



## UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

### ***Extern Examination at UCD Policy Statement and Principles***

V1.10

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#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy document is to strengthen the intentions of existing practice through the provision of clear guidance on the appointment and role of the Extern Examiner in a mature modular system.

#### **Scope:**

This policy applies to the external examination of UCD's taught provision. External examination arrangements for research programmes are described in separate regulatory and guidance documentation.

#### **Definition:**

The term *Extern Examiner* is used throughout the document to describe the external examiner, reflecting the language used in UCD Statute 6.

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## **1. STATEMENT**

- 1.1. Extern Examiners play a vital role in assisting the University in fulfilling its obligations of assuring the academic standards and integrity of its modules leading to awards.
- 1.2. Extern Examiners provide an important consultative and advisory function in supporting the development of modules as well as the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices.
- 1.3. UCD appoints Extern Examiners that are internationally recognised experts in their subject areas and are from institutions with the highest academic reputations.

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

The University recognises that successful fulfilment of the functions of the Extern Examiner is dependent on the quality of internal assessment review at both School and University levels.

The key principles that underpin the role of the Extern Examiner are:

### **2.1. Quality of Assessment**

The fundamental role of the Extern Examiner is to assure academic standards and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The Extern Examiner confirms that the academic standards of modules and the awards to which they lead are consistent with the academic outcomes specified by the University, and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally.

### **2.2. Equity**

The Extern Examiner helps to assure the fairness, validity and rigor of assessment at the University.

### **2.3. Enhancement**

The Extern Examiner provides feedback on the quality of modules and the overall learning experience in the subject area, and on how teaching, learning and assessment in modules and the subject area may be enhanced.

### **2.4. Assessment**

The role of the Extern Examiner is to review, moderate and enhance the assessment process, and they will not routinely act as an additional examiner. The conduct of assessment and the determination of grades and awards is a matter for the Internal Examiner acting with the support and advice of the Extern Examiner. Nonetheless, in particular circumstances and in accordance with the policies of the University, Extern Examiners may be involved in the assessment process as second or additional examiners

## **3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY/REGISTRAR/ASSESSMENT, UCD REGISTRY**

- 3.1. It is the responsibility of the University (by way of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations) to review and approve nominations for Extern Examiners and recommend to the NUI the appointment of such and so many Extern Examiners as the University may deem necessary.
- 3.2. The Registrar and the Academic Council Committee on Examinations shall be supported by Assessment, UCD Registry in the discharging of this function.
- 3.3. It is the responsibility of the Registrar or nominee to:
  - (a) Notify Extern Examiners of their appointment on behalf of the NUI.
  - (b) Ensure that Extern Examiners receive adequate information in relation to UCD's Academic Regulations and Assessment Regulations.
  - (c) Provide induction through guidelines for Extern Examiners.
- 3.4. Assessment, UCD Registry shall ensure that copies of the Extern Examiners Reports are circulated to the relevant Head(s) of Schools, Head(s) of Subjects and the UCD Director of Quality.
- 3.5. The Registrar or nominee shall review all reports submitted by Extern Examiners and follow-up on any matters arising with the relevant Schools.
- 3.6. Assessment, UCD Registry shall supply copies of the Extern Examiners Reports to the NUI.
- 3.7. Assessment, UCD Registry shall facilitate remuneration of Extern Examiners upon submission of the Annual Report on their activities.
- 3.8. The Registrar or nominee shall report annually to Academic Council, summarising the major issues identified in Extern Examiners reports and highlighting examples of good practice from across the University.
- 3.9. The Registrar or nominee with assistance from the Director of Assessment, and the Academic Council Committee on Examinations, may take an overview of results, and make recommendations to Schools and Programme Examination Boards as appropriate.

#### **4. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL/HEAD OF SCHOOL**

A School is primarily responsible for the modules that fall under its remit. Module delivery is the responsibility of the module co-ordinator as appointed by the Head of School. The Head of School will ensure that the following responsibilities are met by the School, although responsibility for their completion may be delegated to Heads of Subject or Heads of Section and School administrators, as appropriate.

