

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 university, 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 the requirements of regulatory bodies, such as the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration. This helps to provide assurance that new programmes are up to date, provide educational challenge, are coherent, are effectively delivered and assessed, and enable students to develop relevant skills.¹

When requesting a review of new programme proposals, Schools and Institutes must:

1. provide an External Adviser feedback form to the External Adviser;
2. produce a written response to the points raised by the External Adviser;
3. submit copies of both the External Adviser feedback and their itemised written response alongside the programme proposal form (to qualityandstandards@qmul.ac.uk)

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 subject area of the programme proposal. The Head of School or equivalent responsible for the proposed programme normally approaches an External Adviser.

External Adviser Criteria

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

Independence

An External Adviser must not:

- Have any conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest when providing independent feedback on programme proposals;

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/registering-with-the-ofs/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/>

- Be a current external examiner at QMUL;
- Have acted as an external examiner at QMUL within the last three years;
- Have acted as an employee of QMUL (i.e. been a member of Queen Mary staff) within the last five years;
- Be employed at an institution that has a partnership with QMUL.

An External Adviser must:

- Hold academic qualifications at least to the level of the proposed programme (i.e. a Bachelor's, or Master's degree);
- Have relevant expertise in the subject discipline, including familiarity with current developments in the subject area concerned;
- Have experience of programme management, development or approval (e.g. by acting as a Programme Director) or of acting as an external examiner (but as above);
- Understand current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in UK higher education (e.g. have prior experience of teaching on programmes at the same level or above at a UK university);
- Have familiarity with:
 - the OfS Conditions of Registration
 - the QAA Quality Code and relevant QAA subject benchmark statements
 - the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
 - all additional regulatory requirements (e.g. apprenticeship standard knowledge, skills and behaviours, and/or the requirements of accrediting professional and statutory regulatory bodies [PSRB's]);
- Hold relevant professional qualifications and be familiar with the educational requirements of the profession (for professional or vocational programmes).

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.

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 independent, expert advice.

External Advisers must be sent a copy of the:

- Completed Part 2 Programme Proposal form;
- Programme Specification(s);
- Module Proposal Form(s) for any new modules, and Module Specifications for existing modules included within 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, in writing, with detailed comments addressing all the points raised by the External Adviser. The fully completed feedback form, with the

School's/Institute's written 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.