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## **THE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' POLICY**

**April 2022**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

External Examiners are independent experts drawn from academia, industry and business, who provide an external reference point for the comparison of the University's academic standards. They assist by offering independent, objective and impartial judgment on matters that contribute significantly to the enhancement of quality in teaching, assessment and learning. They also provide professional advice and their reports are given serious consideration by the institution.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The External Examiner system is an important component of quality assurance arrangements. It offers institutions assistance in ensuring that the standards of degrees and other awards are consistent across institutions as well as providing an external mechanism for maintaining world best practice in the assessment of students' performance.

The External Examiners' Policy provides the guidelines for engaging External Examiners to achieve this purpose.

## **3. SCOPE**

This policy shall apply to External Examiners engaged in all academic programmes at all levels of the institution. (Examination question and scores' vetting/review and review of scores award for Final Oral Defence of Research Project and Dissertations?).

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

**For the purposes of this policy:**

- i) External Examiner:** A suitably qualified specialist in the Specialization/subject area for which they are contracted, who evaluates the overall quality of assessment practices in a programme, through examination of samples of student work, including coursework, final examinations, exhibits, demonstrations, research papers, etc. External Examiners are not employees of the institution, but are contracted for the sole purpose of examining the aforementioned products and processes, and receive no other benefit besides the remuneration stated in the contract.
- ii) Internal Examiner:** Academic staff/lecturers employed by the institution (including adjunct) who are the primary facilitators of its courses, designing and administering assessment items and grading.



- **First Examiner** – the primary facilitator of a course, or the Course Coordinator where more than one group of students is sitting the same course in the same trimester/session, normally more experienced in the course than the second examiner
- **Second Examiner** – a school member with experience in facilitating the course, whether or not they are currently doing so, who collaborates with the first examiner in the preparation of assessment items, including the final examination paper, where applicable. The second examiner is the second marker, especially in all failing and borderline cases and those with exceptionally high marks/grades.

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT

The institution shall engage, by means of contract, External Examiners who are specialists in their field, with relevant qualifications and experience that enable them to objectively evaluate the assessment practices of the academic programmes of the university. In so doing, they provide insight into the reliability, validity and overall quality of the assessment practices within the institution, the ultimate aim being that of programme quality enhancement. Their role is therefore an advisory one. The institution retains its autonomy in designing and conducting assessment practices in the best interest of the quality and unique attributes of its programmes, supported by evidence-based decision making.

## 6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### 6.1. Appointments

#### 6.1.1. Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners

External Examiners shall normally:

- Be competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher educational level.
- Possess relevant academic and/or professional qualifications and expertise above the level of the qualification being examined.
- Possess appropriate levels of expertise and experience in relation to the programme/courses to be examined.
- Have sufficient standing, credibility and breadth- of experience within the discipline to be able to command authority in the field and the respect of colleagues.
- Be independent and impartial in judgment (Must not be anyway connected to the course to be examined or research/dissertation)



- Be knowledgeable about the standards expected of students at the level of study.
- Have sufficient recent examining experience, or have comparable related experience, to indicate competence in assessing students in the specialist area/s they will examine.
- Not have any conflict of interest with the University College arising from personal or family relationships or from other direct ties to members of staff or students.
- Not have been a member of staff or a student of the institution in the past five years.
- Not concurrently act as consultants to a course team on course design or be a member of a panel established to review the course they examine, in order to protect their independence.

External Examiners may be appointed from outside the field of tertiary education particularly from vocational or professional programmes.

#### **6.1.2. Undertaking of the University**

In normal circumstances the University will ensure that:

- All assessment products at both undergraduate and graduate are sent to the External Examiner except in exceptional cases;
- there are no existing links between the proposed External Examiner and the programme/subject area (conflict of interest);
- examiners are properly briefed on their role, the course, and the Department's requirements;
- a new External Examiner shall not normally be from the same institution as the out-going Examiner.

#### **6.1.3. Conditions for the Appointment of External Examiners**

- Appointment of all External Examiners shall be approved by the Academic Senate.
- The appointment of an External Examiner shall be for a period of three years in the first instance and may be extended for an additional three years. In exceptional circumstances, the Academic Senate can approve a further extension, above the additional three years; for example, in areas where there are few persons qualified in this field of study. The External Examiner shall be required to sign a contract for each trimester he/she will work at the start of the trimester to give ample opportunity for briefing.
- The Human Resource Department shall draft a formal offer of appointment and shall send the letter of appointment to the External Examiner for acceptance. If the appointment is

accepted, the External Examiner shall be invited to sign a contract which shall include a confidentiality clause. Once the contract is signed the HR Manager shall retain a copy and a copy shall be sent to the External Examiner, the finance and the HOD.

