

Academic Policy A10 External Examining

1. Purpose and Scope

Regulations regarding External Examining in relation to all Middlesex University degrees remain the responsibility of Middlesex University. This policy is intended to inform and assist SAE staff to ensure effective implementation of those regulations after the granting of Accredited Status to SAE Institute in 2010, and it replicates those Middlesex University (MDX) regulations.

Where any inconsistency or lack of clarity exists between this policy and the approved regulations, processes and procedures of Middlesex University in relation to External Examining as a result of changes made by the University, then the University provisions shall prevail.

External Examiners (referred to hereafter as EEs) are central to the University's and SAE Institute's quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Their role is to act as independent moderators, and to consider student attainment overall with impartiality. External Examiners provide one of the principal means for the maintenance of nationally and internationally comparable standards.

The impartiality of External Examiners is paramount in ensuring equity for students and ensuring the fair application of University and Institute Regulations. External Examiner reports are an integral part of the University's and Institute's monitoring procedures and play a key role in maintaining academic standards, and ensuring comparability of standards with highest national and international norms in the subject. External Examiner reports are sent to MDX.

External Examiner reports are a standard agenda item at the Content Specialist Panels and Finalist Assessment Board. Where a report raises issues of serious concern, the Academic Quality Service (AQS) at MDX alerts the Institute, and requires a formal response to the External Examiner, which is mediated via AQS. SAE Institute collaborates fully with the University in this situation, and will in parallel conduct its own process of investigation and remedial action, before reporting to the University.

This document describes the appointment, induction, rights and responsibilities of External Examiners for the programmes validated for SAE Institute by the University.

2. Operational Procedures and Responsibilities

2.1. The University

The Academic Quality Service (AQS) are responsible for approving EEs and promptly recompensing them for their work (including out of pocket expenses) upon receipt of their reports. These fees are reimbursed by SAE. AQS are also responsible for the management of the EE database, appointments, induction programme and reporting process, all of which is managed by the Quality Enhancement Manager (Student Engagement) and the Quality Manager (Externality), and prepare an annual report for consideration by the Assurance Committee.

2.2. The Institute

The Institute nominates EEs and, upon approval by AQS, ensures the EE is fully briefed about the modules and Programmes to which they are appointed and has sufficient opportunities to meet with appropriate staff. The Institute also works with the EE to develop an effective working relationship with the Dean, Academic Manager, Programme Leaders and University Link Tutors. The Institute ensures that EEs' reports are dealt with promptly in accordance with this procedure.

2.3. The Rights and Responsibilities of External Examiners

The rights and responsibilities of External Examiners are detailed in the Institute's Assessment Board Policy and Regulations (A09).

2.4. The Appointment of External Examiners

SAE Institute follows the guidelines established by Middlesex University for their collaborative partners with regards to the appointment of external examiners, as detailed herein, and found in Section 4 of the LQEH.

- a) The Institute identifies a suitable EE. The appointment form is completed and submitted to AQS; the nomination is screened against the University's criteria for appointment, and then sent to the Faculty's Deputy Dean for approval. Once approval has been granted, AQS issues a formal letter of appointment in the usual way.
- b) In instances where a nominated EE has limited experience, the institution must replace the EE at least one calendar year before the expiry of the contract of the examiner they are to replace. The replacement EE will shadow the existing EE for one year prior to their appointment (A similar principle applies to programmes with more than one examiner whose contracts are due to end in the same calendar year, EE's will be phased in to ensure continuity).
- c) Where an EE is not identified and appointed in a timely fashion, the appropriate University Faculty or Department from MDX will intervene and nominate an EE on behalf of the partner institution for the full 4 assessment cycle period of appointment. This process will be instigated no later than 12 weeks before the final assessment board.
- d) The following criteria must be observed during consideration of proposed External Examiners:
 - EEs are normally appointed for four annual assessment cycles (usually four years) subject to annual review.
 - Care must be taken to ensure that the workload expected of the EEs is reasonable and enables them to undertake the role effectively.
 - EEs who have no previous external examining experience are expected to complete a shadow year with the current external on the programme(s) for development and support purposes. This will be in addition to the term outlined above.
 - Extensions of appointments may be requested for a maximum of one year, and should only be for exceptional circumstances. Where an EE extension is required, a rationale should be submitted to AQS in advance.
 - A potential EE should be approached informally by the regional Dean or Academic Manager (or nominee) responsible for the programme(s) concerned to ascertain

his/her interest in being appointed. They shall clearly explain details of the programme(s), role of the EE, and shall answer any questions that arise as fully as possible.

