

## Guidelines for Schools and Institutes on External Advisers for Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught Programmes Proposals

### Purpose

These guidelines are provided for Schools and Institutes to enable them to choose appropriate External Advisers when developing new programmes.

An External Adviser is normally a member of academic staff from a different HEI, who is asked to review proposals for new undergraduate or postgraduate taught programmes.

External input is an essential part of programme development and is a compulsory part of the programme approval process to ensure compliance and alignment to regulatory bodies, such as the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration. In particular, this helps provide assurance that new programmes are up-to-date, provide educational challenge, are coherent, are effectively delivered and enable students to develop relevant skills.<sup>1</sup>

Schools and institutes must provide an External Adviser feedback form to the External Adviser when requesting a review of new programme proposals.

### External Adviser Criteria

Schools and institutes should ensure that the following criteria is met when selecting an External Adviser:

#### Independence

An External Adviser **cannot** be an External Examiner at Queen Mary. Furthermore:

- Former Queen Mary external examiners may not be appointed, unless a period of at least three years has elapsed since the completion of their contract.
- Former members of staff may not be appointed, unless a period of at least five years has elapsed since their departure.
- Staff who are members of partner institutions are not eligible.
- Staff who may present a conflict of interest when providing feedback on programme proposals

#### Subject expertise and programme management / approval experience

- Academic qualifications at least to the level of the proposed programme;
- Appropriate and relevant expertise in the subject discipline, including familiarity with current developments in the subject area concerned;
- Understanding of current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in UK HE, with prior experience of teaching on programmes at the same level or above;
- Familiarity with the OfS Conditions of Registration, the QAA Quality Code, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) as well as any additional regulatory requirements e.g.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/>

apprenticeship standard knowledge, skills and behaviours, and relevant subject benchmark statements and professional body requirements;

- For professional or vocational programmes, relevant professional qualifications and an awareness of the educational requirements of the profession;
- Experience of programme management, development or approval, or as an external examiner.

Where a joint programme is proposed, External Adviser comments should be sought from experts in both subject disciplines.

In most cases, a senior academic within the discipline with experience of teaching on a similar programme at another HE institution would be appropriate. However, for professional or vocational programmes, it may also be appropriate to seek comments from a major employer or a professional body, or to seek the advice of an External Adviser drawn from a relevant business or professional background. Where it is not possible for any single External Adviser to meet all the above requirements, the programme team may nominate additional External Advisers to ensure a balance of expert advice.

### **The Role of External Advisers**

External Advisers are an essential part of the programme development process, as they provide independent and objective feedback on programme proposals. This contributes to the maintenance of academic standards in developing new programmes and awards.

The Part 2 submission for a new programme must therefore include a written expression of support and/or commentary from at least one External Adviser in the area of the programme proposal. The Head of School or equivalent responsible for the proposed programme normally approaches an External Adviser.

External Advisers must be sent a copy of the:

- Part 2 Programme Proposal form;
- Programme Specification(s);
- Module Proposal Form(s) for any new modules, and/or Module Specifications and details of existing modules forming part of the proposed programme;
- External Adviser Feedback form.

The feedback form will help the External Adviser to shape their comments. Once the feedback form has been returned, programme teams should respond with detailed comments addressing all the points raised by the External Adviser. The fully completed feedback form, with the Schools/Institutes response, must then be submitted to DGLS alongside the rest of the Part 2 Proposal documentation.

For further advice or guidance, please contact [qualityandstandards@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandstandards@qmul.ac.uk) .