold standards.
- Marking and moderation processes for taught academic awards are robust and fairly operated.
- Assessment boards apply the University's academic regulations with sufficient probity, rigour and fairness to ensure the integrity of DMU taught academic awards and the equitable treatment of students.

No taught academic award of the University will be made without participation in the assessment process by at least one external examiner.

The University will give due regard to additional and differing external examining requirements for apprenticeships and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) provision to ensure compliance with additional regulatory and accreditation requirements as appropriate.

5.2 **External examiner roles and responsibilities**

External examiners are required to scrutinise and advise on the following:

- Curriculum development and design: the currency, relevance and coherence of curricular material.
- Standards: that learning materials and learning outcomes are appropriate to curricula and that students are able to achieve standards comparable with those elsewhere and comparable to subject and level threshold requirements.
- Assessment: that assessment aims and objectives are appropriate, the purposes and philosophy of assessment are clearly articulated and understood, that the load of assessment is appropriate, and assessment is properly and impartially conducted.

Specifically, external examiners will be asked to:

- Advise on curriculum design, assessment design, programme modification, programme revalidation in accordance with the University's Programme Approval and Management Policy and its Programme Modification and Revalidation Procedures.
- Sign-off draft examination papers, assignment briefs, and students' choice of projects, design exercises, and dissertations.
- Undertake external moderation of assessed work in accordance with the University's Assessment and Feedback Policy and Marking and Moderation Procedure.
- Confirm that marking and moderation processes have been robust and fairly operated.
- Confirm that taught academic awards granted by the University are comparable in standard to those of other HEIs and comply with national threshold standards and other relevant external frameworks and reference points.
- Act as an ex officio member of the assessment board to which they are appointed, contributing to the approval of module marks, determining award outcomes, and attending at least one assessment board meeting each academic cycle.
- Complete an annual report at the end of each academic cycle.

There is no formal requirement for external examiners to meet with students. However, external examiners should be provided with the opportunity to engage with students where this is deemed appropriate by the programme team or the assessment board in the context of the external examiner's role and responsibilities.

In line with the University's commitment to sustainability, external examiners will not normally be required to attend in-person meetings and will not normally visit collaborative partner delivery sites. Any requirement for travel will be communicated to an external examiner when they are nominated and appointed.

5.3 **External examiner nomination and appointment**

In the first instance, faculties and branch campuses will source, nominate and endorse external examiners for appointment.

The University's External Examiner and External Roles Appointment Panel (EEERAP) will consider and approve external examiner nominations and will seek to ensure nominees are suitably qualified, have the necessary experience, and are impartial.

Criteria for appointment

Appointment criteria are in place to ensure that external examiners are competent to undertake their duties and to ensure that conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to appointment.

Please see Appendix B for further details of external examiner criteria for appointment.

EEERAP will take into account any legitimate case for making an appointment that does not fulfil all the criteria (e.g. where external examiners are drawn from business, industry or professional practice, or where the pool of potential external examiners is restricted).

EEERAP will also seek to ensure that external examiners are not over-extended by their external examining duties and will not normally appoint an external examining with more than one other external examiner appointment.

Independence and impartiality

External examiners will be entirely independent of DMU and any collaborative partner institutions. External examiners will not normally be appointed if they have had close and persistent contact with a current member of staff of the University (or collaborative partner) at any time during the previous five years (either prior to, or during their employment at the University or collaborative partner).

Please see Appendix C for further details of circumstances that should be avoided to prevent conflicts of interest.

Any of these circumstances that cannot be avoided must be declared on the nomination form and be accompanied a clear rationale for consideration by EEERAP.

Any examiner, once appointed, who has a potential conflict of interest (for example being related to or a close friend of a student under consideration), must declare that

interest to the chair of the appropriate assessment board(s) at the earliest opportunity, and should not normally be expected to be the examiner for the student concerned.

Through nomination and appointment activities, the University will seek to avoid external examiners rotating in regular order from institution to institution.

Period of appointment

External examiners will normally be appointed for a period of four years but may be extended exceptionally by EEERAP for a further year to ensure continuity of external oversight or to support succession planning.

In exceptional circumstances, an external examiner may be re-appointed after a five-year period.

