

Points to Consider – Mentoring Arrangements for External Examiners

Introduction

Whilst the University's criteria for engagement with External Examiners refer to the need for appropriate levels of academic and professional expertise and sufficient experience of external examining, they also allow for consideration of nominations of less experienced External Examiners. In such circumstances the University requires that all first-time External Examiners are normally allocated a mentor¹. Mentors will provide advice and guidance, and assist first-time External Examiners throughout their first academic year, as they gain experience in the role.

The guidance below outlines the ways in which the allocation of a mentor should be managed by the programme team(s), the expectations of the relationship between the mentor and mentee, the approval of a proposed mentoring arrangement and how mentoring activity is recorded. Any arrangements are intended to be supportive of first-time External Examiners. At the end of their first year, all first-time External Examiners are asked, within their annual report, to confirm the appropriateness of their mentoring arrangements. This feedback is evaluated by Academic Registry to inform future enhancements to the mentoring system.

Any arrangements are intended to supplement the University's existing approach to External Examiner induction, and should not therefore be viewed as a replacement of these arrangements.

Mentoring Arrangements

When would a mentor be required?

The engagement of a first-time External Examiner should be on the basis that the nominee is supported by a more experienced External Examiner during the first academic year of their engagement. It is particularly important that External Examiners from a background in industry, PSRBs or other practitioner groups are given appropriate support in combining academic judgements with the requirements of the relevant profession.

What is the role of the mentor?

The liaison between mentors and mentees will be managed by the programme team(s).

¹ Where a proposed External Examiner does not fully meet the university's requirements relating to previous External Examiner experience, External Examiner Panel may make a risk-based judgement, based on the nominee's overall profile, as to whether a mentor is required.)

Following the engagement of an inexperienced External Examiner, their nominated mentor will provide advice and guidance on the process of external examining. This might include:

- Discussion of the role of External Examiner.
- Discussion of procedures for Boards of Examiners.
- Discussion of the requirements for the Annual External Examiner Report.
- Discussion of current issues in HE relevant to external examining.

There would be no expectation that specific face-to-face meetings should be arranged between the new External Examiner and their mentor. Advice and guidance could be provided over the phone, via electronic mechanisms such as email or video conferencing or, as applicable, during School-level meetings which may be arranged.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to facilitate mentoring arrangements and arrange the relevant meetings associated with this.

Who should be the mentor?

The mentor assigned to a first-time External Examiner must be an existing External Examiner assigned to a programme(s) of at least the same FHEQ level as the mentee. Although the mentor can be assigned to a cognate subject area, they must not be from the same institution as the mentee. Prior to the commencement of the mentoring arrangement, assigned mentors must have been engaged by Liverpool John Moores University for at least one year.

How could a mentor nominated and allocated?

It is the responsibility of the programme team, at the point of nomination, to confirm the agreed mentoring arrangements for a first-time External Examiner. Faculties need to make their own arrangements for potential mentors to be identified and consulted. The proposed mentoring arrangement must be specified within the nomination form for the newly-nominated External Examiner (i.e. the mentee). Once approved, the arrangement will be recorded securely, by Academic Registry, within the University's WebHub.

It is the Programme Leader's responsibility to inform the mentor that the mentoring arrangement has been approved.

Is an additional fee payable?

Currently there is no provision for the payment of an extra fee for the role of Mentor. However, the situation should be kept under review and feedback obtained from those asked to take on the role. The budget for payment of examiners is held by Academic Registry² and therefore the proposal to make an additional payment would have to be agreed/approved at External Examiner Panel.

What if it is not possible to assign a mentor?

² In the case of Collaborative Provision, the budget is held by the relevant Director of School.

Should it not be possible to assign a mentor, then it may be possible to identify alternate arrangements to support a first time External Examiner's transition into their role. Any such arrangements will be confirmed by the External Examiner Panel or on behalf of the Panel by the Chair. Alternative arrangements will only be considered by/on behalf of the External Examiner Panel where programme teams can evidence that they have exhausted all possible avenues to secure a mentor.