- EEs should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that the programme benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny, and are not to be over-extended by their external examining duties.
 - EEs should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the institution that might compromise objectivity.
 - EE appointments must comply with UK Visas and Immigration regulations and requirements that confirms the EE's permission to work in the UK. AQS will complete Right to Work (RtW) checks for EEs, who cannot commence any work until the RtW check has been completed.
- e) AQS review nominations for appointment against the criteria set out above.
- f) Within two weeks of approval AQS issue an appointment/extension letter to ensure that all appointments have been made by the end of July preceding September start of term of office.
- g) External Examiners are formally appointed on behalf of the University by the Director of AQS who reserves the right to reject nominations. In the case of such rejection the Director of AQS will inform the Institute of the precise grounds.
- h) AQS maintain a central database that holds all the information pertaining to the appointment of EEs. The information recorded includes: name, address, institution, Subject/Programme, dates of tenure, collaborative type, plus other personal data.. Names of examiners are not deleted from the database when their term of office is over but are listed as 'not current'; in this way new nominations can be queried to ensure that the University does not appoint examiners from an institution that has been a source of examiners to a Subject/Programme during the last 5 years.)
- i) In accordance with University guidelines, one of the External Examiners shall be identified as Chief External Examiner; a second contract shall be issued to cover these additional duties, which includes dealing with instances such as:
- A lack of UK HEI experience;
 - A lack of necessary language skills where tuition and/or assessment is not in English;
 - A lack of sound knowledge and understanding of English.
- j) The Chief External Examiner is responsible for maintaining an overview of the local or regional External Examiner operation covering all Degree Centres, acting in a moderating capacity. S/he attends the Assessment Board and has prior access to the website where sample assignments from all Centres are uploaded; s/he also sees the forms completed by all local and regional External Examiners confirming that they have had adequate access to student work and agree the module grades proposed at their Assessment Panels.
- k) The Chief External Examiner also sees annual reports submitted by local and regional External Examiners and comments on these in an overview report to AQS.

2.5. Induction of External Examiners

- a) UK-based External Examiners for the SAE programmes are offered the same external examining induction as for other University UK programmes. However, for External Examiners not based in the UK an alternative induction that does not require attendance at the University is offered. An induction pack is also provided by the Institute that covers operational aspects that are specific to the validated SAE programmes. The Institute is responsible for ensuring that the External Examiner is fully conversant with University and Institute procedures.
- b) Since External Examiners on the SAE programmes are involved in several procedures that do not apply to other University programmes, they are given a specific induction covering the following points:
 - details of the group of External Examiners currently appointed;
 - details of the Assessment Panel and Assessment Board stages;
 - Content Specialist Panel and Finalist Assessment Board operation;
 - respective duties of local External Examiners and the Chief External Examiner;
 - communication between External Examiners;
 - procedures for viewing sample assignments;
 - briefing on the 20-point marking scale used by MDX, and generic assessment criteria;
 - a tour of (or information on) specialist facilities offered by the Institute;
 - other details of the programmes and their regulations.

2.6. External Examiner Reports

- a) All EEs are required to submit an annual report to AQS within 4 weeks of the Finalist Assessment Board, following areas using the template supplied in Appendix 1. Chief EEs are required to submit a report following the template provided in Appendix 2.
- b) Templates are designed to confirm that the EE has received the required support to fulfil the role, including adequate time to consider samples of work, contribute to assessment boards, and to provide assurance that academic standards and student achievement are at the appropriate standards, and equivalent to those at other UK HEIs with which the EE is familiar. All reports must be submitted in English.
- c) All EE reports form a part of the quality monitoring of the programmes. Reports are scrutinized at campus and regional level, and any action taken in response to a report goes forward as an agenda item to the subsequent Content Specialist Panel.
- d) Upon receipt of the report, AQS circulates the report to the Institute and Chief EE. The Institute is required to respond directly to the EE and AQS within 4 weeks of receiving the report from AQS. If no response is given, this is reported to the Assurance Committee.
- e) Upon submission of the report, EEs should expect to be informed by AQS that the report has been received and that the Institute has been asked to respond addressing any issues raised, and receive a formal response from the Institute within 4 weeks of submitting his/her report acknowledging any issues raised and explaining what actions have been taken or are planned to address these issues.