5.4 **External examiner termination of appointment and resignation**

The appointment of an external examiner may be terminated if the EEERAP judges that the responsibilities of the appointment have not been or cannot be fulfilled in the manner or to the standard which the university requires. Reasons for termination could include:

- Failure to provide reports using the standard report proforma, to the expected professional standard and to be submitted within reasonable timescales, normally within a month after the main assessment board.
- Inability to participate in two successive assessment periods, without good reason and without arranging alternative means to input into the assessment process.
- Failure to undertake external examiner duties to the satisfaction of the university by providing inadequate scrutiny of proposed assessments and/or an unacceptable delay in corresponding with the programme team.
- Any change in the external examiners' circumstances which brings about potential conflicts of interest which might jeopardise objectivity.
- Persistent refusal to work within the university's academic regulations.
- Relocation of the external examiner far from the United Kingdom.
- Withdrawal of, or non-recruitment to, programmes. It is the responsibility of the programme leader to inform the external examiner and AQS if this is the case.
- If a reciprocal arrangement is discovered after the appointment or is created when an existing examiner moves to another institution, the appointment will be reviewed.

External examiners wishing to resign from their position should give a minimum of three months' notice.

5.5 External examiner induction and mentoring

External examiners will be inducted into their role by the faculties and branch campuses and AQS. Induction will include information on DMU's Academic Quality Framework and the role and responsibilities of external examiners within that framework, as well as any additional regulatory or accreditation requirements relevant to the programme.

Faculties and branch campuses will ensure regular communication with, and ongoing support for, external examiners throughout their term in office.

Nominees who are new to external examining or have professional experience relevant to a professional or vocational programme can be appointed to the role of external examiner, but will normally require a mentor for their first year of appointment.

Existing external examiners may be asked to act as a mentor to newly appointed external examiners to offer further support during their first year of appointment.

The following criteria will normally apply to external examiner mentors:

- The mentor will be an experienced external examiner from the University's current pool of examiners
- The mentor will attend the same assessment board as the mentee or be from a similar subject area.
- The mentor will have a strong academic background with recent experience of working in higher education.
- The mentor will have participated in a least one assessment period at the university. They should, therefore, have produced at least one good quality annual report and have submitted it in a timely manner.

5.6 External examiner allocations and oversight

Each of the University's taught academic awards will receive programme oversight by at least one external examiner. In addition, each module that contributes to the final classification of a taught academic award will receive external examiner oversight. This includes modules at:

- Level 4 for Higher National Certificates (HNC).
- Level 5 for Higher National Diplomas (HND) and Foundation Degrees (FdA/FdSc).
- Levels 5 and 6 for Bachelor's Degrees (BA/BSc/LLB).
- Levels 5, 6 and 7 for Integrated Master's Degrees.

- Level 7 for Postgraduate Certificates (PgCert), Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip), and Master's Degrees (MA/MBA/MSc/LLM).

Whilst not classified awards, external examiner module oversight is also required at:

- Level 3 for standalone (non-integrated) Level 3 programmes.
- Level 4 for Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE).
- Level 5 for Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE).
- Level 5 and 6 for credit-bearing short courses.
- Level 6 for Graduate Certificates (GradCert) and Graduate Diplomas (GradDip).
- Level 4, 5 and 6 for a University Certificate of Professional Development (UCPD).

New collaborative partners delivering DMU HND, BA/BSc/LLB, or DipHE programmes, will require external examiner module oversight during the first year of Level 4 delivery.

Additional external examiner oversight may also be implemented to comply with specific regulatory or accreditation requirements.

The indicative annual workload for an external examiner will be 360 credits for undergraduate provision and 180 credits for postgraduate provision.

5.7 **External examiner fees and expenses**

External examiners will be informed of their fees in their letter of appointment. Fees may vary depending on workload but will align with the University's standard payment rates. External examiner fees will be paid annually following submission and approval of an external examiner's annual report. If no annual report is received, no fee payment will be made.

Claims for expenses must be submitted within three months of the incurred expenses using the published claim form.

