



Report from the Policy Working Group on Extern Examiners

1. Introduction and Context

UCD General Regulations state that: *The functions of External Examiners are determined by the Senate of the National University of Ireland (with the concurrence of UCD). The Academic Council will establish policy and guidance to assist External Examiners in the performance of their functions. (4.16 Assessment, Grading and Boards of Examiners)*

A Working Group was established by the Academic Council to review the Extern Examination System.

Membership of the Working Group

Professor Gerry Doyle (Chair), Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Supervisor of Examinations

Professor Alan Baird, School of Agriculture, Food Science & Veterinary Medicine

Dr Joe Brady, Arts Programme Dean

Ms Bianca Cranny, Office of Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Professor Pádraig Dunne, EMPS Graduate School Director

Mr Roy Ferguson, UCD Director of Quality

Ms Lynn Foster, Academic Policy and Programme Development

Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty, School of Art History & Cultural Policy

Dr Paul McGrath, School of Business

Professor Joe McMahon, Dean of Law

Mr Jim Murphy, Architecture Programme Dean

Ms Elizabeth Noonan, Director, Academic Policy and Programme Development

Ms Karen O'Shea, UCD Director of Assessment

Professor Mark Rogers, Science Programme Dean

Professor Pat Shannon, School of Geological Sciences

2. Terms of Reference

- To consider the purpose and function of an Extern Examining system in the context of the UCD Modular Curriculum.
- To formulate a Draft Policy on the Extern Examiner for consideration by the University.
- To take account of internal, national and international best-practice in relation to Extern Examining practice and systems to ensure that these inform the development of the UCD draft policy.

3. Related issues

A number of significant related issues were discussed by the Working Group during the development on the Draft Policy. While these were not strictly within the terms of reference of the Working Group, they are recorded here and will in time lead to further policy development.

- 3.1. **Intern Examiners:** The Working Group recognized that an effective extern examination system was reliant on an effective internal examination system. It was agreed that the University would need to articulate in policy and procedures its expectations of internal examiners with regard to quality, equity and rigor of assessments. The School role in the effective internal system would need to be clearly enunciated.

- 3.2 **Programme Externs:** The Working Group considered the value of including Programme Externs in the extern examination model. It was agreed, however, that Extern Examiners should relate to suites of modules related to subject areas either within or across Schools. The Working Group agreed that there was merit in providing a procedure whereby Programme Deans and Programme Boards could invite extern academic advisors (for example, Programme Deans from other leading universities) to assist in the consideration of innovation and best practice in the design, development, delivery and quality enhancement of the current programme and in the development of new programmes.
- 3.3 **Periodic Review of Programmes.** The Working Group would like to suggest that during the periodic review of a Programme, the views/opinions of Extern Examiners involved should be sought.
- 3.4 **Relationships to other policy currently under development:** The Working Group was conscious that finalisation of the Extern Policy would require consideration of recommendations that will issue from the Academic Governance Working Group relating to the determination of academic subjects, managerial sections within Schools and its proposals regarding the terms of reference of future Academic Council sub-committees.
- 3.5 **Special Externs for Masters/PhD Theses:** The Working Group would like to highlight that the Extern Examiners Policy governs subject externs only. The regulations governing Special Extern Examiners for Masters/PhD Theses are outlined in Section 8.6 of the General Regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (for further details see http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicpolicy/phd_regs.pdf) and section 8.5 of the Regulations for Research Masters Degrees (for further details see http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicpolicy/research_regs.pdf) respectively.

4. Working Group Recommendations:

- 4.1 The University acknowledges that it is a reserved power of the NUI Senate to appoint such and so many external examiners as the University shall from time to time recommend and therefore Senate must continue to formally appoint UCD extern examiners.
- 4.2 The University acknowledges that the NUI Senate must determine the functions of extern examiners, with the concurrence of the University.
- 4.3 Nonetheless, the process whereby extern examiners are identified, recommended, confirmed and appointed; communicated with, and where their reports are received and acted on (including the onward transmission to NUI); and their payments arranged should, henceforth, be managed directly by UCD.
- 4.4 While Senate must continue to determine the functions of extern examiners, UCD should propose to Senate a set of functions compatible with the needs of the Institution and its UCD Horizons modular curriculum. These should be a high-level description of the functions of an extern examiner, not a set of detailed procedures, which should (a) derive from the high-level functions, (b) may vary from time to time, and (c) do not require the approval of Senate.
- 4.5 UCD should routinely provide the NUI with copies of extern examiner reports.