- f) EEs who submit an inadequate report are asked to resubmit their report following the guidelines in the template provided. Payment of fees is withheld until a satisfactory report is received.
- g) If an EE does not submit the report four weeks after the Finalist Assessment Board the following actions will be taken:
 - Within six weeks of the FAB the University Quality Enhancement Manager (Externality) will write to the EE requesting submission of the report within 14 days.
 - If a report is not submitted within one month, the Director of AQS will contact the EE in writing requesting submission within 14 days; thereafter if a report is still not submitted, the Director of AQS may terminate the contract.

2.7. **Compliance with the Procedure**

- a) If an EE feels that, despite reasonable requests, the Institute is failing, for no justified reason, to comply with the letter or spirit of this procedure, they shall be able to refer their concerns to the Vice-Chancellor separately from the normal annual report. The Vice-Chancellor shall make inquiry into the matters raised, and report back to the examiner within eight weeks outlining any actions to be taken as a result. Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor shall make an annual report to the Assurance Committee of the University of any action necessitated under this sub-paragraph.
- b) External examiners employed by the University are expected to undertake all the duties and responsibilities required of them to the best of their abilities. In particular, they are expected to:
 - Respect the confidentiality of Assessment Panel and Board meetings and of materials which they assess - in particular, of projects and dissertation work, details of which shall not be disclosed to any third party without prior permission;
 - Comment by the deadline specified on draft examination papers or other proposed forms of assessment referred to them;
 - Attend all Content Specialist Panel and Finalist Assessment Boards at which their attendance is required;
 - Submit within four weeks of the convening of Finalist Assessment Boards reports which address, substantively and appropriately, issues identified in the notes of guidance, issued by AQS, for the preparation of EEs' reports.
- c) In the event that an external examiner or the University considers that early retirement is advisable 3 months' notice will normally be required by either party. Examples of circumstances in which an external examiner might retire early are:
 - Inability to fully meet the requirements and responsibilities of the external examiner's role due to a change in the external examiner's personal or professional circumstances;
 - Unexpected conflict of interest which could affect impartiality of judgement and/or compromise objectivity.
 - A cease in communication with the University for longer than 3 months, in which the fulfilment of the procedures has been compromised.

- d) The University reserves the right to terminate the contract for Service of any external examiner if, in the opinion of the Head of AQS, there has been any breach of confidentiality on the part of the examiner, or if the performance of the examiner, in the context of this procedure, is deemed to be in any respect significantly inadequate, or if communication with the EE has ceased for a period of 3 months or longer. In such cases, AQS will liaise with the Institute to confirm the termination of the EE, and provide a confirmation of termination to the EE in writing.
- e) Where an EE has a serious concern relating to systematic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including a submission of a confidential report to the head of the institution, they may invoke the Unsatisfactory Quality Scheme or inform the relevant PSRB.

2.8. **Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Copyright**

- a) In compliance with [General Data Protection Regulation and the University's Data Protection Policy](#), the University will use personal data submitted by the EE for the payment of fees and expenses, and for other necessary communication about the EE's contract. Where required for these purposes, this data will be shared with other departments of the University. Staff members must not disclose EEs' personal data, including contact details, to any person or body outside the University without the consent of the EE. EE's should also not distribute or share assessment and information provided by the University or disclose any personal information on the student assessed.
- b) An EE's report will be made available to University staff and/or collaborative programme partners as part of the quality/annual monitoring procedure. EEs' reports may be circulated as part of an internal or external audit. All reasonable efforts will be made to anonymise the reports, if the EE makes a written request for this. Marks, comments and opinions expressed by an EE about individual students during the assessment process may be disclosed to the student concerned, if the student makes a Subject Access Request under the Data Protection Act.
- c) Under the Freedom of Information Act, the University will provide copies of EEs' reports to third parties who make a lawful request for these. Reports will normally retain examiners' names. The University will consider any reasonable request from EE's to anonymise their reports. Such a request should be made in writing and submitted with the report.
- d) Copyright in all EE's reports will be owned by the University. Examiners will not be permitted to retain their moral rights (under the Copyright Act) in the reports as the University may choose to anonymise the reports as appropriate.