- 4.1. The Head of School shall, in consultation with the School and with agreement of the University, recommend Extern Examiners as appropriate to the needs of their School.
- 4.2. The Head of School shall ensure that the proposed Extern Examiner meets UCD's criteria for appointment of Extern Examiners (see section 6.2).
- 4.3. The Head of School shall interact with the Extern Examiner to determine their willingness to serve as Extern Examiner for UCD, prior to their nomination to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations.
- 4.4. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to nominate Extern Examiners to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. The nomination should be submitted to Assessment, UCD Registry. The Head of School shall ensure that all information provided to Assessment, UCD Registry is correct and complete.
- 4.5. The Head of School, in consultation with the School and with the agreement of the Extern Examiner shall determine the specific duties of the External Examiner aligned to roles and responsibilities outlined in Section 5.
- 4.6. The Head of School shall establish a procedure to ensure that module assessments, including examination question papers, have been properly reviewed before being submitted to Extern Examiners for consideration.
- 4.7. The Head of School or nominee shall provide the Extern Examiner with full information on the modules under examination, including any relevant materials describing learning outcomes and/or descriptors, assessment strategies and methods of assessment. The School should agree with the Extern Examiner which assessment instruments are to be reviewed in advance, and which may be reviewed in retrospect.
- 4.8. The School shall complete a detailed review of module grading outcomes. Statistical reports that are supplied by Assessment, UCD Registry may be used to facilitate this process. Where anomalies are identified and are not rectified at School level, these should be brought to the Extern Examiner's attention for comment.
- 4.9. The Head of School shall provide a written response to the Registrar or nominee to recommendations arising from the Extern Examiners Report. In particular, the response shall include information on how the School intends to progress any issues raised by the Extern Examiner, or why, having reflected on the issues raised, a decision is made not to take any action.

#### **5. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXTERN EXAMINER**

- 5.1. The activities of Extern Examiners shall be agreed with the appropriate Head of School and should include the following:
  - (a) Reviewing curricula and outcomes of modules and programmes, including results of module and programme evaluation instruments
  - (b) Reviewing assessment strategies and assessment instruments.
  - (c) Auditing a sample of graded assessments to confirm standards and to make any relevant recommendations on learning outcomes, assessment and grading practices.
  - (d) Auditing, where appropriate, the distribution of grades for modules.
  - (e) Advising on enhancements to assessment and grading practices or aspects of module or programme development.

- (f) Reviewing the content of modules and, where relevant, the subject(s) or programme, to ensure appropriateness and enhance quality.
  - (g) Extern Examiners may be invited to participate in practical, clinical or oral assessments, and will normally review the assessment of major projects, dissertations or theses.
  - (h) Exceptionally, recommending on the re-scaling or adjustment of grades for a student or cohort of students.
  - (i) Extern Examiners shall visit the University at least once during each year of their term of appointment.
  - (j) Extern Examiners may engage in discussions with Schools or key committees within Schools and students at any time during their appointment. It is expected that a formal period for such discussions would be arranged during the Extern Examiner's visit.
- 5.2. Following completion of the aforementioned activities, the Extern Examiner is required to provide a report on their findings to the Registrar or nominee (see section 7.0). A template will be provided for this purpose.

## **6. THE APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR EXTERN EXAMINERS**

- 6.1. The Academic Council Committee on Examinations is responsible for the review and approval of all Extern Examiner nominations for the University. The Head of School, in consultation with the School, nominates Extern Examiners to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. Nominations are submitted to Assessment, (UCD Registry), who maintain a Register of Extern Examiners for the University. Assessment records and collates details of the proposed Extern Examiners for presentation to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations for approval. Upon approval, the Academic Council Committee on Examinations secretary notifies the Registrar or nominee, Assessment, UCD Registry and the NUI of the recommendations. It is the responsibility of the Assessment, UCD Registry to inform the Head of School, Programme Board and Extern Examiner of the Academic Council Committee on Examination's recommendations. This procedure is depicted in Appendix 1.
- 6.2. The appointment of Extern Examiners will be based on the following criteria:
- (a) Extern Examiners may be appointed in respect of a subject; groups of cognate subject areas or programmes, as determined necessary by the Head of School
  - (b) An Extern Examiner's academic and professional qualifications should be appropriate to the subject area to be examined.
  - (c) Externs should have appropriate academic standing and expertise, and be adequately experienced to adjudicate on comparability of standards.
  - (d) An Extern Examiner may not be a member of UCD staff and may not be involved in the teaching in a subject/degree programme in which they will examine.
  - (e) An Extern Examiner should not normally be appointed from the same institution as their predecessor. Exceptions may on occasion be permitted, for example, in the case of subjects taught only in a very small number of institutions.
  - (f) Former members of UCD staff may not be appointed as Extern Examiners for a period of at least three years after they have left UCD.
  - (g) Nominations for new Extern Examiners should be submitted for approval by 1<sup>st</sup> of March of year of their appointment.
  - (h) Extern Examiners will be appointed for terms of up to three years within UCD.
  - (i) In exceptional circumstances, an extension to appointment may be sought. Extensions will be granted normally for only one year. Requests should be made, following the procedure outlined in 6.1, to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations.

- (j) Should an Extern Examiner not be in a position to fulfil their term of appointment, formal notification should be given to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations, giving at least three months notice (with the exclusion of emergency situations).
- (k) The process for replacing Extern Examiners within their appointed term follows the normal appointment procedure outlined in section 6.1. In emergency situations, a School should forward the substitute nomination on the appropriate documentation to the Director of Assessment, providing an explanation for the nomination. The nomination will be forwarded for retrospective approval at the next available Academic Council Committee on Examinations.
- (l) UCD reserves the right to terminate the appointment any time during the period that the Extern Examiner is eligible to serve.