5. Contents of Report

The following two documents are presented for discussion:

- Draft UCD Extern Examiners Policy
- Draft UCD Extern Examiner Report

6. Future Actions

Once the policy and principles contained therein are approved, compliance guidelines for staff in UCD, Heads of Schools, Heads of Subject Areas, and Extern Examiners will be developed and published.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Extern Examination at UCD Draft Policy Statement and Principles

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Following UCD's transition to a modularised and semesterised system, an interim policy outlining the University's extern examination process and role of an extern examiner, was approved and adopted by the University in 2005, *The Role of Subject Extern Examiners in a Modular Curriculum (Stage 1 – 2005/2006)*:

http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicpolicy/pol_role_extern_exam.pdf

Purpose:

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

Definition:

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

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 Extern Examiner confirms that the academic standards of modules leading to awards are consistent with reference to the academic outcomes specified by the University, and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally.

2.2. Equality

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

2.3. Improvement

The Extern Examiner provides feedback on the quality of modules and subject areas, and on how teaching, learning and assessments in modules and subject areas may be enhanced.

2.4. Flexibility

The Extern Examination System / Framework will have flexibility within general guidelines so that Extern Examiners can provide the support and guidance appropriate to the range of academic subject areas within the University.

3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY/SUPERVISOR OF EXAMINATIONS/ASSESSMENT AND LOGISTICS UNIT

- 3.1. It is the responsibility of the University (by way of the Academic Council Executive Committee) 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. With the approval of the President, the Registrar has delegated authority as Supervisor of Examinations to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, who shall be supported by the Assessment and Logistics Unit in the discharging of this function.
- 3.3. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor of Examinations 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 General Regulations and Assessment Regulations.
 - (c) Provide induction through guidelines for Extern Examiners.
- 3.4. The Supervisor of Examinations 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 Supervisor of Examinations shall review all reports submitted by Extern Examiners and follow-up on any matters arising with the relevant Schools.
- 3.6. The Supervisor of Examinations shall supply copies of the Extern Examiners Reports to the NUI.
- 3.7. The Supervisor of Examinations shall facilitate remuneration of Extern Examiners upon submission of the Annual Report on their activities.
- 3.8. The Supervisor of Examinations 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 Supervisor of Examinations with assistance from the Director of Assessment, and the Academic Council Standing 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 Executive Committee.
- 4.4. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to nominate Extern Examiners to the Academic Council Executive Committee. The nomination should be submitted to the Assessment and Logistics Unit. The Head of School shall ensure that all information provided to the Assessment and Logistics Unit is correct and complete.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. The Head of School shall provide the Extern Examiner with the facilities and appropriate information in order to enable them to carry out the activities outlined in Section 5.2 appropriately.
- 4.7. The School shall complete a detailed review of module grading outcomes. Statistical reports that are supplied by the Assessment and Logistics Unit 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.
- 4.8. The Head of School shall provide a written response to the Supervisor of Examinations 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 Extern Examiner should be a reviewer and moderator of the assessment process. They should take an overview of standards, assessment and grading and should not normally be involved in the assessment of individual students. There are exceptions to this principle, where, for example, the Extern Examiner may be involved in assessing dissertations or major projects that are normally completed in the later stages of programmes, or where Extern Examiners are involved directly in assessment of professional competence.
- 5.2. The activities of Extern Examiners should include the following:
 - (a) Reviewing assessment strategies and assessment instruments.
 - (b) Auditing a sample of graded assessments to confirm standards and to make any relevant recommendations on learning outcomes, assessment and grading practices.
 - (c) Auditing, where appropriate, the distribution of grades for modules.
 - (d) Advising on enhancements to assessment and grading practices or aspects of module development.

- (e) Exceptionally, recommending on the re-scaling or adjustment of grades for a cohort of students.
 - (f) Reviewing the content of modules and, where relevant, the subject, to ensure appropriateness and enhance quality.
 - (g) Extern Examiners shall visit the University at least once during each year of their term of appointment.
 - (h) Extern Examiners may engage in discussions with Schools or key committees within Schools 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.
- 5.3. Following completion of the aforementioned activities, the Extern Examiner is required to provide a report on their findings to the Supervisor of Examinations (see Section 6.0). A template will be provided for this purpose.

