

Code of Practice for External Examiners: Research Degrees

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Date	Supersedes	Description of Change
1 December 2023	2023 Version 1	Minor amendment to delegate authority to a nominee. Changes to committee structures.
1 April 2023	2022 Version 1	Changing external to internal in Item 39
1 October 2022	2018 Version 01.1	Minor amendment to reflect changes to committee structure and restructuring.

Document Owner	Approved By	Date Approved	Review Frequency
Quality Enhancement Unit.	Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee.	3 November 2023.	Every three years.

Note: In exceptional circumstances, and subject to approval by the Chair of the Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee, responsibilities assigned to Schools, Heads, of School, School Officers or School Committees in this Code of Practice may be assumed by the College, Head of College, College Officers or College Committees respectively, as appropriate.

Code of Practice for External Examiners: Research Degrees



In this document the term 'External Examiner' refers to External Examiners for research degrees including the thesis element of Professional Doctorates (e.g. EdD and DClInPsy schemes).

General

1. All External Examiners are ultimately responsible to Bangor University's Senate.
2. In the UK's system of higher education, institutions are responsible for the quality of the education they provide and the academic standards of the awards they offer. External examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining nationally comparable standards within autonomous higher education institutions.
3. The University, through the Quality Enhancement Unit, will appoint one or more External Examiner(s) to carry out the role(s) defined in this Code of Practice for all provision that leads to the award of a research degree from the University. This includes collaborative provision.
4. The external examining function should help Bangor University to ensure that:
 - it is maintaining the academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and the QAA UK qualification descriptors for doctoral degrees and master's degrees by research;
 - the assessment process measures student achievement appropriately, and is rigorous and conducted fairly and consistently.

Criteria for Appointment

Criteria for the appointment of Internal Examiners are given in Appendix 1.

5. Eligibility to work in the UK: Under the constraints of the Law on Preventing Illegal Working, nominees must be eligible to work in the UK if the External Examiner intends to participate in the *viva voce* from within the UK. Non-UK nationals based outside the UK must not travel to the UK, and the *viva voce* must be conducted by video conference. Please contact the Quality Assurance Manager for further information, if required.

Please note that document checks will be conducted, except in cases where the nominee is based outside the UK and the *viva voce* will be held by video conference. Please see Appendix 2 for more details.

6. Schools and other Academic Sections should take care to ensure that they do not overuse a particular Examiner.
7. Nominees should have sufficient expertise, experience and seniority to command authority in the field and to assure comparability of standards. These three criteria

apply to **all** research degrees including areas of professional education (e.g. nursing, initial teacher training, social work).

8. Normally, a nominee will be of Senior Lecturer status or above, or the equivalent. If a School can provide robust evidence of sufficient expertise, experience and seniority of their nomination, such criteria will take precedence over the formal job status.
9. Examiners from outside the University system are appropriate where professional expertise is required. In all such cases, the Internal Examiner should be an experienced academic member of staff of senior status with considerable experience of UK research degree standards.
10. External Examiners must meet any criteria specified by Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory bodies (e.g. HCPC). The External Examiners in such cases will be appointed as defined by this Code of Practice. The Quality Enhancement Unit will be responsible for liaising with the Professional Body, or equivalent, where necessary.
11. Former members of staff may not be invited to become External Examiners before a lapse of at least five years, or sufficient time for students supervised by that member of staff to have passed through the system, whichever is the longer.
12. Nominees who are retired may be appointed up to 5 years following their retirement.
13. When nominating an External Examiner from outside the UK, a detailed explanation and curriculum vitae is required from the nominating School at the time of the nomination. In all such cases where an examiner from outside the UK is used, the Internal Examiner should be an experienced academic member of staff of senior status (e.g. Professor, Reader) with considerable experience of UK research degree standards.
14. To avoid any conflicts of interest, no External Examiner may be appointed who has significant involvement with the University, the School, the supervisor or the candidate. Nomination of an External Examiner should detail the nature of any such involvement. All nominations where there has been involvement will be examined by the Head of Quality Enhancement (or nominee). Generally, 'significant involvement' will be interpreted as 'likely to compromise the independent and fair judgment of the External Examiner'.
15. Where the candidate is also a member of University staff, a second External Examiner shall be appointed in place of an Internal Examiner. At least one should have considerable experience working in UK higher education.