- External Examiners shall not hold more than the equivalent of two substantial undergraduate appointments at a time, unless approved by the Academic Senate. It is essential that External Examiners are able to devote sufficient time to their duties.
- An External Examiner shall not examine more than six courses each trimester, unless approved by the Academic Senate.
- Retirees may be considered for appointment as External Examiners if there is sufficient evidence of their continuing involvement in the area they will be examining.

#### **6.1.4. Re-Appointment**

In some cases, where there is a shortage of skilled persons to act as External Examiners, it may be necessary to extend the contract of an External Examiner beyond the time of initial appointment.

In such cases:

- It is the responsibility of the Department requesting the re-appointment to have first gained the agreement of the External Examiner to the possible extension of his/her contract.
- The Department Head shall confirm that the External Examiner has no conflict of interest.
- The re-appointment shall be in line with the terms of the initial appointment.

## **7. APPLICATION**

External Examiners are appointed each trimester up to a normal maximum of three years' service. They are nominated through the school who submit the credentials of the proposed Examiner to the Academic Senate. The Academic Senate after the perusal of these credentials shall approve the nominations as it sees fit and shall appoint.

### **7.1. The Selection Process**

The process starts with the nomination of the External Examiner. Responsibility for nominating the Examiner lies with the relevant Department. However, External Examiners shall be appointed by the Academic Senate on the recommendation of the Dean through the school Board.

- i) Recognizing the need for External Examiners, the Department Head (HOD) shall have discussions within the department for suggestions as to persons who may be eligible to serve.

The "**Form to Nominate An External Examiner**" shall be filled out giving the necessary



information so that the HOD can make contact with the proposed person/s to ascertain his/her willingness to serve, explaining the scope of the work he/she will be required to do (i.e. the courses he/she would be required to examine) and requesting his/her credentials.

- ii) The proposed Examiner after liaising with the HOD shall provide information by completing the **“Information from External Examiners Form”** and attaching his/her credentials (current CV, certified copies of certificates/degrees, references, etc.) to be forwarded to the Head of the relevant Department. The Department Head/HOD shall forward the documents with his/her recommendations to the Dean of the relevant School, to be submitted to the School Board for consideration. If the response is favourable, the documents shall be submitted to the Registrar for submission to and approval/disapproval by the Academic Senate.
- iii) Once approved by the Academic Senate, the Human Resource Department shall contact the proposed Examiner and shall issue a formal Letter of Appointment. On receipt of an acceptance from the proposed Examiner the HR Department shall invite him/her to sign a contract which details the terms of his/her employment. Once the contract is signed and returned, the HR manager shall retain a copy, and send a copy to the External Examiner, the finance and the HOD of the prospective Department. The HR manager shall also make arrangements for the External Examiner to be given an orientation On the university examination policy/guidelines followed by orientation by the HOD of the Department with which he/she will be working. The External Examiner shall be given copies of the course outlines, marking guide and made aware of regulations governing the examination process.
- iv) The appointment shall normally be for three years, but the External Examiner shall be required to sign a contract for each trimester he/she will work. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **7.2. The Lecturers/School**

Lecturers/School shall:

- i) Identify and recommend a prospective External Examiner to the Department Head/HOD;
- ii) Nominate the prospective External Examiner by completing the requisite Nomination Form and submit to the Department Head.

### **7.3. The Department Head:**

The Department Head (HOD) shall:



- i) Liaise with the lecturer to contact the proposed External Examiner, discuss the scope of the work and request and collect credentials;
- ii) Make recommendations to the Dean of the School, based on review and assessment of the credentials submitted.
- iii) After receiving the signed contract, ensure that the External Examiner is adequately briefed on his/her contractual arrangements to assist and enable the External Examiners to perform his/her role effectively. The briefing should ensure that the External Examiner is aware of:
  - the expectation of the University regarding their role;
  - the Examiner's role including the extent of the Examiner's discretion/authority;
  - the objectives/learning outcomes of the course, its outline and teaching methods;
  - the methods of assessment, marking practices (e.g. table marking) rubrics and marking scheme;
  - the regulations governing the programme;
  - remuneration and time-line for the task.
- iv) Prepare the packages inclusive of the documents related to the assessment tasks and send to the Examinations Department;

#### **7.4. HR Manager**

The HR manager shall:

