

External Examiners Duties and Procedures

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Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsible School/Unit:	Registrar, Student Administrative and Academic Affairs, Heads of School				
Consultation undertaken:	Academic Quality Sub-Committee				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:					
Reference(s)	Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining (QQI 2015).				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
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1 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	17/04/2002	Academic Council (AC:DOC:45:07:02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopted.
2	25/04/2007	Academic Council (AC:DOC:94:07:01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amended.
3	28/02/2014	Academic Council (AC:DOC:135:05:01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amended.
4	23/11/2018	Academic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed and amended.
5	29/04/2022	Academic Council (AC:DOC:180:16:03)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External Examiner Duties and Procedures updated to include a requirement that Continuous Assessment (CA) with a weighting of 40% or more must be reviewed by External Examiner(s).

External Examiners: Duties and Procedures

Scope

This document details the procedures by which Dundalk Institute of Technology selects External Examiners for its programmes and the duties and responsibilities associated with the core activity of External Examining on its programmes.

This document should be circulated to:

- All External Examiners
- All members of the Academic Council.
- All members of the Institute with responsibility for the proper conduct of examinations

This document will be available:

- To all internal examiners.
- Under the FOI Act to any persons contacting the Office of the Registrar.

This document is also published on the DkIT website. (www.dkit.ie)

The Institute recognises that:

External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing the Institute with informed comment on the standards set and learner achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of institutional quality assurance.

The main purposes of external examining are:

- To verify that Learning Outcomes as assigned to a programme / module to which the external examiner has been appointed have been met.
- To assist DkIT in the comparison of academic standards with relevant external awards standards.
- To ensure that DkIT's assessment processes are valid, reliable, fair and consistent and are in line with DkIT regulations.

It shall be the external examiners' task to appraise both the examination process and continuous assessment process on a continuing basis and report to senior management on whether particular learners' performances have been judged properly against the Institute's awards standards and further, whether the assessment process has measured Learning Outcomes appropriately and whether the examination process has been conducted fairly.

It shall be the Institute's task to respond to any observations made by the External Examiners in an appropriate manner.

1. Nomination

- 1.1** The Academic Council of Dundalk Institute of Technology approves the selection criteria, terms of office and appointment of persons to act as External Examiners to its programmes. The Council shall also approve such procedures as may be required, including these procedures, relating to the appointment, role and duties of Extern Examiners.
- 1.2** The Academic Council shall request the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (henceforth referred to as Registrar) to seek nominations for persons to act as External Examiners. The Council and / or the President may also nominate persons to act as External Examiners. Normally, the process of nominating External Examiners will be delegated to the Heads of School/ Department, as described in 1.3 to 1.7 below.
- 1.3** The Head of School/Department may seek recommendations for nominations through a School/Department Board and/or Programme Board
- 1.4** The Head of School/Department may consult with persons proposed for nomination in order to seek her/his consent to be nominated and determine her/his availability to act as External Examiner. Such consultation shall be without commitment to appointment as External Examiner.
- 1.5** The Head of School / Department may communicate with the Heads of School/Department from other H.E.I.s with a view to arriving at suitable arrangements in relation to the appointment of External Examiners to more than one Institute. These discussions should take account of agreed limitations on the number of Institutes to which an External Examiner may be simultaneously appointed. Such consultation shall be without commitment to appoint any specific person as External Examiner. Reciprocal arrangements between H.E.I s should be avoided.
- 1.6** The Head of School/Department shall take into account the need for continuity in the External Examiner process from one year to the next.
- 1.7** The Head of School/Department shall normally recommend persons nominated for appointment as External Examiners to the Academic Council of the Institute prior to the end of the academic year preceding the appointment.