3. **Status of this Document**

This document draws together policy and procedural statements as set out in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook, tailored to the specific situation of the Institute operating with accredited status. It will be revised as necessary alongside any subsequent revisions of the University handbook.

4. **Policy History**

Last Review: 28 August 2020

Policy Review Date: November 2021

APPENDIX 1 – EE report template

External Examiners' report template

Purpose of the External Examiner's report

Please read this section before writing your report

External Examiner reports are an integral part of the University's quality monitoring and quality enhancement process and play an important role in the programme review cycle. The University requires all External Examiners to submit a written report annually. The report should be submitted within **one month** following the final Assessment Board.

The report should focus on the assessments just concluded and should be linked with the aims and outcomes for the qualification and the assessment criteria for each module as described in the programme student handbook. The University invites External Examiners to be fully objective and to make positive criticism and/or recommendations, where appropriate.

External Examiners' reports are the property of the University and the University will circulate these as it sees fit and in accordance with legislative requirements (see below). The University may choose to anonymise the reports, as appropriate. External Examiner reports are public documents and are seen by students at Programme Voice Group meetings. **Please avoid reference by name to individual students and members of staff.**

In addition, under the Freedom of Information Act, the University will provide copies of External Examiners' reports to third parties who make a lawful request for these. Reports will normally retain examiners' names. The University will consider any reasonable request from external examiners to anonymise their reports. Such a request should be made in writing and submitted with the report.

Full details of the procedures, and the use of the reports is outlined in [LQEH section 4](#).

Submission of the report

Please submit your report via email to the following email address:

externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk

Payment of your fee is arranged upon receipt of your report, unless the report is referred for any reason.

External Examiner Report – Faculty Assessment Board

SAE Institute / Middlesex University External Examiner Assessment Panel Confirmation Form	
Content Specialist Panel (CSP) Date:	
Trimester going to Content Specialist Panel (CSP):	
CSP Cognate Group:	
Region(s):	
Degree Centre(s):	
Modules moderated	
External Examiner name:	
Have you had adequate access to sample assignments of students to be considered by the Board covering the full range of marks?	
Have you have been able to access sample assignments from other Degree Centres for previous Boards in order to establish comparability?	
Did you receive access to sample assignments of students in a timely and efficient manner?	
Have you been consulted about, and agreed, which sample assignments should be uploaded for sampling?	
Have you seen evidence of internal moderation in the assessment process and confirm it was used effectively and consistently?	
Are you in agreement with the proposed grades and resubmission arrangements etc.?	
In your view, are the standards set for the award(s) appropriate for the qualification(s)?	
In your view, are the standards of student performance equivalent to other UK institutions with which you are familiar?	
<p>Please comment here about (a) the work and (b) the procedure:</p> <p>a. The work <i>This should include comments on:</i></p> <p><i>Students overall performance, particularly the classification profile of programmes under the remit of the assessment board in relation to previous cohorts and their peers elsewhere.</i></p>	

b. The procedure

This should include comments on:

- *the conduct and operation of the assessment board*
- *problems at the assessment board in applying the assessment regulations.*

Are there any issues or suggestions that you would like to draw to the attention of the Chief External Examiner and Board?

Please list any recommendations and should relate to issues which have a serious impact on academic standards or academic quality.

(N.B all External Examiners' reports are responded to as a matter of course.)

APPENDIX 2 – Chief EE report template

Template 4e Chief External Examiner's report template

Purpose of the External Examiner's report

Please read this section before writing your report

External Examiner reports are an integral part of the University's quality monitoring and enhancement process and play an important role in the programme review cycle. External Examiners are required to submit annual written reports.

Reports should be submitted within **one month** following the final Assessment Board and should not be delayed until re-sit boards have taken place.

