

LTC12D157

Title: *Report to LTC – Implementation of QAA Chapter 7 – External Examining*
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1 Introduction

QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education

From the 2012-13 academic year, the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education replaces the set of national reference points previously known as the Academic Infrastructure. The Quality Code gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. The Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all those involved in delivering higher education which leads to an award from, or is validated by, a UK higher education provider. It makes clear what institutions are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of all higher education providers. These Expectations express key matters of principle that the higher education community has identified as important for the assurance of quality and academic standards. The Quality Code is published for providers to reference when designing their respective policies for maintaining academic standards and quality.

Part B of the Quality Code is concerned with Assurance and Enhancing Academic Quality and includes Chapter B7 on External Examining, published in December 2011.

Chapter 7 – External Examining

Chapter 7 is designed to ensure that external examining can operate in a way which is transparent, rigorous and as consistent as possible across all UK higher education institutions, taking into account institutions' autonomy and differences in their mission, size, organisational structures and range of provision. Chapter 7 supersedes the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 4: External examining* (2004), published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and incorporates the recommendations of the Universities UK (UUK)/GuildHE review of external examining published in 2011.

2 Mapping of Existing UEA Regulations, Policy and Practice for External Examining Against Chapter B7

The Expectation: Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners

A B7 Working Group, led by Learning and Teaching Service staff, in collaboration with the ADTP, was established at the start of the academic year 2012-13 to review our regulations, policy and practice for the University's External Examining System and to map our current

processes to The Expectation above and the 18 Chapter Indicators, as shown in the attached Mapping Document.

This mapping exercise was focussed around ensuring sound quality assurance to maintain high academic standards and the document, therefore, records the following:

- i) evidence of compliance where the Group was satisfied that current processes meet The Expectation and Indicators
- ii) action points where the Group felt that further work was required to ensure compliance
- iii) action points where the Group identified opportunities for quality enhancement. This was given a high consideration by the Group in order to develop our policies and processes in pursuit of excellence in our academic standards.
- iv) responsibilities for action points
- v) timelines for implementation of action points

3 Implementation

Implementation of Chapter 7 will be led by the Chapter Champion, Lynne Ward, LTS Manager with responsibility for Quality and Assessments. Lynne Ward will work in collaboration with the ADTP, LTS and other colleagues to ensure that Chapter B7 is fully implemented in the institution in accordance with the QAA's guidance.

The following quality assurance and enhancement measures have been identified to support implementation of Chapter 7 in 2013-14:

- Full review of all External Examiner documentation and standard correspondence to ensure External Examiners are adequately briefed on their responsibilities and provided with suitable and appropriate information and data to discharge their duties effectively;
- Review of appointments process and documentation to ensure Schools are aware of the potential for conflicts of interest and can identify them in order to be in a position to resolve prior to appointment;
- Join up the enhancements to the External Examiner processes with all extant regulations for the assessment of students and the soon-to-be-published QAA Chapter B6 on Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning;
- Publication on the LTS website of comprehensive information for External Examiners, staff and students relating to regulatory powers of Examiners, programmes to which examiners are appointed, composition of Boards of Examiners;
- Ensure that all processes relating to the external examining system are clearly recorded and proactively made available to staff and students;
- Review of workload allocation models for UEA examiners working for other institutions;
- Enhance and clarify internal lines of communication with Schools and Faculties, and externally with Examiners, to ensure effective consideration of and responses to reports;
- Ensure reports and responses are proactively made available to students;
- Development of website structure to accommodate availability of data;
- Enhance reporting of and responses to institutional themes and issues;

4 Conclusion

The conclusion of the Group was that, broadly, the Indicators were currently being met and, as required by The Expectation, we are 'making scrupulous use of external examiners'. However, the developmental work identified on the Mapping Document will ensure 100% compliance with the QAA's requirements and exploit opportunities for quality enhancement in pursuit of continuous improvement in the External Examining system and the monitoring of our academic standards.