2. Approval

- 2.1** The Academic Council shall consider nominations for appointment as External Examiners as motions in the name of the President, Registrar, Heads of School/Department, or those nominated by the Council itself, if appropriate.
- 2.2** The Academic Council shall satisfy itself that persons nominated for appointment will normally satisfy the criteria for appointment as detailed in Appendix 1. In exceptional circumstances, where it is proposed to nominate a person who does not satisfy these formal criteria for appointment, this shall be clearly noted on the External Examiner nomination form and reasons given for the nomination.
- 2.3** The Academic Council shall approve the appointment of such and as many persons as it deems necessary to act as External Examiners of the Institute for such periods as it decides, in accordance with Section 4 of these procedures. Approval of appointments of External Examiners will normally be completed by the end of the academic year proceeding their term of office

3. Appointment

3.1 Following approval of nominations by the Academic Council of the Institute, the Registrar shall issue a letter of appointment to the External Examiner, along with a contract to be signed by the External Examiner and President of the Institute (or his/her nominee), which shall include, *inter alia*:

- External Examiners: Duties and responsibilities – (this document)
- Term of office
- Reporting relationships and requirements
- Fees payable by the Institute
- Conditions relating to other appointments
- Termination of contract procedures
- Conflict of Interest declaration.

3.2 The External Examiner shall be appointed from the date of signing of the Contract by the External Examiner and the President or his/her nominee.

3.3 The term of office shall normally be for a period of three to five years as determined by the Institute. In exceptional circumstances, the appointment may be extended by one further year. The circumstances shall be advised to the Academic Council prior to the proposed extension taking effect

3.4 Normally, the term of office shall commence on the 1st October each year.

3.5 The Registrar shall maintain a register of External Examiners appointments and periods of tenure. This register will be published on the DkIT website.

3.6 Should it be necessary to terminate the contract of appointment, the Head of School/Department shall recommend termination of the contract to the Academic Council for approval detailing the reasons for the proposed termination. The President shall notify in writing an External Examiner whose contract has been terminated. The External Examiner may resign at any time by writing to the Registrar.

3.7 Following appointment, the Registrar shall ensure that the External Examiner receives access to adequate additional documentation to enable him/her to understand the examination systems operated by the Institute. Such documentation might include:

- Quality assurance policies and procedures
- Assessment and examination procedures
- Examination rules and regulations
- Policies in relation to equal opportunities.
- Schedule of Examinations

- 3.8** In addition the Head of School/Department shall ensure that the External Examiner is provided with (or with links to) adequate documentation to enable her/him to carry out the functions of External Examiner, including:
- Programme / module documentation including Module Descriptors, Approved Programme Schedules and any special conditions pertaining to any programme.
 - Staff lists indicating module / programme allocations
 - Draft examination papers and related material including marking schemes.
 - Previous examination papers as appropriate.
 - The assessment brief for continuous assessment components with a weighting of $\geq 40\%$ of the module mark.
 - Completed continuous assessment components as appropriate.
- 3.9** On appointment the Institute may invite the External Examiner to visit the Institute to become familiar with its operations; to discuss his/her responsibilities as External Examiner and to determine the requirements of the External Examiner.
- 4.0** **Number of External Examiners**
- 4.1** The Institute shall ensure that sufficient External Examiners are appointed so that it can be satisfied that:
- The standard of its programmes and learner performance can be adequately moderated and
 - The assessment, examination and determination of award processes are being fairly conducted.
- 4.2** External Examiners may be appointed on a Departmental basis, programme basis, or module basis as determined by the needs of the Institute.
- 4.3** Where External Examiners are appointed on a Departmental basis, there should be sufficient External Examiners to adequately assess the core academic areas on programmes delivered by the Department. Such External Examiners will moderate one or more programmes. The Institute shall determine the distribution of activities among the Departmental External Examiners.
- 4.4** Where External Examiners are appointed on a programme basis, there shall be at least two External Examiners appointed for each programme.
- 4.5** Additional External Examiners may be appointed who have expertise in particular module areas, as determined by the Institute, and may be involved with particular modules at programme level within a School or Department, or on an Institute-wide basis.
- 4.6** Where External Examiners are required to act as a team, the Institute shall ensure that such External Examiners have an opportunity to meet prior to a final Examination Board meeting.
- 4.7** It is not normally a requirement that a discipline specific expert be appointed to cover every aspect of programme. The emphasis should be on ensuring the programme as a whole is adequately moderated.
- 4.8** Discipline specific External Examiners shall only be appointed in exceptional circumstances and by express approval of the President.