6. Monitoring and review

6.1 This policy and its application will be monitored by the University's Academic Quality Committee and Academic Quality Services team. A full review of the policy will take place every three years with policy revisions considered and approved by the University's Academic Board.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

7.1 The University is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all of its activities, including external examining. Through this policy the University is committed to providing clear and justifiable criteria for the appointment of appropriately qualified external examiners and ensuring that criteria and recruitment practices do not create unfair barriers for qualified individuals. External examiners also play an important role in ensuring that the University's taught academic portfolio delivers a high-quality academic experience and positive outcomes for all students (including those from underrepresented groups).

8. Sustainability

8.1 There are no policy-specific sustainability considerations or implications to note. However, sustainability considerations have influenced the University's decision to conduct external examining activity remotely where possible, minimising the need for external examiner travel.

9. Related policies and standards/documentation

9.1 Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework, particularly the B Conditions of Registration for quality and standards.

9.2 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, particularly the Advice and Guidance for Assessment and External Expertise.

9.3 Skills England, as appropriate to the University's apprenticeship provision.

9.4 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements, as appropriate to the University's professionally accredited and regulated provision.

9.5 Internal procedures relevant to the implementation of this policy (see Appendix A below).

9.6 Assessment and Feedback Policy

9.7 Apprenticeship Assessment Policy

9.8 Programme Approval and Management Policy

9.9 Other internal policies relevant to the quality assurance of the University's taught academic provision can be accessed here on the University's website: Academic Quality Services

10. Appendix A: List of Associated Procedures

10.1 This policy is implemented via the following associated procedures:

- External Examiner Appointment and Induction Procedure
- Marking and Moderation Procedure
- External Examiner Annual Reporting Procedure

11. Appendix B: External Examiner Criteria for Appointment

11.1 External examiners will be expected to demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed external frameworks and reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student experience.
- Competence and experience in the field covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof.
- Relevant academic qualifications/professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate.
- Academic and teaching experience at the level at which assessment is taking place including competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures (either externally or internally). External examiners from outside the higher education system, for example, from industry or professional practice, may be appointed where appropriate.
- Familiarity with the standard expected of students to achieve the award that is being assessed.
- Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
- Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.
- Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers.

- Fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements).
- Their right to work in the UK.

11.2 External examiners will also be expected to meet any applicable criteria set out by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (where applicable to accredited programmes).

11.3 External examiners will also be expected to meet any applicable criteria set out in the relevant Skills England Assessment Plan (where applicable to apprenticeship programmes).

12. Appendix C: Conflicts of Interest

12.1 To avoid potential conflicts of interest, external examiners should not be appointed if they are covered by any of the following categories or circumstances:

- A member of a governing body or committee of DMU or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of DMU or one of its collaborative partners.
- A former member of staff or student of DMU or one of its collaborative partners (unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the proposed external examiner have completed their programme(s)).
- Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff involved in the delivery or oversight of the programme, or a student currently studying the programme.
- Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to significantly influence the post-study prospects of students studying on the programme.
- Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question. (However, for example, the contributions of university staff to edited works will not normally preclude the editor from consideration as an external examiner).
- Anyone from the same department of the same institution as the external examiner being replaced.

12.2 No more than one external examiner should be appointed at any one time from the same department of the same institution to externally examine in the same subject area at DMU.

12.3 Reciprocal arrangements between institutions involving cognate programmes are not permitted and an external examiner should not be appointed from a department in which a member of DMU is serving as an external examiner. It is hoped that all universities are following similar appointment criteria and would therefore turn down the nomination on the basis of a reciprocal arrangement. Nevertheless, if a member of DMU staff is offered an external examiner role in the same department in which one of DMU's existing external examiners is based, the DMU staff member must decline the appointment. If a reciprocal arrangement is discovered at a later date or is created when an existing examiner moves to another institution, the appointment will be reviewed.

12.4 Nominating an individual who has acted as an external panel member for the validation of the programme is permitted. However, such a nomination should contain an explanation of how the benefits of a fully independent perspective are outweighed by the benefits of engaging someone who has been involved in the development of the programme, and an assurance that impartiality will be maintained.

12.5 For collaborative provision, anyone who is closely associated with a competitor institution to the collaborative partner or has been closely associated with a competitor institution in the past five years (either as an external examiner or in some other capacity) should not be appointed.

13. Document and version control information:

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Approved by	Academic Board
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Coverage	DMU Leicester, DMU London, DMU Dubai, and collaborative partners (including Transnational Education)