ICA External Examiners

Contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 2
2. The role of External Examiners ........................................................................................ 2
3. The responsibilities of External Examiners ................................................................ 2
4. Period of appointment ......................................................................................................... 4
5. The role of External Examiners in dealing with mitigating circumstances ......................... 4
6. The role of External Examiners at an Assessment Board .................................................. 5
7. External Examiner reports .................................................................................................. 5
8. Assessment for professional postgraduate taught programmes .................................. 6
1. **Introduction**

1.1. External Examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards and in ensuring rigorous but fair assessment of candidates. This document provides generic information on the role of External Examiners at ICA and outlines the activities in which External Examiners are likely to be involved.

1.2. The policies and procedures contained herein apply to all ICA programmes irrespective of the mode, level or place of study.

2. **The role of External Examiners**

2.1. The role of an External Examiner is to act as a critical friend to ICA, not a marker.

2.2. The principal responsibilities of External Examiners are to ensure that:

   - assessment and examination procedures have been fairly and properly implemented and that decisions have been made after appropriate and due deliberation
   - standards of awards and candidate performance are comparable with those in equivalent higher education programmes at the same level.

2.3. External Examiners also have a role in highlighting and encouraging good practice, commenting on the programme’s relationship to the Assessment Framework and any relevant subject benchmarks, and advising the Assessment Board on dealing with difficult cases.

2.4. The formal responsibility of all External Examiners is to ICA. External Examiners’ reports are addressed to ICA and External Examiners have the right to make a confidential report to the ICA President at any time. External Examiners’ feedback and reports are a key source of information in the monitoring of assessment standards based upon specific content.

3. **The responsibilities of External Examiners**

3.1. The External Examiner is appointed to a programme and has specific responsibilities for all the cohorts of candidates for the relevant assessment.

3.2. The principal responsibilities of External Examiners are to ensure that:

   a) assessment and examination procedures have been fairly and properly implemented and that decisions have been made after appropriate and due deliberation
   b) assessment materials (assignments and examination papers) are a valid and reliable means of assessing the programme content
   c) standards of awards and candidate performance are comparable with those in previous cohorts at the same level
d) standards of awards and candidate performance are comparable with those in equivalent higher education programmes at the same level

e) standards of candidate performance are compatible with those required by ICA and industry

f) comparability is achieved across the UK and International papers

g) good practice in teaching and assessment is highlighted and encouraged

h) all significant assessed work that leads to an award classification is reviewed, to check whether marking is consistent across the programme.

3.3 External Examiners will attend each Assessment Board for the programme to which they are appointed, with responsibility for:

a) making an oral report to the Assessment Board, commenting generally on the assessment process and any other issues that have arisen (see section 7.1)

b) commenting on the programme’s relationship to the Assessment Framework and any relevant subject benchmarks

c) advising the Assessment Board on dealing with borderline cases or requests for mitigating circumstances

d) endorsing the agreed outcomes of the assessment within their discipline

e) submitting a report for each cohort using ICA’s pro forma.

3.4 All the candidates’ work will be provided for the External Examiner to review before the Assessment Board meeting. The sample that an External Examiner reviews will normally include:

- the work of all borderline candidates
- the work of all candidates assessed as distinction or fail
- a sample of candidates from the top, middle and bottom of the marks ranges.

3.5 External Examiners will not be involved in marking.

3.6 External Examiners may wish to discuss with a relevant Chief Examiners the arrangements for moderating the marking, to satisfy themselves that standards are appropriate and that candidates are being treated fairly.

3.7 Where review by an External Examiner indicates concern over the marking, the External Examiner can request a review of the whole cohort.

3.8 External Examiners should not change individual marks. The External Examiner’s role is to benchmark overall marking standards. Any suggested changes must be reported to the Assessment Board.

3.9 Where review of scripts, or an analysis of the distribution of the marks, indicates the need to review the marks for the whole cohort, the Chief Examiner has discretion about whether to:
• re-mark all the scripts in the cohort, or
• scale the marks for all candidates in relation to agreed benchmarks.

Any recommendations for scaling must be approved by the Assessment Board.

3.10 External Examiners have the right to see any items of assessed work produced by a candidate by any method.

3.11 Where assessment is online, the programme team must ensure that the External Examiner has access to the work, in order to make informed judgements on the marking and standards.