5. Role of External Examiner

- 5.1** External Examiners shall normally attend the Institute at the time of final determination of results and/or at such other times as may be determined by the Institute in consultation with the External Examiner for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and / or the standard of learner performance.
- 5.2** External Examiners shall determine, in their expert judgement, whether:
- The standard of examinations is satisfactory
 - The standard of the learner performance meets the intended Learning Outcomes.
 - The assessment and determination of awards processes have been consistent and fair
 - The learner performance on the programme as a whole has been properly assessed
 - The standard of assessment and performance is comparable to that in other institutions (if appropriate).
- 5.3** External examiners shall ensure that, during their proposed tenure, all significant elements of the programme(s) with which they are involved have been adequately assessed. The Institute recognises that not all elements need be considered at each academic session. The Institute requests that the External Examiner shall pay particular attention to the award years of each of the assigned programmes.
- 5.4** In order to ensure that quality is assured:
- External Examiners shall have the right to inspect all draft examination papers and continuous assessment components ($\geq 40\%$ of the module mark) that are related to the programme to which they are appointed and to propose modifications and amendments prior to final printing. An external examiner is normally requested by the Head of Department to review specific examination papers or continuous assessment components related to the programme.
 - The External Examiner shall have the right to inspect any or all programme work, project work and assignments which form part of the continuous assessment material for any learner and which affects the final module mark.
 - The Internal Examiner and the Head of Department are responsible for ensuring that such material is collated in good time.
- 5.5** Where it is provided for in the Approved Programme Schedule, and an External Examiner wishes to carry out a *viva-voce* on candidates, they shall notify the Institute in good time to permit the candidates to be notified. Such notice should be a minimum of two weeks' notice.
- 5.6** External Examiners shall normally visit the Institute at the time of Examination Board meetings and/or at such other times as may be determined by the Institute in consultation with the External Examiner. External Examiners may also be requested to attend a meeting in the Institute or other location for the purposes of:
- (a) Induction of new appointees as External Examiners.
 - (b) Discussion of issues in relation to External Examiners in the context of Quality Assurance.
 - (c) Other general matters relating to examinations.
- 5.7** In addition to providing feedback to Academic Departments and Schools, External Examiners shall submit a full report to the Registrar in accordance with Section 7 of this procedure. Any differences of opinion which occurred with the Internal Examiner should be identified in this report.
- 5.8** An External Examiner shall declare any circumstances, which may constitute a conflict of interest with the Institute or with an Examinee.

- 5.9** Where a conflict of interest is identified, the External Examiner may not be involved in any consideration of that particular Examinee.

6. Boards of Examiners

- 6.1** Meetings of Examination Board are held for the purpose of deciding individual learner results at such times as the Institute may determine. The meeting to determine examination results is termed the Examination Board meeting. The Minute of such meeting shall be the Broadsheet of Examination results. The conduct of Boards of Examiners at DKIT is outlined in Section A7 of DkIT Assessment and Standards.

- 6.2** The External Examiner should normally attend the Institute on the day prior to the meeting of the Examination Board, or at such other times as may be agreed by the Institute and the External Examiner, for the purpose of:

- Reviewing the overall performance of candidates, particularly borderline cases
- Reviewing the proposed results for the programme as a whole
- Reviewing module performance with Internal Examiners
- Reviewing marked scripts, project work or continuous assessment material, as required or requested.
- Carrying out viva-voce examinations, if required.

The Registrar/Head of School/Department shall provide the External Examiner with suitable statistical information, where available, to assist in this process.