Nomination Procedure

16. Nominations for External Examiners should be made by the Head of School or nominee.
17. Nomination forms for Examiners should be submitted to the Quality Enhancement Unit **at least 1 month** prior to the submission of the thesis.
18. Following approval by the Head of Quality Enhancement (or nominee), an invitation letter is sent from the Quality Enhancement Unit. The Quality Enhancement Unit will provide written confirmation of the appointment to Schools once the appointment process is completed.

19. In cases where a nominated External Examiner does not meet all the above criteria, a detailed explanation is required from the nominating School at the time of the nomination. A curriculum vitae of the nominee should also be included.

Outcomes

20. In cases where the External Examiner nomination is rejected for failing to meet the above criteria, an alternative nomination will be required. Schools may appeal to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) on the rejection of an External Examiner.
21. No nominations can be made in retrospect. All nominations must be approved by the Head of Quality Enhancement (or nominee) before a formal appointment is made.
22. A School is not permitted to proceed with the examination of a research student until the Quality Enhancement Unit provides formal confirmation of appointment.

Responsibilities

23. External Examiners' fees shall be set, reviewed and amended by the Curriculum Quality Assurance Delivery Group, upon the recommendation of the Head of Quality Enhancement.
24. The University is responsible, through the Quality Enhancement Unit or PGR Student Administration Team, for ensuring that each External Examiner is supplied with copies of the relevant Regulations of the University and expenses claim form.
25. Heads of Schools are responsible for ensuring that External Examiners receive copies of the thesis, the University's 'Notes for External and Internal Examiners', and the appropriate examiners 'Result and Report Forms'. This is normally supported by the PGR Student Administration Team
26. Heads of Schools are responsible for informing candidates if there is any delay in the examination process beyond 3 months. If External Examiners are unable to examine within 3 months of the submission of the thesis, alternative examiners should normally be appointed for this purpose. Schools should inform the Quality Enhancement Unit of any such delay.

Academic Misconduct

27. An External Examiner who, either in the course of the examining process or subsequently, considers that a candidate has engaged in an unfair examination practice shall immediately report the circumstances in writing to the Chair of the Examining Board concerned.

Reports

28. In accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code, Examiners are asked to submit separate, independent written reports before the *viva voce* and a joint report after it. External Examiners are also asked to report on the examination process.
29. The Internal and External Examiners' reports will be made available to the candidate following the *viva voce*.

30. External examiners' reports are returned to Student Administration. Expenses claim forms are returned to the Quality Enhancement Unit. Examiners are paid their fee on receipt of the form.
31. A summary report of issues raised by External Examiners will be considered by the Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee. The Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee, in consultation with the relevant School is responsible for ensuring that any actions on major points raised by External Examiners are carried out.
32. External Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Vice-Chancellor, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. The University will provide a considered and timely response to any confidential report received, outlining any actions they will be taking as a result.

Arbitrating Examiners

33. External Examiners are asked to note that when the decision of an Examiner to fail a candidate gives rise to a case of dispute between the External Examiner and internal Examiner, it is within the power of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), at the request of the Chair of the Examining Board, to appoint another External Examiner who will be asked to arbitrate. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (ESE) may take into account any written reports submitted by members of the Examining Board. In choosing a second External Examiner the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (ESE) may also take into account, but is not bound by, the nomination (if any) of an Examining Board for a second External Examiner. A decision on whether or not to reconvene the Examining Board shall be at the discretion of the second External Examiner whose decision on this matter is final.

Collaborative Provision

34. Bangor University will normally appoint External Examiners for candidates enrolled for a joint or dual award, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this Code of Practice. In such cases, the relevant authority in the partner institution will be consulted prior to the appointment being made.
35. If, for administrative reasons, it is more appropriate for the External Examiner to be appointed by the partner institution, the External Examiner must be approved by the University prior to appointment.
36. An Internal Examiner from Bangor University must also participate in the examination process.
37. The Examiners must complete Bangor University report forms in order for an award to be made by the University.

Appendix 1 Criteria for the Appointment of Internal Examiners

38. The Internal Examiner should be sufficiently senior and experienced in examining to assure UK standards, and not within their probationary period.
39. Wherever feasible, the Internal Examiner should be sufficiently independent to make as objective a decision as is possible in relation to the examination of the thesis.
40. Where either of these two criteria cannot be achieved, the expectation of a School is that they recruit an appropriate Internal Examiner from another School. In exceptional cases, a second External Examiner may be appointed. In such cases, the Quality Enhancement Unit will re-charge half the combined cost of both External Examiners to the School.

Appendix 2 Scheme for Document Checks