- i) On approval of the Academic Senate, contact the External Examiner and send letter of appointment
- ii) Have contract prepared for External Examiner's signature
- iii) On return of the signed contract, retain a copy in HR, send a copy to the External Examiner, the finance and to the HOD.
- iv) Arrange for all new Examiners to be given an orientation/briefing

#### **7.5. The Dean**

The Dean shall:

- i) Present the recommendations from the HOD to the School Board;





- ii) Forward the recommendations, if successfully considered at the School Board, with copies of the credentials to the Registrar to be included on the agenda of the Academic Senate meeting.
- iii) Receive the report of the External Examiner from the Registrar's Office noting the recommendations and ensuring that a response is sent to the External Examiner including an implementation plan as warranted. This plan shall be approved by the School Board and copied to Academic Senate for noting.
- iv) Receive the Claim Form through the Examination's Department and ensure accuracy before forwarding to the finance.

#### **7.6. School Board**

The School Board shall:

- i) Receive and scrutinize the nominations of the External Examiner, and recommend approval as it sees fit to the Academic Senate.
- ii) Receive recommendation of the External Examiner and implementation plan from the Dean; make appropriate recommendations to the Academic Senate through the Dean.

#### **7.7. The Registrar**

The Registrar shall:

- i) Have overall responsibility to manage the Examinations Process
- ii) Receive the nominations for External Examiner to be placed on the agenda of the Academic Board for consideration
- iii) Receive the report from the External Examiner through the Examination's Department and forward to the Dean
- iv) Receive a copy of the implementation plan from the School Board through to Dean to be placed on the Agenda of the Academic Senate.

#### **7.8. Academic Senate**

The Academic Board shall:

- i) Review recommendations and credentials of the nominees from the School Board;
- ii) Deny or accept nomination and on acceptance, approve appointment.
- iii) Receive the implementation plan from the School Board through the Dean for consideration, in response to the recommendations from the External Examiner.



## **7.9. The Examinations Department**

The Examinations Department shall:

- i) Send the package including the documents related to the assessment pieces to the External Examiner;
- ii) Receive the return of documents related to the assessment pieces, as well as the External Examiner's Report and forward to the Dean.

## **7.10. The finance**

The finance shall:

- i) Ensure that the External Examiner is compensated in a timely manner in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract.

## **7.11. Roles and Responsibility of the External Examiner**

### **7.11.1. Responsibility with Respect to Assessment Tasks**

External Examiners shall be appointed by the Academic Board to the relevant Department/School with responsibility for the programme.- The External Examiner shall be regarded as an independent contractor and not an employee or agent of the University. The External Examiner does not qualify for any benefits from the University.

The External Examiner shall be specifically required to scrutinize the assessment tasks and advise on the following:

#### **i) Assessment:**

- The purpose and philosophy of assessment are clearly articulated in the Department and understood by the students;
- The appropriateness to the course of the aims and objectives
- The appropriateness of the assessment load for the level and length of the course, and that
- The assessment is properly and impartially conducted and in line with the institution's policies and regulations as set out in the Undergraduate and Graduate Students' Handbooks.

#### **ii) Standards:**

- The appropriateness of the learning outcomes to the curricula and
- The capability of students to achieve standards comparable with those of similar programmes elsewhere and comparable to subject and level.

iii) **Curricula:**

- The relevance and currency of the curricula
- The consideration of research and development in the field.

**7.11.2. Conflict of Interest**

Each External Examiner shall be required to ensure that in the performance of his/her duty as an External Examiner there is no conflict of interest. As a consequence, no External Examiner shall be involved in any aspect of the assessment process (whether at the setting, marking or award stage), including examination for a prize or scholarship. If he or she may reasonably be regarded as having a professional or personal interest because of a current or previous relationship to, or friendship with, the proposed candidate(s), then the External Examiner shall decline to participate in the assessment process.

**7.11.3. External Examiners' Responsibility to the University**

During the term of their appointment, External Examiners are likely to obtain knowledge of confidential information regarding the business of the University. The External Examiner undertakes to and covenants with the University that this confidential information will not be used except during the continuance of their appointment; and they shall not at any time, including after the termination of their appointment, disclose or divulge any such information to any person other than to employees of the University who are authorized to have access to this information. Confidential information applies to any reports, the content of any research paper/thesis belonging to the students being examined, or any oral or written communication arising during the External Examiner's performance of duties.

