



Externality Policy

September 2024

**Version 1.1
Approved by the Board of Governors**

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1. Context

The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) March 2017 Higher Education Review (HER) for Special Course Designation (SCD) reported (in paragraph 1.38) that:

'The college also intends to make use of independent external expertise with regard to its compliance with aspects of the Quality Code. Similarly, the College is seeking engagement with employers and their representative bodies to enhance the extent to which its higher education provision is informed by independent expertise.'

The report further confirms that the extent to which the college uses independent external expertise to maintain academic standards is somewhat limited.

The College, in its response to the recommendation has developed the following policy which scopes out its approach to further developing and enhancing its practice of engaging with external expertise in support of all aspects of its higher education provision; its management, delivery and oversight. The policy is aligned with the following QAA Expectations.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education places considerable emphasis upon externality. [Part A of the UK Quality Code, Expectation A3.4](#) (external website) states:

In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards

[Chapter B1 of the UK Quality Code](#) (external website) highlights the value and importance of bringing an external perspective to both design and approval:

...individuals external to the higher education provider offer independence and

objectivity to the decisions being taken. This contributes to the transparency of the process and provides a basis for the comparability of academic standards across the higher education sector. Advice from individuals external to the Course also contributes to enhancement, by providing additional perspectives...External advice provides expertise on current developments both

in the subject area and in learning and teaching practices, and is sought from a variety of sources.

Indicator 6 in [Chapter B8](#) (external website) states:

...Higher education providers make use of reference points and draw on expertise from those outside the Course in their processes for Course monitoring and review

2. Policy

The policy consists of a series of guidance areas relating to how the College will engage more fully with external academic, professional and industrial influences in support of its strategy to further enhance its management of academic standards, quality of learning and enhancement of the student experience.

Experts external to the College will bring their professional expertise and insight in both formal and informal channels by:

2.1 supporting and enhancing the management and maintenance of academic standards, the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment

2.2 providing oversight to the annual monitoring process and Course approval and review process

2.3 becoming a valuable asset to the College in assuring that the Course s it delivers are academically coherent, current in terms of the most recent academic, professional and industrial developments and relevant to the needs of employers.

2.4 ensuring impartiality and an objective viewpoint, external experts will not be asked to take part in the development of a Course that they will subsequently be asked to report on.

External experts will normally require to report on all new Course s within their subject area and for the periodic review of existing Course s.

In addition, the College engages both formally and informally, with external professionals with regards to staff and student development, quality assurance & enhancement, student support and guidance, careers and employability, governance and wider sector and commercial developments

3. Academic externals will be asked to undertake the following duties:

3.1 Provide a written report on the template provided for new Courses, proposals for major modifications to Courses and on documentation to inform the periodic review of existing Courses

3.2 Offer an independent and objective viewpoint on proposals within a specific area of academic or professional interest and expertise in order to enhance and inform lines of enquiry and the deliberations of the Panel

3.3 Consider Course specifications and associated documentation and assess the extent to which these take proper account of the College and external regulations, reference points and policies

3.4 Offer judgements on the setting and maintaining of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities in the context of the QAA HE Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ), subject benchmarks and other associated elements of the UK Quality Code

3.5 Comment with regard to the structure and coherence of the detailed new Course proposal or Course under review

3.6 Comment on the capacity of the Course to provide students with relevant and effective experience in the context of preparation for vocational or professional practice

3.7 Advice, where appropriate, on whether proper consideration has been given to the requirements and regulations of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

4. Academic & professional external expertise supporting staff & student development

To ensure the higher education provision is academically coherent, current in terms of the most recent academic, professional and industrial developments and relevant to the needs of employers, the College has developed an extensive network of external academic and industrial professionals.

In addition, over the course of the academic year, the College provides appropriate internal staff development events, mapped to on-going responses to external examiner reports, annual monitoring review outcomes and wider sector developments. This will culminate in an annual Staff Development and Enhancement Conference, structured around a series of presentations and workshops led by highly qualified and experienced industry professionals.

5. External Examiners

College Expectations of External Examiners

5.1 Provide the College with impartial and independent advice and informed comment on standards and student achievement in relation to those standards.

5.2 Provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not the College is maintaining the threshold academic standards for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements.

5.3 Provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not the assessment measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the Course (s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations.

5.4 Provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.

5.5 Provide informative comment and recommendations on good practice observed by the external examiners and opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

5.6 Contribute as board members to examination/assessment boards to provide an expert view of the rigour and fairness of the assessment process by endorsing, or not, the decisions of the board and confirm that he/she is satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process.

5.7 Submit a report annually, via the awarding body, to the College to reflect the nature of the provision, the duration of teaching and assessment periods and their timing in the calendar/academic year.

5.8 Where the external examiner has reached the end of his/her term of office the report should include an overview of that period.

5.9 Ensure annual reports provide clear and informative feedback to the institution and confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details)' state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been addressed to their satisfaction, address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body and give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).

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