

PROVIDER NAME: CCT College Dublin

POLICY AREA: Standard 5: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Policy and Procedure Title: External Examiner Policy

Policy No: CCTP510

Version: 2.2

Policy Statement

It is CCT policy that assessment contributing to the fulfilment of requirements for the attainment of higher education awards on the National Framework of Qualifications will be subject to independent external review. The external examining process is a quality assurance mechanism that supports the maintenance of academic standards, the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the equivalence of standards with other providers, and assists in providing the public confidence in programmes delivered by the College which lead to a framework award.

CCT College Dublin is committed to full and proper implementation of the QQI publication *Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining*. The following procedure outlines how this will be satisfied. In accordance with the QQI guidelines, 'An external examiner's functions can be discharged by an individual or by a team of external examiners...External examiners are often drawn from the higher education community. They can be drawn from other communities of practice provided they have the necessary competences (or acquire them prior to engagement).'

In the case of collaborative provision, appropriate mechanisms and criteria for the appointment of External Examiners will be agreed in advance as part of the collaborative agreement. CCT College expects that the approval and appointment process will be equivalent to that outlined hereunder. In the absence of an alternative, the CCT policy and process will be applied.

Definitions and Principles

An external examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role

Staff Involved

QA Officer, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of School, School Manager, QE Committee

- 1.6 Where the nomination is accepted and the QE Committee's recommendation is endorsed by Academic Council, the QA Officer will notify the School Manager.
- 1.7 The QA Officer will issue a formal appointment letter along with appropriate supporting documentation to assist the External Examiner in their role.
- 1.8 The School Manager, along with the Programme Leader, will follow up to arrange an induction meeting and provide programme specific information.
- 1.9 The Dean of Academic Affairs will arrange for QQI to be notified of the appointment and provided with a copy of the CV of the appointee.
- 1.10 All nominated External Examiners, prior to appointment, receive a copy of CCT's Conflict of Interest Policy (CCTP806) to avoid ethical and financial conflict and ensure conflict is managed accordingly.
- 1.11 An external examiner's term of appointment is sufficiently long to allow the examiner to assess trends, and sufficiently short to provide diversity and maintain the required level of independence. Traditionally, the normal period of appointment has been three years. Any term of contract over a period of three years will be considered by the QE Committee, who will make a recommendation to Academic Council, for approving or denying such a proposal. A rationale for the extended tenure must be provided. Absence of a replacement or alternative External Examiner is not normally considered a suitable rationale for extension. The Dean of Academic Affairs will notify the awarding body where an extended tenure is approved.

2. CCT Induction of External Examiners

CCT endeavours to facilitate the external examiners to carry out their duties as efficiently and effectively as possible. To this end the Dean of Academic Affairs, through the QA Officer, shall ensure that External Examiners receive adequate documentation to enable them to understand the assessment systems and regulations operated by the college. Such documentation might include:

- Quality assurance policies and procedures
- College academic and administrative structures and procedures
- Programme/subject/module documentation
- Assessment and examination procedures and schedules
- Rules and regulations
- Examination and award structures
- Conflict of Interest

Dean of Academic Affairs
QA Officer

Copies of welcome letter and induction materials

The School Manager is required to arrange an induction meeting with a newly appointed External Examiner where they are introduced to the College, faculty and staff, and the programme. Where the External Examiner is taking over from an outgoing post holder, where possible, arrangements should be made to allow for a handover meeting between to the two parties. A new External Examiner should be provided with copies, where they exist, of the most recent External Examiner reports and responses from the programme team.

3. Duties of External Examiners

The primary role of an external examiner is to verify the academic standards achieved and ensure the programme and providers assessment regulations and practices are fit for purpose.

As per QQI guidelines, the main functions of the external examiner (or external examiner team) are as follows:

- Review the appropriateness of the *minimum intended programme learning outcomes* (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal) and other programme objectives.
- Probe the actual attainment of students (*actual* programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by the College.
- Compare and contrast both the *minimum intended programme learning outcomes* and the actual attainment of students with the relevant awards standards with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond.
- Determine whether the applied procedures for assessment are *valid, reliable, fair and consistent*.
- Review the appropriateness of the *programme assessment strategy* and the assessment procedures and, flowing from this, consider subsidiary module assessment strategies.
- Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and students' prerequisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include key continuous assessment tasks, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the external examiner.
- Report findings and recommendations to the provider.

With regards to the requirement to review key assessment tasks, the external examiner should normally be provided with access to all summative assessment tasks completed by learners and facilitated to review a sample of same. This access can include Moodle log in, invitation to attend student presentations, or access to videos of student work for example.