## **7. THE EXTERN EXAMINER'S REPORT**

- 7.1 Extern Examiners shall submit a completed Annual Report (see Appendix 2) for each year of their term of appointment. The report should be completed normally within six weeks of the completion of work for the academic year.
- 7.2 An Interim Report may be submitted should the Extern Examiner identify any issues that require immediate action to facilitate a review before the next academic session.
- 7.3 The Extern Examiner Report will be used for review at module and subject level by Schools, and for review at College and University level.
- 7.4 Extern Examiners may submit a report in confidence in addition to the main report. The report will be sent to the Registrar or nominee for consideration.
- 7.5 In the Annual Report, the Extern Examiner will be asked to confirm that the module/suite of modules they have assessed comply with University Regulations and Policy, including but not limited to the following regulatory requirements [*Academic Regulations, section 4; Assessment, Grading and Boards of Examiners*].
- 7.6 In the Annual Report, the Extern Examiner will be asked to confirm that they were provided with evidence to show that their recommendations from previous years had been considered and acted upon.
- 7.7 Extern Examiners shall complete all relevant sections of the UCD Extern Examiners Report. Completed reports, with the inclusion of any recommendations, should be submitted to the Registrar c/o Assessment, UCD Registry. Extern Examiners will receive payment for their activities upon submission of the report.
- 7.8 At the end of their term of appointment, Extern Examiners shall complete a final report in addition to their annual report. The final report should provide the University with a synopsis of the Extern Examiner's experiences during their term of appointment. In particular, the final report should focus on the practicalities of their experience; whether the roles and responsibilities of an Extern Examiner, as defined by UCD, were adequate; analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the modules/subjects; trends observed over their term; suggested developments and improvements; final comment on overall quality of the modules/subject.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT, CONSULTATION AND APPROVALS PLAN

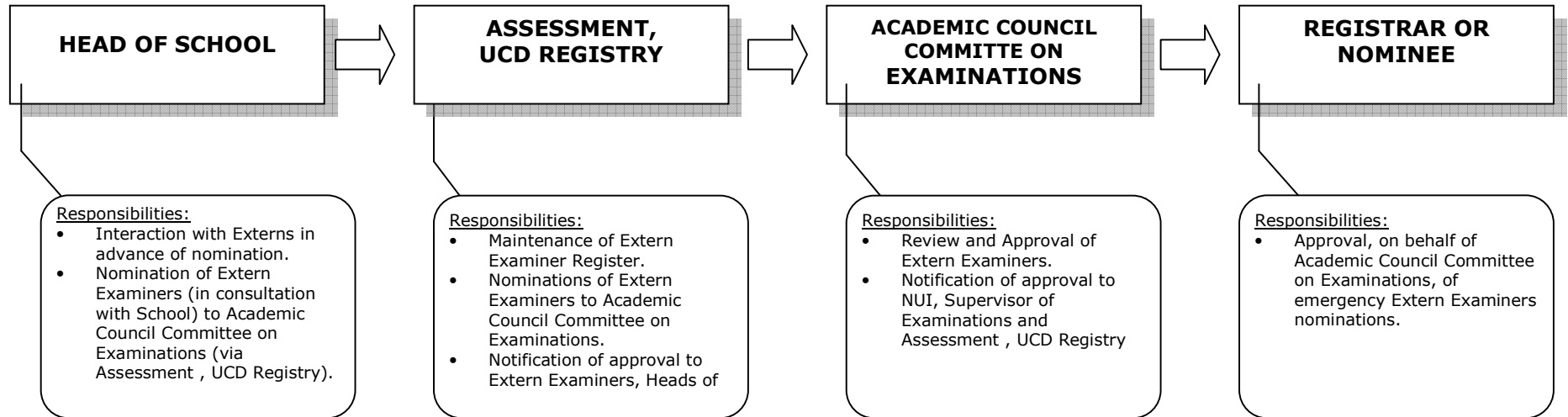
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Consultation and Approval					
Committee/Group	Date		Version	Action	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Policy Working Group	29 <sup>th</sup> Nov 07				
Policy Working Group	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec 07		V1.0		
Policy Working Group	10 <sup>th</sup> Jan 08		V1.1		
Policy Working Group	21 <sup>st</sup> Jan 08		V1.2		
Policy Working Group	4 <sup>th</sup> Feb 08		V1.3		
Policy Working Group	27 <sup>th</sup> Feb 08		V1.4		
Policy Working Group	12 <sup>th</sup> Mar 08		V1.5		
Academic Council Executive Committee	27 <sup>th</sup> Mar 08	20 <sup>th</sup> Mar 08	V1.6	Discussion	Agreed in principle subject to revisions
Policy sub-group			V1.7	For Registrar's comments	
Academic Council Executive Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> May 08	7 <sup>th</sup> May 08	V1.8	For Approval	<b>Approved</b>
Policy revised in response to decisions at NUI Senate.					
ACCE	4 <sup>th</sup> Feb '10		V1.9	Discussion	endorsed
AC	18 <sup>th</sup> Feb '10		V1.9	For Approval	Endorsed with some operational clarifications
Academic Council Committee on Examinations	4 <sup>th</sup> Mar '10		V.10	For Approval	Approved
AC	23 <sup>rd</sup> Apr'10		V1.10	For Noting	-