4. **Period of appointment**

4.1 The period of appointment for External Examiners is from 1 January in the year of appointment, to 31 July in the year of expiry of appointment. This timeframe enables External Examiners to be involved in assessments and examinations from the start of the two annual intakes.

4.2 The period of appointment is four years. The term of an Examiner’s appointment can be extended, by mutual agreement between the External Examiner and ICA.

4.3 External Examiners who wish to resign before the end of their normal period of office should write to ICA giving four months’ notice to allow the appointment of a replacement.

4.4 In exceptional circumstances, ICA may recommend the termination of an External Examiner’s appointment before the end of his/her normal period.

5. **The role of External Examiners in dealing with mitigating circumstances**

5.1 Any marks that are awarded on completion of more than half but less than the whole assessment or are recorded as pass/fail on completion of less than half the assessment, because of mitigating circumstances, as specified in the regulations, should be reported to the External Examiner for the discipline.

5.2 Decisions by a designated panel of the Assessment Board on the extent and severity of mitigating circumstances should be reported to, and ratified by, the External Examiner. The policy on mitigating circumstances can be found in ICA Policies and Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances on the ICA website.

5.3 An External Examiner may be asked to conduct a viva for a candidate who claims mitigating circumstances (in accordance with the Mitigating Circumstances policy).
6. The role of External Examiners at an Assessment Board

6.1. External Examiners are full voting members of the relevant Assessment Board.

6.2. External Examiners are expected to be present at the meeting of the Board where the candidate results in the programme/s for which they are responsible are awarded.

6.3. External Examiners may advise the Assessment Board on the general standard of candidate performance in relation to those elements of assessment that they have scrutinised. They should be made aware of the outcome of any previous meeting to consider mitigating circumstances. They should be satisfied that decisions are appropriate and consistent, and that the management of the assessment and the decision-making process is appropriate and consistent.

6.4. The Chair of the Assessment Board should invite the External Examiner to comment generally on their view of the examining process once the detailed discussion of cases has been completed. This oral report must be recorded in the minutes of the Assessment Board.

6.5. On rare occasions, an External Examiner may not be prepared to endorse the outcome of the examination process or the decision of an Assessment Board. If such occasions do occur, then every attempt should be made to resolve the conflict through discussion and negotiation. If such attempts are not successful then the ICA President will review the circumstances and attempt to broker an agreement between the Chair of the Assessment Board and the External Examiner, who shall, respectively, have powers to sign on behalf of all internal members of the Board and all External Examiners. Failing agreement, the ICA President shall have powers to determine the matter and sign the results.

7. External Examiner reports

7.1. External Examiners are expected to make an oral report to the Assessment Board. This report should include the External Examiner’s opinion of:

a) the assessment process, including its fairness, accuracy and efficiency
b) the academic quality of the cohort(s) examined
c) the effectiveness of the teaching (as judged by the performance of the candidates)
d) any recommendations to the Board for improvements in the teaching or examination process
e) any good practice that has been observed
f) whether any recommendations made in previous years have been acted on properly.
7.2. A record of this oral report must be recorded in the formal minutes of the Assessment Board and approved by the Board, including the External Examiner.

7.3. External Examiners are also required to submit to ICA a written report for each cohort. Names of all candidates and staff should be omitted from External Examiners’ reports, to maintain confidentiality.

7.4. Where deviations from ICA’s assessment regulations have been approved at partner organisations by ICA, External Examiners must be fully briefed by the partner organisation as to the rationale for the difference in procedure.

8. **Assessment for professional postgraduate taught programmes**

8.1. Where part of the assessment process consists of an oral assessment/interview, the assessment will be conducted by a panel of appropriately qualified and experienced assessors appointed by ICA.

8.2. The assessment will be competency-based and mapped to the National Occupational Standards of Competency (NOS) which will be provided to the candidates at the commencement of the programme.

8.3. The grading system is not layered and is based only on a ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’ basis.

8.4. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in Section 3 the External Examiner will:

   a) observe a sample of interviews by each individual assessor
   b) review the written evidence submitted by candidates
   c) provide recommendations to the assessors on the competency of each of the candidates
   d) produce a formal report for submission to ICA, which will be sent for consideration to the Assessment Board.