While it is not a requirement for the External Examiner to review a sample of student work in respect of every assessment, all capstone assessments and terminal examinations along with a selection of continuous assessments should be reviewed. The size and breadth of the sample can be agreed at programme level but should enable the External Examiner to confirm academic standards and the accuracy of grading. Where modules are not capstone modules or do not include a terminal examination and are modules which contribute to the award classification, the student work in respect of at least one assessment within the module must be reviewed by the external examiner.

School Manager

Feedback /
recommendations on
assessments

All assessments provided to the external examiner should detail the learning outcomes being assessed and must be accompanied by a marking scheme.

The external examiner will review the drafts of all examination question papers, marking schemes, worked solutions, etc. before the question papers are sent for printing, and the assessment briefs and marking schemes for agreed continuous assessments. External examiners shall have the right to make suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions, and amendments as they deem appropriate.

3.2 External Examiners will be provided with a representative sample of graded student work. The sample, which should be drawn on a basis agreed between the Internal and the External (examiners), should include sufficient material to enable the External Examiner to form a judgement as to the appropriateness of the marking at all levels of classifications. In this regard, assessments from modules contributing to the award classification are the priority for External Examiner review.

3.3 All External Examiners will be required to visit the institutions for at least ONE exam board in each academic year. See section 3 for remit of Exam Boards CCTP301-2.1.7

3.4 External examiners will attend the College during the determination of results and at other times as determined by the College and the External Examiner for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and/or the standard of student performance.

3.5 External examiners are responsible for determining, in their expert judgement, if the assessment procedures are fair and consistent and in accordance with the appropriate standards.

3.6 External examiners will ensure that, during their proposed tenure, all key assessments of the programme with which they are involved have been adequately assessed.

3.7 External Examiners will decide, in consultation with the Programme Leader / School Manager and where required in accordance other approved validating body procedures:

- The assessments including the assessment briefs / examination papers, model answers and marking schemes to be reviewed prior to them being issued
- The sample of assessed work to be considered.
- The Faculty Co-ordinator / QA Officer is responsible for ensuring that such material is provided to the External Examiner in good time.

4. External Examiners Report (*pro forma* document)

4.1 After each cohort is assessed the external examiner is required to submit a written report utilising the template provided by the College.

School Manager

Faculty Coordinator
QA Officer

External Examiner Report

It is not appropriate for learners to seek to contact External Examiners in relation to assessment disputes or assessment feedback. Such matters should be directed through the relevant College procedures.

Monitoring

Monitor (Job Title)	Frequency	Monitoring Method(s)
Dean of Academic Affairs QA Officer	QE Committee Programme Board meeting Annual review for full academic year	External Examiner Register Minutes of QE Committee Review of records of correspondence between exams officer, registrar, lecturer and external examiner Review of records of external examiner reports Review of minutes of Exam Board meetings Review of actions taken in the past semester regarding recommendations from External Examiners

POLICY CONTROL SHEET

Policy Title	External Examiner Policy
Responsible Officer(s)	QA Officer
Issuance Date	August 2017
Effective Date	August 2017
Last Review Date	July 2019
Supersedes	Version 2.0
Next Review Date	August 2024
Designated Reviewer(s)	Dean of Academic Affairs, QA Officer
Scope	Internal staff (full and part time); Learners; Program Boards; Academic Standards Board; Appeals Board, Board of Examiners, QE Committee

Revision History

Revision	Approval Date	Revision Description	Originator	Approved By
New Policy	August 2015	New QA system	Senior Management Team	Head of Academics, College Registrar
Version 2.0	August 2017	Expansion to more fully document appointment process and criteria and clarify the responsibilities of all parties.	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Council
Version 2.0	May 2018	Renumbered, was CCTP513, now CCTP510	QA Committee	Academic Council
Version 2.1	July 2019	Edit to reflect programme specific sampling arrangement and requirement for External Examiner to be capable of fulfilling duties through technology i.e. accessing Moodle to view student work.	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Council
Version 2.2	March 2020	Edit to include additional selection stage where multiple applications are received	QE Committee	Academic Council

References upon which the Policy section is based

CCT Policy area	Student centred teaching, learning, and assessment
Statutory & System Wide Basis	The Irish Qualifications and Quality Act (Education and Training), 2012; European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area, QQI Assessment and Standards

**Related CCT Policies /
Forms**

CCTP806 – Conflict of Interest
CCTP515 Board of Examiners