- 6.3** The Internal Examiner shall indicate on the Module marks sheet any proposed adjustment to the marks/grades as proposed by the Internal or External Examiner and agreed by them. Efforts should be made to achieve consensus between the Internal and External Examiners in relation to such proposed amendments. If the proposed amendments are not agreed, either the Internal Examiner or the External Examiner may bring these to the attention of the Examination Board.

- 6.4** Where the External Examiner proposes adjustments to a group of learners as a whole, they shall consult with the Internal Examiner and Head of School/Department in advance of the meeting of the Examination Board. Efforts should be made to achieve consensus in relation to such proposed amendments.

- 6.5** The External Examiner shall attend the meeting of the Examination Board as a full member with the same voting rights as other members of the Board.

- 6.6** The External Examiner may comment on such matters relating to individual learner performance, module performance, or programme performance, as they deem necessary. The Examination Board shall give due consideration to such comments.

- 6.7** The External Examiner may request to have her/his dissenting opinion on any matter recorded on the Broadsheet of Results. If the External Examiner has a dissenting opinion this may be put into their report to the Registrar and may be brought to the attention of the Academic Council by the Registrar.

- 6.8** The External Examiner shall sign the Broadsheet of Results. Such signature indicates that the External Examiner participated in the Examination Board as a member of the Board, and conveys no further status on the significance of individual learner results.

7. Reporting Arrangements

- 7.1** The External Examiner shall provide a report to the Registrar of the Institute by 1st July of each year, or at such other times as may be specified by the Institute following the assessment/examinations on a standard report form provided by the Institute. This report will be called the External Examiner's Report.
- 7.2** The External Examiner may, in addition, submit a special written report to the Registrar on such other matters as they deem appropriate, and may request that such matters be treated on a confidential basis.
- 7.3** The Registrar shall make available a copy of the pro forma External Examiner's Report to the President.
- 7.4** The Registrar will provide the appropriate Head of School/Department, with the pro-forma External Examiner's Report. A memo may be attached with comments or a request for further information or follow-up on any issue.
- 7.5** The Head of School/Department shall provide a copy of the External Examiner's Report to the relevant Internal Examiner(s) and a summary of the External Examiner's report as an agenda item to the relevant Programme Board. The Head of School/Department shall return the Programme Board Response (where relevant) as the minute of this item to the Registrar's Office.
- 7.6.** The External Examiner's comments and Programme Board Response are recorded in the Annual Programme Board Report. Schools/Departments may respond to the External Examiner where appropriate, e.g. in the case of factual inaccuracies or where actions have been taken as a result of the External Examiner's recommendations.

Criteria for Nomination

The overarching criterion for nomination of an External Examiner is that they can provide an independent, knowledgeable, informed viewpoint in regard of the ongoing assessment of learners on a programme of study.

The External Examiner should therefore be a person of academic or professional distinction, suitably qualified, whose association with a programme of study at DKIT could be considered to enhance the standing of the programme.

In order that no perception of impropriety or conflict of interest may arise, the External Examiner must be financially and socially independent of DKIT (see section 11 below).

1. External examiners may be drawn from academic life and, where appropriate, from business, industry and professional practice. External Examiners should be professionally qualified where this is the normal practice for the industry.
2. External examiners drawn from business, industry or professional practice should be in current practice and of senior standing in their fields.
3. External examiners should normally be suitably qualified with a minimum of an honours degree (NQAI Level 8) or equivalent. They should have both current and relevant experience in the areas of industry, education or research or professional practice.
4. External examiner nominations /appointments should be such as to ensure maximum objectivity in relation to the institutions to which they are nominated.
5. Academics may be nominated from H.E.I.in Ireland and abroad. DkIT will seek to draw nominations from a variety of institutions, and within a single discipline will seek to avoid multiple nominations from the same institution.
6. Normally, an External Examiner drawn from academic life should hold an academic qualification, in the appropriate discipline, to a higher level than that of the programme(s) to which he/she has been nominated. Such persons associated with NQAI Level 8 and Level 9 programmes in their own institutions may be nominated as external examiners to Level 8 and Level 9 programmes at Dundalk I.T.
7. Dundalk Institute of Technology should take due cognisance for the desirability of gender balance when nominating panels of external examiners.
8. It is viewed as inappropriate for individuals to canvass Dundalk Institute of Technology on their own behalf for the purpose of seeking a nomination as an external examiner.
9. External examiners shall not normally be appointed for a period exceeding 3 years on any programme. The Academic Council of Dundalk Institute of Technology may recommend a period of up to 5 years for specific programmes.
10. External examiners who have served for two appointment periods or more should not normally be considered for re-nomination until a minimum of three years has elapsed.