The Chief External Examiner's report should focus on the assessments just concluded. The report should be linked with the programme aims and outcomes, and the assessment criteria for each module as described in the programme/module handbook. In particular the report should focus on the standards of moderation undertaken by the local External Examiner in respect of the:

- appropriateness, effectiveness and consistency of the internal assessment processes;
- appropriateness and effectiveness of the relevant assessment regulations;
- procedures in respect of qualifications; and
- the appropriateness of the standards against which the qualifications have been made.

Reports should be objective and make positive criticism and/or recommendations, where appropriate.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the University will provide copies of External Examiners' reports to third parties who have made a lawful request. Reports will normally retain External Examiners' names. The University will consider any reasonable request from External Examiners to anonymise their reports. Such a request should be made in writing and submitted with the report.

External Examiners' reports are the property of the University. The University will circulate reports as it sees fit, in accordance with legislative requirements. External Examiner reports are public documents, and are seen by students at Programme Voice Group meetings. **Please do not use references by name to individual students and members of staff.**

Full details of the procedures, and the use of the reports is outlined in [LQEH section 4](#).

Submission of the report

Please submit your report via email to the following email address:

externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk

Your annual fee will be processed once we receive a copy of your chief external examiner's annual report.

Chief External Examiner Report

Chief External Examiner Name	
Boards Attended	
Date of Board	
Academic Year	
Term	

Report content and guidelines

The Chief External Examiner is asked to submit a typed report making comments under the following headings:

Student Achievement
<p><i>This should include comments on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>students' overall performance across centres and programmes, particularly the classification profile of programmes under the remit of the assessment board in relation to previous cohorts and their peers elsewhere in the UK</i> • <i>the extent to which standards are appropriate to the qualification or qualification element under consideration</i>
Student performance (please avoid reference by name to individual students)
<p><i>This should include comments on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>standards achieved by students across centres and/or programmes</i> • <i>student performance in relation to their peers on comparable courses in the UK</i> • <i>student performance in programmes taught at different centres</i> • <i>student performance in relation to clinical/professional practice (if applicable)</i> • <i>strengths and weaknesses of the cohorts across centres and/or programmes</i> • <i>the basis and rationale for any comparisons of standards made</i> • <i>factors that the External Examiner is aware of that have positively or negatively affected student performance.</i>
Assessments: structure, design and marking
<p>This should include comment on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards of marking and moderation across centres and/or programmes • procedures for assessment and examination across centres and/or programmes
Assessment Boards
<p><i>(Please confirm attendance at assessment boards and in the event of non-attendance whether you were fully involved in the assessment process.)</i></p>

<p>This should include comments on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisation and conduct of Assessment Boards • problems at the assessment board in applying the assessment regulations. 	
<p>Role of the External Examiner</p>	
<p><i>This should include comments on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>quality of the information you received concerning your role as an External Examiner</i> • <i>access to and availability of material needed to make required judgements</i> • <i>the extent to which comments in your previous report have been considered and appropriately acted upon</i> 	
<p>Collaborative Programmes</p>	
<p><i>Please add any comments relating to the links between the University and the collaborative institution.</i></p>	
<p>Confirmation of new External Examiner (if appropriate)</p>	
<p><i>Please add any comments relating to the proficiency of the new External Examiner and confirm that you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have reviewed and approved a sample of moderated assessments</i> • <i>have reviewed a draft External Examiner's report</i> • <i>agree that the External Examiner is experienced in applying UK HE and Middlesex University regulations and procedures</i> • <i>recommend that the External Examiner should be approved for a full term</i> 	
<p>Recommendations or actions</p>	
<p><i>Please list any recommendations or actions arising from your report:</i></p> <p><i>Recommendations should relate to issues which have a serious impact on academic standards or academic quality.</i></p> <p><i>(NB all necessary actions/recommendations are responded to immediately as a matter of course.)</i></p>	
<p>Good practice</p>	
<p><i>Please list any good practice you have noted.</i></p> <p><i>If you are completing your term as Chief External Examiner please comment on the development of the Programme(s) during this time.</i></p>	

External Examiner Confirmation

Report Submission Date	
Signed	
Print Name	

For AQS use only

Date Report Received	
Checked, by Whom.	
Date Sent to Programme Team	
Date Response Received	