

## **EXTERNAL EXAMINERS – POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE**

This document defines policy and provides procedural guidance for the role of external examiners with regards to higher education programmes delivered at, or by, Solihull College and University Centre and is in addition to the requirements of the awarding body.

**NOTE: All External Examiners are appointed by the awarding institution/body and thus directly subject to that organisation's policy and procedures.**

### **1. The role and responsibilities of External Examiners**

- 1.1. The QAA Code of Practice for External Examining describes external examiners as “independent and impartial advisors providing institutions with informed comment” and outlines their role in the following way:  
“The external examining function should assist institutions to ensure that:
  - the academic standard for each award and award element is set and maintained by the awarding institution at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
  - the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended outcomes of the programme appropriately, and it is fair and fairly operated;
  - institutions are able to compare the standards of their awards with those of other higher education institutions.”
- 1.2. Depending on the requirements of the awarding body, this may include:
  - the approval of assessment tasks, case studies, questions and examinations;
  - the assessment of results;
  - the verification of awarded grades;
  - the adjudication of borderline and problem cases.
  - RPL/ APL records
- 1.3. To carry out these responsibilities external examiners must:
  - be able to judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment;
  - be given access to all assessed work if required
  - be provided with samples of the work based on the requirements of the awarding body;
  - be given the opportunity to meet students
  - be able to verify that assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved programme regulations;
  - report to the validating body the results and award recommendations
  - have access to sufficient student work and quality assurance records to be able to report back to Solihull College and University Centre on student performance and academic standards as well as on the effectiveness of the assessment process overall;
  - have access to sufficient student work and quality assurance records to be able to report to the validating body on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessment process which put at risk the standard of the validated award.

- 1.4. Solihull College and University Centre encourages externals to meet with student groups in the course of their duties, particularly where the content of a programme includes the assessment of practical or project work, presentations or exhibitions.

## **2. External Examiners' Reports**

- 2.1 External examiners are required to provide a written report on the standards being set and achieved including:
- the overall performance of the students in relation to their peers on comparable programmes;
  - the strengths and weaknesses of students;
  - the quality of knowledge and skills (both general and subject specific and including any work-based or work-related aspects) demonstrated by the students and in the light of agreed subject benchmarks, and the national qualifications framework;
  - the structure, organisation, design, marking and fairness of all assessments;
  - the quality of teaching as indicated by student performance;
  - the lessons learnt from the assessments for the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods and resources of the programme, and feedback on whether issues previously raised have been addressed;
  - other recommendations arising from the assessments.
- 2.2 Solihull College and University Centre will respond to Pearson External Examiner reports with an action plan by the end of the academic year. This action plan will be checked by Head of School and the Dean of Higher Education.
- 2.3 All EE reports will be scrutinised and collated depending in the validating body by the Director for Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation. Reports will be discussed with key faculty staff and a summary report will be presented to the Quality and Standards Committee.
- 2.4 External examiners must be able to:
- Consider each student impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with the award, the staff, or any of the students.
  - Have the opportunity to approve the form and content of proposed examination papers and/or coursework as specified in the programme validation documents.
  - Have the opportunity to approve forms of alternative assessment.
  - Be consulted about and agree to any proposed changes to the structure of the assessment which will directly affect students currently on the award.
  - Have access to all assessed work, if so required.
  - Participate, as required, in reviews of decisions about individual student's awards.
  - Have sufficient access to students, student work and college policies and procedures to be able to provide informative comment and recommendations upon:
    - Whether Solihull College and University Centre is maintaining the threshold academic standards for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
    - Whether or not Solihull College and University Centre's assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended

outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with college and the validating body's policies and regulations;

- Whether or not Solihull College and University Centre's academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience;
- Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by the external examiner(s);
- Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students;
- The management of Module and Programme Boards if required.

## **Pearson External Examiner Procedure**

The Quality Nominee will receive the notification of the appointment of the programme External Examiner.

The Quality Nominee will notify the Dean of Higher Education, The HE Quality Administration team, the HE Course leader and the HE Head of School of the appointment and will confirm the contact names to the External Examiner.

The External Examiner will be asked to copy the Dean of Higher Education into any correspondence with the curriculum area to monitor the Quality Assurance process centrally.

The External Examiner may ask for sample assessment/assignment briefs to be sent before they are issued to the students. Reports on these briefs are returned to the HE course leader – and where necessary changes made before the assignments are issued to students.

The Dean of Higher Education will meet External Examiners new to the College as part of the EE visit to ensure the External Examiner is briefed on the College cross college External Examiner protocols and procedures, Where possible the Dean of Higher Education will continue to meet with the External Examiners during their annual visits.

The Dean of HE will brief HE course leaders about the Pearson External Examiner process and any changes to the annual process or to the External Examiner reporting procedures.

The HE course leader and Head of school negotiate a suitable visit date for the External Examiner that enables them, as far as possible, to meet students and where possible attend an assessment board.

HE course leaders needing support with the preparation of the visit can request support from the Dean of Higher Education.

The EE report will be uploaded to Edexcelonline within 10 days of the visit. The Quality Nominee will download and circulate the report – both Part A and Part B.

Part A of the EE report is shared with students; published via Moodle and discussed in the programme quality boards – all actions are included in the AMR and QIP

The HE course leader and HE head of school prepare the action plan – The Head of School and Dean sign off the action plan and ensure it is sent to the EE

The External Examiner reports for Pearson Higher National provision are summarised by the Dean of Higher Education and reported to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.