**7.11.4. Duties of the External Examiner**

The External Examiner will be required to perform duties which may include the following areas:

- Review and comment on all assessment tasks
- Examination of course work and examination scripts (including work from dual-mode delivery)
- Examination of research papers/thesis
- Examination of Practicum
- Examination of practical areas, exhibitions and performances.

i) **General Duties**

The External Examiner shall:



- a) Become familiar with the University's policies and programme specifications;
- b) Become familiar with the course/s to be examined, that is, the learning outcomes, and how these outcomes are linked to the assessment outcomes in the programme;
- c) Review and comment on the form and content of proposed assessment tasks prior to their execution, in order to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly in relation to the course specification and in such a way that they are able to fulfil the objectives of the course and achieve the required standard.
- d) Confirm appropriate level and credit value and that they accurately reflect the syllabus;
- e) Ensure that the assessment process is sound and fairly operated in the marking, grading and classification of student performance in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
- f) Evaluate the assessment process. Check to ensure that Internal Examiners are using the assessment criteria consistently across the range of assessments and/or scripts;
- g) Review assessment products that may include examination scripts, coursework scripts (research papers), projects, portfolio, practical work/labs/exhibitions, oral presentations, research studies, work presented digitally, dissertations, viva voce, field work or combination thereof;
- h) Check for consistency of the internal marking. This enables the External Examiner to see whether the marks awarded by Internal Examiners are in line with the marks that would be awarded for a similar performance in other comparable institutions;
- i) Evaluate the rigour of assessment practices adopted by the Internal Examiners;
- j) Evaluate students' performance on assessment tasks against the intended learning outcomes;
- k) Consider and advise on the comparability of standards where courses and programmes are delivered at more than one location and in more than one modality;
- l) Evaluate internal assessment processes for courses in consultation with the Internal Examiners;
- m) Provide informative comments and recommendations upon whether or not the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations;



- n) Act as the second marker in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient internal expertise;
- o) Comment and advise on matters of curriculum content, balance and structure, in so far as these are revealed by the assessment process;
- p) Provide informative comments and recommendations on “good practice” observed by the External Examiners and opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students;
- q) Submit written report/s for each course examined as set out in the contract as prescribed in the contract.

**ii) Duties Specific to the Specialization/Subject Area**

The External Examiner shall:

- a) Review the examination sample packages and determine whether the question paper:
  - was appropriate to the level of the programme/year;
  - was an appropriate means of testing whether candidates have achieved the stated learning outcomes;
  - sufficiently covered the full range of the course outline;
  - had an appropriate distribution of marks;
  - was fair – i.e. that some candidates were not at an advantage other than by virtue of their academic ability, preparation and commitment.
- b) Have the right to review all assessed work e.g. coursework, examination scripts, projects, online discussion forums and research thesis. In cases where the number of students in the group is large, a random selection will be made of submitted pieces, with samples from each grade band
- c) May attend meeting of Academic Senate (if invited) to consider issues arising out of the External Examiner’s report.

**iii) Duties Performed in Relation to Orals/Performances**

Where oral or performance-based examinations constitute a substantial part of the assessment procedure, the External Examiners and Internal Examiners shall review the exhibitions/performance/demonstration of students and will together decide on the final grade for the student.

**iv) Duties in Relation to Research Studies / Thesis**



The External Examiner shall examine the work presented based on the criteria set. The key things to be looking for when assessing the research studies/thesis are:

- a) Is the problem worth addressing;
- b) Is it being addressed in an appropriate way;
- c) Is the literature review comprehensive and up to date, and does it show understanding of the theoretical context;
- d) Does the candidate make explicit links between the review of his or her research question/s and study design;
- e) Is there evidence of critical appraisal of the studies that are reviewed;
- f) If there is empirical work, are the right methods being used, is the sample large enough, are the data presented clearly and analysed and interpreted appropriately, does the discussion illuminate the results, and do the stated conclusions follow from the results;
- g) If the work is theoretical, is the line of argument coherent, well expressed and does it develop logically;
- h) Is the work ethical, and
- i) Is the work that of the candidate (i.e. not plagiarised).

**v) Duties in Relation to the Practicum**

The External Examiners who work with the Practicum team are expected to:

- a) Collaborate with the University's Examiners in determining the extent to which the agreed standards of the Practicum are maintained.
- b) Collaborate with the University's HODs in developing schedules for the assessment of student-teachers.
- c) Assess student-teachers using the instrument(s) provided by the University.
- d) Provide feedback on the assessment of student teaching within the designated time and in the required format.
- e) Participate in moderation exercises to arrive at final grades for student-teachers.
- f) Prepare reports on the Practicum that will aid the University in taking decisions to improve the exercise.

