

External Examining Policy

1 Context

- 1.1 The Academic Regulations state that External Examiners provide independent and external participation in the management of academic standards, student success and progression and opportunities to identify best practice and enhancements.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how External Examining operates at Walbrook, aligning with Office for Students requirements, the QAA Quality Code and good practice across the UK Higher Education sector.

2 Principles

- 2.1 The Policy principles are as follows:
 - i. At least one External Examiner will be involved in the awarding process for a Walbrook Higher Education programme or award.
 - ii. Sufficient External Examiner expertise will be appointed to cover the full range of modules in a programme as well as overall programme oversight.
 - iii. External Examining principles will apply to all awards and programmes awarded solely by Walbrook as well as for any programme delivered in partnership with another organisation where Walbrook is jointly responsible for making an award.
 - iv. A single External Examiner appointment will normally be made in a collaborative provision arrangement where the same programme is delivered by Walbrook and by a partner so as to ensure relevant oversight of standards.

3 External Examiner Responsibilities

- 3.1 An External Examiner is responsible to the Walbrook Academic Board for:
 - i. Ensuring that marks are awarded fairly and consistently and in line with Walbrook assessment criteria for the relevant learning outcomes.
 - ii. Supporting Walbrook in ensuring that the assessment process is fair and reliable in accordance with Office for Students requirements.
 - iii. Reviewing and confirming a representative sample of assessment marks and associated feedback prior to the relevant assessment board, to provide assurance that marking has been conducted consistently, fairly and in accordance with the approved assessment criteria and academic standards.
 - iv. Reporting on the alignment of the academic standards of the programme/s with UK Higher Education requirements such as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Subject Benchmark Statements published by the Quality Assurance Agency.
 - v. Contributing to and attending the annual Programme Review meeting, at which programme leaders will be asked to discuss their evaluation of the previous year's operation, and to identify their focus for enhancement for the coming year.
 - vi. Offering suggestions for the enhancement of the curriculum or the assessment process.
 - vii. Reviewing and approving all assessment materials that contribute to the final assessment.
 - viii. Reviewing any changes to assessment arrangements proposed by Walbrook.
 - ix. Declaring any potential or actual conflict of interest that arises during their appointment or any change in circumstance that impacts on their role.

- x. Providing an annual written report
 - xi. Reporting directly to the Provost on any serious and urgent concerns about academic standards prior to, or at the same time as, providing the annual report.
- 3.2 A **Module External Examiner** will have responsibility for overseeing the relevant module/s for which they are appointed. A **Programme External Examiner** will have responsibility for overseeing the overall standard of the award and parity of standards across modules. More information about how External Examiners undertake their role, including samples of work, is provided in Section 9.

4 Appointment Criteria

- 4.1. The Chair of LTQC has responsibility for approving (and terminating) the appointment of an External Examiner on the recommendation of the relevant Academic Lead.
- 4.2. The schedule of External Examiner appointments will normally be phased to avoid multiple appointees starting at the same time and to allow for the mentoring of any new External Examiners by more experienced colleagues.
- 4.3. An External Examiner will normally have the following skills and experience:
- i. Relevant discipline qualifications and/or practitioner experience to undertake the role.
 - ii. A clear understanding and experience of the UK Higher Education including QAA Subject Benchmarks, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the requirements of the Office for Students in relation to ensuring fair and valid assessments.
 - iii. Current or recent experience of the relevant level of the award and associated standards of the programme to which an appointment will be made.
- 4.4. We normally expect a proposed appointee to have relevant external examining experience. We will provide training and support for any appointee new to external examining, and we will also provide an experienced mentor.
- 4.5. Proposed appointees need to declare any other external examiner appointments that they currently hold. We would not normally take forward an appointment if the individual holds more than two appointments, including a potential appointment with Walbrook. This is our approach to ensure that an appointee has sufficient time to fulfil their duties with us.
- 4.6. A proposed appointee must have no conflicts of interest so as to maintain the principle of independence. This means that a proposed appointee must not:
- i. Have previously been an External Examiner for the programme concerned
 - ii. Have been an External Examiner for another Walbrook programme during the past five years
 - iii. Be a member of staff in the academic department of an institution where a member of Walbrook staff is currently acting as an External Examiner.
 - iv. Be from the same academic department of the institution as the External Examiner whose appointment is ending.
 - v. Be from the same academic department of the institution as another External Examiner currently appointed by Walbrook.
 - vi. Have been a member of Walbrook staff or a student within five years of the proposed appointment date.
 - vii. Have any other current or planned involvement with the programme or Walbrook, including through consultancy.

- viii. Have active professional links (e.g. collaborative research) with any member of staff involved in delivery of the programme.
 - ix. Have personal links with any member of staff or student involved in the programme
 - x. Be associated with any collaborative partner of Walbrook
 - xi. Any other circumstances in which there is potential conflict of interest
- 4.7 An External Examiner will not be appointed for more than one Walbrook programme unless there is commonality of modules across the programmes in question.

5 Appointment Period

- 5.1 An External Examiner appointment period will normally be for a maximum of four consecutive years. An extension to this period will be exceptional and will need to be proposed by the Academic Lead to the Chair of the LTQC for approval.