Chapter B7 External Examining - Mapping Document				
Publication Date: December 2011				
The Expectation: Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.				
Expectation A5 - Externality is also relevant. This provides that: 'Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.'				
Chapter Champion: Lynne Ward, LTS Manager				
The Indicators	Location of Evidence	Actions	Who	By When
Awarding institutions appoint one or more external examiner(s) to carry out the role(s) defined in this Chapter 1 for all provision that leads to a higher education award of the institution.	COP on External Examining	In order to evidence compliance, electronic versions of all items listed with relevant sections highlighted to be saved to the QAA B7 folder on the LTS shared drive	LW	Sep-2013
	External Examiner approval process including exceptions		LW	
	LTC oversight of all EEs and terms of office		CG	
	Appointment letter		LW	
	declaration by EE re: prior work for UEA		LW	
	Partnership Office processes		SW	
	NAM regulations		JJ	
	PSRB requirements detailed on appointment letter		LW	
Awarding institutions expect their external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations 2 upon whether or not:	EE's report form; Procedure for considering EC's; Assessment Regulations	rewrite EE's report form; review EEs assigned to same course where taught at London	LW/BF	Sep-2013
• an institution is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements	Bullet points will be included on revised EE form; Same EEs where possible for same course delivered at different sites			
• 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				
• the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.				
Awarding institutions expect their external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations 3 on:	EE's report form	rewrite EE's report form	LW	Sep-2013
• good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiners	Annual Course Update, Module Review, Course Review	Check review forms cover these issues; dissemination of EE reports	LW, AL	Sep-2013
• opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students	Evidence of consultation on Exam Q's	Locate and provide, ADTP to consider CW aspects	LW, AL	Sep-2013
Institutions have explicit policies and regulations governing the nomination and appointment of external examiners. Institutions can terminate an external examiner's appointment at any time, subject to approved institutional procedures, for failure by the external examiner to fulfil his/her obligations or if a conflict of interest 4 arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved	COP on EE, Appointment letter	See 1 above and also map bullet points from (4) to appointment letter and accompanying information	See 1 above	Sep-2013
Institutions apply the following UK-wide set of criteria for appointing external examiners and make every effort to ensure that their external examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities defined by the institution. Institutions use the criteria to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved 5 prior to appointing external examiners or as soon as they arise.		Check that each point under (5) is covered by the documents noted in the evidence column and confirm in writing this has been done	LW	Sep-2013
Person specification		Review training docs	AL	
a. Institutions appoint external examiners who can show appropriate evidence of the following:				Sep-2013
i. knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality				Sep-2013
ii. competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts hereof				Sep-2013

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iii. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate	COP on EE, Appointment letter, EE training docs, Process maps			Sep-2013	
iv. competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures				Sep-2013	
v. 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				Sep-2013	
vi. familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed				Sep-2013	
vii. 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)				Sep-2013	
viii. meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies				Sep-2013	
ix. awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula				Sep-2013	
x. competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience				Sep-2013	
Conflicts of interest					
b. Institutions do not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:		COP on EE, Appointment letter, EE training docs, Process maps	Check that each point under (5) is covered by the documents noted in the evidence column and confirm in writing this has been done	LW	Sep-2013
i. member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners					
ii. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study					
iii. anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study					
iv. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study v. 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					
vi. former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)					
vii. a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution					
viii. the succession of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same department in the same institution					
ix. the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.					
Terms of office					
c. The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.	COP on EE, Appointment letter	Check that each point under (5) is covered by the documents noted in the evidence column and confirm in writing this has been done	LW	Sep-2013	
d. An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.					
e. External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.					

