

The Role of the External Examiner

School of Linguistic Speech & Communication Science

Our external examiners act as consultants during the academic year and help with:

(1) Input or comment on any minor curriculum changes, particularly with regard to assessment practices and marking of continuous assessment during the academic year.

(i) Review and approval of examination papers / questions and marking schemes/rubrics as set by teaching team (this includes Foundation Scholarship exam papers).

(ii) SLP external attends 'live' case presentations and is available to be also present at off-site clinical exams - in these roles the extern acts as moderator (e.g. present while marks/ grades being discussed and guiding if any marked discrepancies). The external examiner is also present across contexts to maintain standardization of procedures and processes.

(iii) Leading up to the Sophister Court of Examiners, the examiners are present on site at least 2 days prior to the meeting to review, sample and discuss with staff all marks and grades.

The External Examiner is advised of the marking criteria used in association with the programme objectives and the specific learning outcomes for each module. In addition, the module co-ordinator and team may have devised specific criteria for performance e.g. in both theoretical & practice elements of programmes. Marking criteria are provided for each assessment.

Although all student work is available to the External Examiners at this time, it is deemed sufficient for the Externs to moderate the examination or continuous assessment assignments, including examination scripts from the top, middle and the bottom of the range of marks and including the work of borderline students. External Examiners therefore, moderate the results and recommend changes to unpublished marks of all SS modules, including the dissertation or final year project.

(v) At the Court of Examiners, the external examiners report on student work, grading standards, etc. and make suggestions for improvement of procedures where necessary; they also comment on course/module content as necessary.

(vi) The External Examiner provides the department with an annual written report, providing clear and informative feedback; they are generally asked to 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) were 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). The department, having discussed the Examiners report, then responds in writing to all issues, suggestions and commendations raised by the examiner, with responses to issues and suggestions being mandatory.

The role of the External Examiner Going Forward

The SLSCS views the External Examiner as a person who is knowledgeable about the subject being examined and is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programmes field of learning. There are several external examiners appointed to the School, all with discipline relevant expertise.

It was the view of some academic staff that coherent assessment systems and adequate standards depend to some extent on the external examiners' knowledge, skills and attitudes and to some extent on their conscientiousness. A small variation in practice was noted within the School. It was thought that a more robust College system, to guide both internal & external

moderation policy and procedures, might be worth exploring to help assure the quality of external examination.

However, a number of academic staff acknowledged that assuring educational quality by specifying teaching and learning structures, assessment processes and outcomes will increase and not reduce their workloads. It was also questioned whether quality in higher education, necessarily involved people external to the College, assigning objective, qualitative scores to students' work.

Academic members of staff concluded that the external examining process offers an objective interface and an independent element into the standards and procedures for the assessment of students. As such, despite concerns about the current system and what might replace it, it was the view that there is scope for testing and evaluating different approaches to external examining.

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