6 Following appointment and induction

- 6.1 An External Examiner appointment will be confirmed in writing by the Registrar. The Examiner will also be provided with the necessary information to carry out their role following their appointment.
- 6.2 The Academic Dean is responsible for ensuring that a newly appointed Examiner is briefed and inducted to Walbrook. As a minimum, this includes a meeting with the Examiner to discuss the programme and to ensure that they have all relevant information. The Examiner will also be provided with an opportunity to attend an induction meeting and meet relevant academic staff prior to starting their duties. This also includes shadowing opportunities where relevant.
- 6.3 The Academic Lead is also responsible for ensuring that an External Examiner is kept up to date with any changes to the module/programme relating to their duties.

7 Ending an appointment early

- 7.1 An appointment can be ended during a contractual period in the following circumstances:
- i. The External Examiner has a change in circumstances which mean they are no longer able to act (including any conflict of interest). Wherever possible, 6 months' notice should be provided to enable Walbrook to find an alternative replacement. However, we also recognise that specific personal circumstances (e.g. health conditions) may not allow that period of notice to be given. Walbrook will always ensure that replacement External Examiner arrangements are made so that the integrity of this Policy is not compromised.
 - ii. If Walbrook withdraws a module/s or programme to which the External Examiner is appointed. Wherever possible, at least 6 months' notice will be provided to the Examiner by Walbrook so that they can plan accordingly.
 - iii. An External Examiner does not carry out the agreed duties in accordance with this Policy or with the Academic Regulations. Where Walbrook identifies there is a gap between the performance of the Examiner and our requirements, this will normally be addressed firstly through a conversation between Walbrook and the External Examiner. This conversation will consider if there is any action that can be taken by the Examiner and/or by Walbrook to address the position. Walbrook will also need to ensure that there is no compromise to academic standards in any action that is agreed. Where there is no action to be taken, or where action is taken but where the situation is not addressed, the appointment will be terminated. Where there is evidence to show that an

appointment needs to be terminated without a conversation with the Examiner, this decision will be taken by the Provost.

- iv. A breakdown in the relationship between the External Examiner and Walbrook and where it is not possible to take action to resolve the situation.
 - v. An External Examiner does not submit an Annual Report within the specified timeframe without good reason, or where the report does not provide the quality of information that Walbrook requires to assure standards. Walbrook will follow up either of these situations with the Examiner. A final judgement about the quality of a report will be made by the Chair of LTQC. Where a report is still not provided, or where a report continues to be of poor quality, the appointment will be terminated.
 - vi. Any other circumstances in which an appointment is no longer tenable.
- 7.2 Academic Board is responsible for approving the termination of any External Examiner appointment.

8 Scope and samples of work

- 8.1 An External Examiner must be provided with sufficient samples of work to be able to fulfil their duties. Samples will be provided on a regular basis throughout the academic year, rather than as a single or limited number of large sample sets. The sample of work will be agreed in advance and will include assessments across each category of the marking criteria, those which are within 1% to 2% of the borderline of each category of the assessment criteria, and a selection of those assessments that have been awarded a fail.
- 8.2 We will provide a greater scope of work if requested by the External Examiner, up to and including the full set of assessments for a module.

9 Adjustment of marks

- 9.1 The External Examiner can not adjust marks for an individual student. If an External Examiner finds a discrepancy in the marking process within the samples of work they review, it will normally be the case that either they request to review a greater sample and/or they require Walbrook to undertake a remarking process for the cohort for that assessment task/s because, for example, there has been a procedural error in the application of the published assessment criteria. Please see our Material Irregularity Policy for further information.

10 Annual Report

- 10.1 Each External Examiner is required to complete an annual report to support Walbrook in its annual monitoring process. The report should be submitted within two weeks of the request from the Registry. Each report will be made available by Walbrook to relevant staff and students and will be considered formally through the academic governance structure. It will also be discussed with the External Examiner at the annual Programme Review Meeting.
- 10.2 The Registry Team will review the report and provide it to the relevant Academic Lead, highlighting any identified good practice or concerns.
- 10.3 The relevant Academic Lead will reply in writing to the External Examiner providing a response to issues raised and confirming any action that will be taken. Academic Board

will receive excerpts of good practice or concerns and responses as part of the annual monitoring process.

- 10.4 The Registry team will prepare an annual, overarching report to the Academic Board on matters arising from all External Examiner reports and actions taken. Faculty Board will then monitor the progress of any required actions.
- 10.5 An External Examiner may also raise a serious concern directly to the Vice-Chancellor and/or the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. If Walbrook failed to act in response to a serious matter, an External Examiner also has recourse to the QAA Concerns Scheme or to the Office for Students Notifications Scheme.

11 Contact between Students and External Examiners

- 11.1 Walbrook students will be able see the name of an External Examiner on the VLE. We would not normally expect a student to contact an External Examiner as it is important that there remains a level of independence. If a student is unhappy with the assessment process or a mark they have been awarded they should talk to their lecturer or refer to the Appeals and Complaints Policy. An External Examiner will inform us if they are contacted by a student, and we will subsequently decide if any action is required under the Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy.
- 11.2 An External Examiner can request a meeting with group of students if, for example, they are interested to understand more about the student experience. This type of meeting would not, however, be routine practice, and the parameters would need to be agreed with the Provost. Walbrook would also reserve the right to observe the meeting. Under no circumstances would matters relating to marks be discussed.

12 External Examiner Fees

- 12.1 External Examiners receive a payment for their work which is paid upon receipt of their annual report. External Examiner fees are reviewed annually by the Registrar.

13 Document Control

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