# Appendix 1



## Procedure for Nomination and Approval of Extern Examiners



## Appendix 2



### University College Dublin UCD Extern Examiner Report

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#### Return this form to:

Registrar c/o Assessment,  
UCD Registry  
University College Dublin  
Tierney Building  
Dublin 4  
Ireland

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#### Deadlines for submission

Reports for undergraduate programmes should be submitted within six weeks of the completion of the work for the academic year.

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#### Subject/Award

Subject	<input type="text"/>
Award	<input type="text"/>
UCD Academic Contact	<input type="text"/>

#### Extern Details

Extern Examiner	<input type="text"/>
Institutional Address	<input type="text"/>
E-mail Address	<input type="text"/>
Period covered by this Report	<input type="text"/>
Dates of Visit(s) to UCD	<input type="text"/>

Number of years as Extern Examiner in your current appointment at UCD. (please tick ✓)

1  2  3  Extension period

If you acted as Extern Examiner in the previous year -

Were you provided with evidence that your recommendations from previous years were considered and acted upon? Please comment.

Did you receive timely payment following your visit and the submission of your Report to the University?

Yes  No

If no, please comment.

**Modules**

1. Did your review of the contents of modules indicate that they were both current and appropriate to the level at which they were delivered?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Were module objectives sufficiently well-defined and appropriate to the subject matter and to the level of delivery?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Were you provided with adequate evidence that an appropriate review of the module statistics took place at School level?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Were you satisfied that the learning outcomes were aligned to the grading outcomes in the modules?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In your audit of the distribution of grades in modules did any give cause for concern?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Did failure rates in any modules give cause for concern?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Were you given the opportunity to audit a sample of graded assessments to confirm standards?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Did the existing assessments enable students to demonstrate achievement of the expected learning outcomes?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments.**

Among your general comments please deal with the following matters:

- (a) The module outcomes.
- (b) Alignment of learning outcomes and grading outcomes in the modules.
- (c) Any modules where grading required significant adjustment (please list).
- (d) Any concerns about failure rates in particular modules.
- (e) Recommendations on assessment and grading practices.

**Recommendations for developments, enhancements and improvements.**

## Subject

1. Was the subject structure and content appropriate to the level at which it was taught?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Did you have adequate information to review assessment strategies within the subject/programme?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did you have adequate information to review assessment instruments (examination papers, continuous assessments, practicals, clinical assessments, etc.) within the subject/programme?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Did you have any concerns about the overall grade distributions or failure rates within the subject?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Was the extent of the assessment requirements appropriate to the course and level of award?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Comments.

Among your general comments please deal with the following matters :

- (a) Subject structure and content
- (b) Overall assessment strategies.
- (c) Assessment instruments.
- (d) Overall grade distributions or failure rates within the subject.
- (e) Extent of the assessment requirements.

### Recommendations for developments, enhancements and improvements.

**Overall Quality**

1. Was the general quality of candidates' work satisfactory?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Were the standards achieved by students consistent with those in your own university and/or in other universities in which you have acted as an Extern?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Were the final GPA distributions (honours classes) comparable with the distribution in other institutions?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Did you meet with students and discuss their level of satisfaction with modules / the programme?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Were the procedures followed during the grading and examining process impartial and equitable?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Was the administration of the assessment process satisfactory?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Did you have adequate time to carry out the assessment tasks?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments.**  
 Among your general comments please deal with the following matters :

- (a) General quality of candidates' work.
- (b) Comparability of standards with those in your own university and/or in other universities in which you have acted as an Extern.
- (c) Satisfaction with the programme.
- (d) Impartiality and fairness of the grading and examining process.
- (e) Administration of the assessment process.
- (f) The timeframe for your assessment tasks.

**Recommendations for developments, enhancements and improvements.**

## General Comments

**Please provide overall comments on the assessment process.**

In addition, please comment on aspects of the process that:

- (a) Demonstrate good practice.
- (b) Give cause for concern.

**General recommendations for developments, enhancements and improvements.**

**Signature**

**Date**