6. THE APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR EXTERN EXAMINERS

- 6.1. The Academic Council Executive Committee 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 Executive Committee. Nominations are submitted to the Assessment and Logistics Unit, who maintain a Register of Extern Examiners for the University. The Assessment and Logistics Unit records and collates details of the proposed Extern Examiners for presentation to the Academic Council Executive Committee for approval. Upon approval, the Academic Council Executive Committee secretary notifies the Supervisor of Examinations, the Assessment and Logistics Unit and the NUI of the recommendations. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor of Examinations to inform the Head of School, Programme Board and Extern Examiner of the Academic Council Executive Committee's recommendations. This procedure is depicted in Appendix 1.
- 6.2. The appointment of Extern Examiners will be based on the following criteria:
- (a) An Extern Examiner's academic and professional qualifications should be appropriate to the subject area to be examined.
 - (b) Externs should have appropriate academic standing and expertise, and be adequately experienced to adjudicate on comparability of standards.
 - (c) 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.
 - (d) 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.
 - (e) 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.
 - (f) Extern Examiners should not normally hold more than two other positions of external examiner during their term of appointment at UCD.
 - (g) Nominations for new Extern Examiners should be submitted for approval by 1st 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 Executive Committee.
 - (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 Executive Committee, 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 process outlined in Section 6.1. In emergency situations, a School should forward the substitute nomination on the appropriate documentation to the Supervisor of Examinations, providing an explanation for the nomination. The nomination will be forwarded for retrospective approval at the next available Academic Council Executive Committee.
- (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 Supervisor of Examinations 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 [*General 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 Supervisor of Examinations. 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

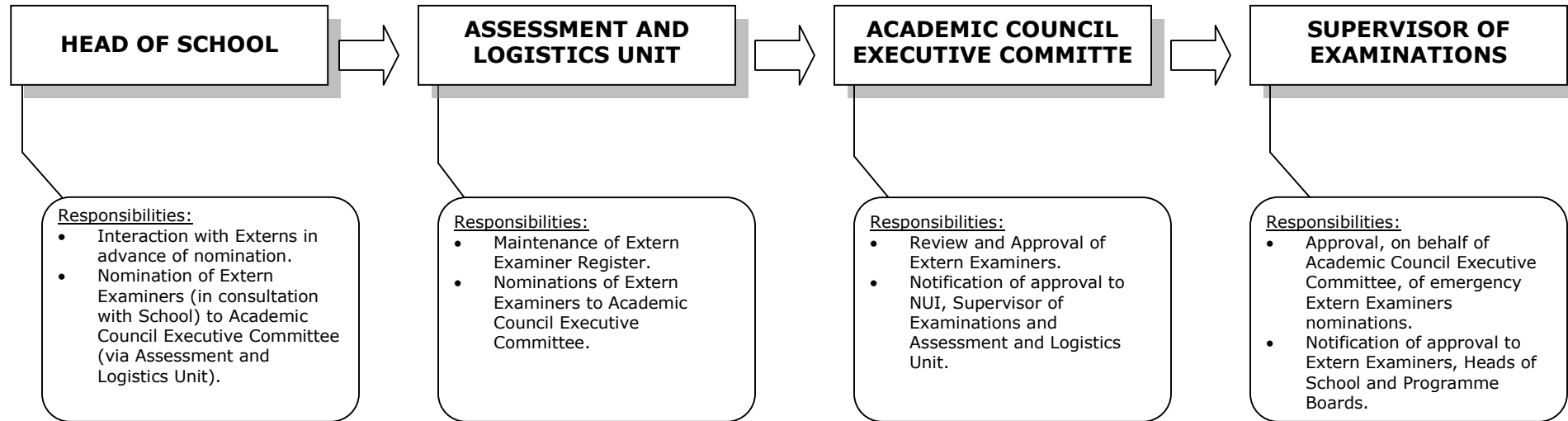
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Consultation and Approval					
Committee/Group	Date		Vern	Action	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Policy Working Group	29 th Nov 07				
Policy Working Group	18 th Dec 07		V1.0		
Policy Working Group	10 th Jan 08		V1.1		
Policy Working Group	21 st Jan 08		V1.2		
Policy Working Group	4 th Feb 08		V1.3		
Policy Working Group	27 th Feb 08		V1.4		
Policy Working Group	12 th Mar 08		V1.5		
Academic Council Executive Committee	27 th Mar 08	20 th 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 th May 08	7 th May 08	V1.8	For Approval	

Appendix 1



Procedure for Nomination and Approval of Extern Examiners



Appendix 2



University College Dublin UCD Extern Examiner Report

Return this form to:

Professor G. Doyle
Supervisor of Examinations
University College Dublin
Tierney Building
Dublin 4
Ireland

Deadlines for submission

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

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 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