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6	Institutions ensure that all external examiners they appoint are informed about organisational procedures, practices, and academic regulations, and the crucial value of external examiners' feedback to the institution as part of the broader system of quality assurance and enhancement.	Appointment Letter and EE's training docs and Instructions To Examiners	Review docs noted to check that (6) is covered	LW	Sep-2013
7	Institutions communicate clearly in writing to all concerned the:				
	• modules, programmes and/or award(s) to which each external examiner is appointed	Letter of appointment	Publicise LTS database	SW/LW	Sep-2013
	• various roles, powers and responsibilities assigned to their external examiners, including the extent of their authority in examination boards.	Letter of appointment, Regulations, Instructions to Examiners	Change voting Regs	CG	Sep-2013
8	Institutions include the name, position and institution of their external examiners in module or programme information provided to students.	Programme Specs from 2013-14	Amend Specs	LW/CG	Dec-2013
		Where students invited to meet with EE - the letter of invitation	Check form letter	LW	
9	Prior to the confirmation of mark lists, pass lists or similar documents, institutions expect external examiners to endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes they have been appointed to scrutinise	Procedure requiring signature on Board lists, Information provided to EE's re: role	Ensure procedure is written down	LW/RP	Sep-2013
10	Institutions provide external examiners with sufficient evidence to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.	Procedure re: samples provided and other data used by EE and Board, should also be in COP; EE confirms receipt of materials through EE reprot form	Ensure procedure is written down and check COP - amend if needed (also check EE report form)	LW	Sep-2013
11	Institutions recognise the importance, and mutual benefit, of the work undertaken by many of their staff as external examiners for other institutions and agree with staff the time they need to fulfil these duties.	Workload allocation models	discussion re status of EE work re: pyment received et al; review allocation models	AL	Dec-2013
12	External examiners submit a report annually, at a time determined by the institution, to the head of the institution or to one or more named individuals that he/she designates	EE report form, Appointment letter, FLTQC Minutes (to show consideration of reports), LTS database, PSRB specific procedures	i)Review form to ensure requirement is clear,publicise LTS database, ii)Ensure FLTQC secs are fully aware, iii) check with LTS Managers re: PSRB specific procedures/responsibilities	i) LW, ii) LW, iii) JS	i) Sept 2013
13	External examiners' annual reports provide clear and informative feedback to the institution on those areas defined for the role in Indicators 2 and 3 (the core content). In addition, their reports:	EE report form			
	• confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details)		Ensure all issues under (13) are covered by required responses on EE report form	LW	Sep-2013
	• state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction				
	• address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body				
	• give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).				
14	Institutions make external examiners' annual reports available in full to students, with the sole exception of any confidential report made directly, and separately, to the head of the institution.	LTS Web Site (from 2013-14 onwards)	Include in Web restructure work. Include in letter of appointment.	LW	Sep-2013

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15	At both institutional and subject/programme level, institutions give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports. The actions taken as a result of reports, or the reasons for not taking action, are formally recorded and circulated to those concerned. Institutions ensure that student representatives are given the opportunity to be fully involved in this process, enabling them to understand all the issues raised and the institution's response. At institutional level the general issues and themes arising from the reports are reviewed.	FLTQC Minutes; LTC Minutes; Summary document from Assessments Manager; Senate Reports, minutes of any specific meetings with SU	i)Ensure all evidence referenced is available online ii) Review structure of Assessments Manager summary to LTC iii)Regular meetings with SU Academic Officer iv) availability of EE reports and School responses on LTS website	i) CS ii)LW iii)JS iv) LW	Sep-2013
16	Institutions provide external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations, outlining any actions they will be taking as a result of the reasons for not taking action.	FLTQC Minutes; LTC Minutes; Summary document from Assessments Manager; Senate Reports	Ensure we have written procedure for responding and for logging responses	LW	Sep-2013
17	Institutions inform external examiners, in writing at the beginning of their term of office, that they have a right to raise any matter of serious concern with the head of the institution, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. Institutions provide a considered and timely response to any confidential report received, outlining any actions they will be taking as a result.	Letter of Appointment, Instructions to Examiners, NAM, COP	Ensure (17) is reflected in all noted documents and confirm in writing	LW	Sep-2013
18	Where an external examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the head of the institution, he/she may invoke QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.	Letter of Appointment, Instructions to Examiners, NAM, COP	Ensure (18) is reflected in all noted documents and confirm in writing	LW	Sep-2013