

External Panel Member Policy

Purpose

This document sets out the University policy for the appointment of External Panel Members to serve on Panels for the consideration/ approval of new courses and the periodic review of existing courses.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In line with the Expectations, Core and Common Practices set in the UK Quality Code 2018¹, the University uses external expertise to provide impartial and independent scrutiny as part of our course approval and review policy and procedures.
- 1.2 The role of External Panel Members is to provide independent scrutiny and advice relating to the course's academic and professional standards including alignment with relevant national frameworks, content, delivery and relevance.
- 1.3 External Panel Members for full course consideration and for periodic review are asked to read and comment evaluatively on course documentation provided in advance, and to act as a full member of the Course Consideration Panel. This includes meeting with the course team and, where applicable, with relevant students, apprentices, alumni and other stakeholders, and contributing to the formulation of decisions, conditions and recommendations about the course under consideration.
- 1.4 As a member of the panel the External Panel Member's role is specifically:
 - as an academic or professional subject specialist, to provide independent scrutiny and critically evaluate the course and its content from the point of view of either their experience of courses in the subject area at a similar level elsewhere in the UK HE Sector or their knowledge and experience in the relevant professional sector;
 - to highlight for the panel examples of good practice in the course under consideration, based on their experience of similar courses elsewhere, and/or opportunities for enhancement;
 - to provide input, from their external perspective, on content, delivery pattern, assessment strategy and alignment to course aims and learning outcomes alignment with expectations of the [Office for Students Sector-Recognised Standards](#), [QAA Advice and Guidance](#) and [Framework for Higher Education Qualification \(FHEQ\) descriptors](#), the relevant subject benchmark(s) and applicable professional standards.
- 1.5 A full Course Consideration Panel will normally include at least two External Panel Members:
 - One external academic with knowledge of the subject area of the course under consideration and one practitioner in the relevant field;
 - Or two external academics.
- 1.6 Additional external expertise may be required when a proposed course will be delivered in partnership with another institution.
- 1.7 External Panel Members must be appointed in accordance with the criteria and procedures set

out in section 2 below. Amendment to the procedure may be required for courses which are proposed to be delivered under an Educational Partnership arrangement with an organisation in a different jurisdiction.

- 1.8 Different arrangements apply in respect of approval for credit-bearing short courses, and non-credit bearing short courses involving Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation and/or assessment leading to a certificate of completion, as set out in the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Short Courses (credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing)/ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy. However External Panel Members for these courses will be appointed in line with the criteria set out below. For External Panel Members for panels covering short courses this role will normally be carried out through the submission of a written report, rather than by attendance.
- 1.9 References in this policy to any University role or officeholder include their properly appointed nominee. References to job titles include equivalences.

2. Criteria for appointment

2.1 Those nominated as External Panel Members should normally:

- hold an academic qualification at least to the level of the proposed course, and ideally above that level; for practitioner External Panel Members, hold professional qualifications at an appropriate level.
- have a broad overview of the subject area under consideration and be familiar with current developments in the field of study concerned.

For the academic External Panel Member

- have significant experience and knowledge of relevant national frameworks, including the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education² and any relevant subject benchmark statements³, so they are able to provide meaningful comment on the academic standards of the course and its alignment with these standards.
- have significant experience of learning, teaching and assessment activity and course / curriculum design for courses of at least the level of the course(s) under consideration including appreciation of issues relating to inclusive curricula.
- for courses to be delivered in partnership with another institution, have relevant experience of the approval of partnership provision in the relevant national setting; for proposals that involve a partner outside the UK at least one External Panel Member shall have experience of the approval of international partnership provision.
- for Apprenticeship courses, ideally both External Panel Members should have some experience and understanding of apprenticeship provision, and one should have experience of Apprenticeship course design and approval.

(in particular for periodic reviews)

- have experience that enables them to assist in identifying good practice and recommending enhancements to benefit the course design and delivery and/or the wider learning experience.

For the practitioner External Panel Member

- be aware of the educational requirements for the profession and the relevant professional standards and expectations.

2.2 For courses delivered solely via distance learning one of the External Panel Members will normally have relevant experience of delivering a course via this mode.

2.3 External Panel Members should not:

- have had any close relationship with the University, the predecessor organisations (AECC

² [Quality Code \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk)

³ [Subject Benchmark Statements \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk)

University College and University College Osteopathy) or its educational partner institutions such as teaching (other than guest lectures), external examining, acting as a member of the Board of Governors, significant involvement in current or recent research collaborations with a member of staff closely involved in the course for which they are appointed; within the last five years.

If the proposed external adviser is a former member of staff or former student a period of at least five years should normally have elapsed since their departure.

- have any conflict of interest that may affect their ability to consider the proposed course(s) under review impartially. This may need to be considered on a case-by-case basis as part of the approval process. It may be prudent not to select a Panel Member from a close or competitor institution.
 - Have acted as the External Academic Critical friend for the new course under consideration (where applicable, as set out in the Course Design Framework).
- 2.4 Retired professionals/academics cannot normally be considered after 12 months has elapsed since their employment in the subject/HE, unless exceptional circumstances exist and continuing practice within the sector can be evidenced.
 - 2.5 Where more than one academic External Panel Member is required, they should not normally be drawn from the same institution.
 - 2.6 Appointments should not normally involve reciprocity – i.e. an External Panel Member should not normally be appointed from a department where a member of University staff associated with the course under consideration is acting or has recently acted in a similar role, or is currently acting as external examiner.
 - 2.7 External Panel Members should normally be able to fulfil the criteria outlined above by demonstrating previous experience of course approval or review or external examining, or having relevant responsibilities or, for the professional External Panel Member, equivalent professional roles. They should have knowledge, through this experience, which will enable them to make national comparisons about academic and professional standards.
 - 2.8 Over reliance on a single External Panel Member should be avoided since it reduces the range of external involvement.

3. Appointment process

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of the Course Proposer (for new courses) or the Course Leader (for periodic reviews), in consultation with the Head of School and other relevant colleagues as appropriate, to identify and nominate External Panel Members.
- 3.2 When approaching nominees to discuss their willingness and suitability, the Course Proposer/Leader should make it clear that participation is subject to Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) approval.
- 3.3 The Course Proposer/Leader should complete an External Panel Member Nomination Form. If the proposed External Panel Member does not fulfil all the criteria for nomination, the Course Proposer / Leader should ensure that a specific rationale for the choice of External Panel Member is recorded on the form for consideration by ASQC.
- 3.4 The completed form should be submitted to the Quality team who will arrange for the nomination to be considered by ASQC. If necessary, nominations may be considered in circulation.
- 3.5 All appointments are subject to the completion of required Right to Work checks which is undertaken by HR.
- 3.6 On notification that the nominee has been approved, the Quality team will write to the External Panel Member to inform them of their appointment (subject to the completion of a right to work check) and outline their duties.

4. Associated forms

- Nomination form: External Panel Member for Course Considerations Panel

Version:	2.3
Approved by	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Policy Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	UK Quality Code (2018) UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance, particularly: External Expertise, Course Design and Development, and Assessment Examples from other institutions used as source material
Date approved	
Effective from	September 2024
Review date	2024/25
Target	Heads of School, Course Proposers, Framework/Course Leaders, Registry, members of Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Policy location	
Equality Impact	No direct impact