11. In order to ensure the independence of the role of external examiner, restrictions must be placed on the selection of External Examiners.

- Persons who are currently employed or contracted or hold office at Dundalk Institute of Technology (including RDC) in any capacity, shall be ineligible for appointment as External Examiner.
- Persons who might be likely to financially gain as a result of decisions as an External Examiner are ineligible for appointment.
- Members of the Governing Body of DkIT are ineligible.
- Spouses, partners and children of persons in these categories are likewise ineligible.
- All such persons shall be ineligible for appointment as External Examiner until a period of six years has elapsed after terminating the formal relationship with DkIT.
- In the event of a spouse, partner or child accepting employment at DKIT or its subsidiaries, the External Examiner must resign their commission.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Institute: Throughout this document the term ‘Institute’ shall be interpreted as referring to Dundalk Institute of Technology.

President: The President has ultimate responsibility for Assessment and Standards in DkIT and is ex-officio a member of all Programme and Examination Boards

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar: The VPAA-Registrar has particular responsibility for Academic Quality Assurance and is ex-officio a member of all Programme and Examination Boards.

Head of School: A member of staff of DkIT who oversees work of a School and who normally acts as Chair to the Examination Board Meeting. The Head of School is ex-officio a member of all Programme and Examination Boards within their School.

Head of Department: A member of staff of DkIT who oversees work of a Department and who normally acts a secretary to the Examination Board Meeting. The Head of Department is ex-officio a member of all associated Programme Boards.

Internal Examiner: A member of Academic Staff who prepares and marks the assessments.

Learner: A member of the Institute who is enrolled on a programme and submits themselves to assessment for the purpose of demonstrating attainment of the requirements of an award.

Programme Board: Meeting of Internal Examiners (and learner representatives) responsible for the management and delivery of a programme of study.

Examination Board: Includes all of the External Examiners and Internal Examiners for a programme of study.

Examination Board Meeting: A meeting of the Examination Board for the purpose of determining examination results, composed of:

1. Chair (normally Head of School)
2. Internal Examiners
3. External Examiners
4. Examination Secretary (normally Head of Department)

Programme: A programme is defined in this document as a programme of learning which has been approved through the Institute’s quality assurance procedures. It is an approved curriculum, followed by a cohort of learners leading to an award of the Institute. Programmes are comprised of modules.

Module: A module is a quantum of learning with defined learning outcomes, indicative content, assessment strategy, resources and workload which has been approved through the Institute’s quality assurance procedures.

Assessment: Learner assessment (specifically assessment of learning) means inference (e.g. judgement, or estimation or evaluation) of a learner’s knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence.

Examination: An Examination, as defined in this document, is a suite of assessment activities approved for a particular programme of study. Examinations are normally considered on a Stage basis.

Approved Programme Schedule: This is a description of a programme setting out the approved modules and any special regulations which apply to the programme.

Broadsheet of Results: The original signed sheet tabulating the results for each examination module and the overall examination result for each examination candidate. The Broadsheet of Results may be signed by:

1. Internal Examiner(s) participating in each examination module as listed on the Broadsheet and present at the meeting.
2. External Examiner(s) present at the meeting.
3. Secretary to the Examination Board.
4. Chair of the Examination Board.