External Examiners working with the Practicum team, operate in a similar way to those responsible for external examination of courses offered at the University. Thus, the External



Examiner would sample a minimum of 20% to a maximum of 30% of the students in a given area of specialization.

External Examiners are expected to attend meetings / workshops etc. to become aware about the philosophy of the University and the expected outcomes of the Practicum.

External Examiners will examine the portfolio, evidence of learning community participation and make visits to see students teach after grades have been awarded by the University, for the purpose of ensuring quality. They will then write a report of their findings and sign off on the grades awarded based on their sampling.

## **7.12. Contracts and Remuneration**

### **7.12.1. Documentation on Signing the Contract**

The External Examiner will be required to sign a contract before commencing his/her services. Therefore, once the letter of appointment is given and the contract has been signed, the Department Head shall ensure that the External Examiner gets the following:

- course outlines for the course(s) he/she will be responsible for examining;
- grading scheme;
- External Examiner's report form(s);
- assessment products to be evaluated with rubrics/marketing schemes. (If number of assessment products for each course is less than 20, all products must be examined. If the number of assessment products for each course is more than 20, a sampling of each grade level will be sent to the External Examiner. The sample should provide the External Examiner with sufficient evidence to allow a determination that the internal marking is of an appropriate standard and is consistent);
- claim form.

### **Termination of the Contract by Either Party**

The contract may be terminated before the expiration date of the contract by either party giving at least three months' notice.

### **7.12.2. Termination of the Contract by the University**

The University College may terminate the contract with an External Examiner, before the expiration date of the contract for the following reasons:

- change in academic position, institution or retirement from his/her institution during term of office;



- potential conflicts of interest (i.e. commercial, intellectual property or other). A conflict of interest may be defined as (but not limited to) a position within another tertiary institution considered to be a direct competitor;
- failure to meet the requirements of the post i.e. confidentiality;
- any behaviour or actions by the External Examiner considered unprofessional or in breach of University policies;
- substantial changes to a programme, which result in the External Examiner's contract being phased out prematurely. In such cases, at least 3 months' notice will be given;
- failure to meet the professional standards and practices expected of an External Examiner including late or non-submission of expected reports.

In such cases, a full report should be provided to the Academic **Senate** who will terminate the contract of the relevant External Examiner.

The main reasons for early termination shall be that the External Examiner failed to submit reports as required or continued to submit inadequate reports and did not respond to enquiries from the Specialization/subject team or institution.

#### **7.12.3. Termination of the Contract by the External Examiner**

The External Examiner may choose terminate the contract prior to the expiration date (i.e. to resign prior to the completion of his/her appointment period). In such a case the External Examiner shall be required to complete all duties to maintain continuity of assessment. Letters of resignation shall be addressed to the HR manager.

Whatever the reason for termination, the External Examiner shall return to the University all property, including computer software and documents, which belong to the University or otherwise relates to its business or affairs, **without retaining any copies**.

### **7.13. Reports**

#### **7.13.1. External Examiners' Reports**

External Examiners shall be required to submit to the Department Head, a signed report for each course they are responsible for examining, commenting on issues relating to:

- the overall performance of students in the course/programme;
- the appropriateness of the assessment strategy and method of assessment;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students with regards to learning outcomes;
- the quality of the knowledge and skills demonstrated by the students;





- the structure, organization, design and marking of the items being assessed;
- the type, suitability and effectiveness of the assessment in relation to the course outline
- the appropriateness of marks awarded and the overall range of marks in relation to the marking criteria;
- the consistency of marking within each course;
- adequacy of facilities and material for practical/performance examinations
- quality of written feedback to students on coursework;
- success and failure rate;
- recommendations or any suggestions for improvement or development;
- areas of 'good practice' identified
- their opinion as to whether recommendations made in previous years have been properly considered.

#### **7.13.2. Use of the External Examiners' Reports within the Institution**

The External Examiner shall return ALL materials received as well as a signed report to the Department Head. On receipt of the report the Department Head will make copies to be disseminated to the lecturer who taught the course and the Dean of the School.

The External Examiners' reports are intended to be used as a tool to assist the Department in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the assessment of a course. It also provides assurance to the University on the standards and quality of the teaching, learning and assessment processes.

### **8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- **Academic Integrity Policy**
- **Examination's policy**

#### **Presented by**

Prof. Robert Rugimbana

Vice Chancellor (Chairman Senate)

Date: ..... 23-05-2022

Signature: ..... 

#### **Approved by**

Mr. Philibert Afrika

Chairman BODs

Date: ..... 23/5/2022

Signature: ..... 

