



## External Examining Policy and Procedures

### Purpose

This document sets out the policy and procedures relating to external examining at AECC University College, including the appointment and induction of external examiners and their role and responsibilities. The arrangements are designed to ensure that the external examiners appointed by AECC University College are appropriately qualified and in a position to provide impartial and independent advice, informative comment on academic standards and student achievement in relation to those standards and to make recommendations, in line with Indicators 2, 3 and 4 of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)'s UK Quality Code, Part B, Chapter B7: External Examining (hereafter Quality Code Chapter B7).

### 1. Background

- 1.1 The system of external examining is one of the key mechanisms through which AECC University College ensures that its academic standards, assessment processes and practices are comparable and consistent with higher education institutions elsewhere in the sector. The main purposes of external examining are:
- to provide independent verification to help ensure that the academic standards of our awards are appropriately set and maintained, aligned with the FHEQ, relevant benchmark statements and PSRB requirements where applicable,
  - to help us verify that our assessment process measures student achievement appropriately against the intended learning outcomes of the course, and that our processes and marking standards are sound, fairly operated and in line with our policies and regulations.
  - to provide independent verification that the performance of our students is comparable with that on similar courses elsewhere in the sector;
  - to help us ensure that the quality of learning opportunities is maintained and enhanced.

External examiners submit an annual report, using a template provided by the Institution, to provide a judgement and commentary in respect of the above.

- 1.2 AECC University College recognises the importance of the role of external examiners for higher education institutions and encourages its own staff to actively engage with and seek external examining opportunities within the sector.
- 1.3 External examiners are responsible through the Academic Development and Quality Committee (ADQC) to Academic Board.
- 1.4 No degree, diploma or certificate of the institution may be awarded without participation in the assessment process by at least one external examiner, who is a full member of the relevant Assessment Board.
- 1.5 The number of External Examiners for each Framework/Programme must be sufficient to cover the full range of studies and professional requirements. New external examiners are appointed to maintain sole or joint responsibility for at least one named programme and an agreed number of named unit(s) within a Framework and/or Programme. These are allocated according to the external examiners' subject expertise, any relevant PSRB and other external requirements, the size and complexity of the provision, and associated workloads.

## Part 1 Nomination and Appointment of External examiners

### 2. Selection and criteria for appointment, including conflicts of interest

2.1 The selection of nominees for appointment as an external examiner must be made in accordance with the following national criteria as set out in the Quality Code Chapter B7:

- ‘Degree-awarding bodies appoint external examiners who can show appropriate evidence of the following:
- i) knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality
  - ii) competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof
  - iii) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate
  - iv) competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures
  - v) sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers
  - vi) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed
  - vii) fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements)
  - viii) meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies
  - ix) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
  - x) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.’ (Quality Code Chapter B7 p 13)

2.2 In order to avoid **conflicts of interest**, external examiners may not be appointed in the following categories of circumstances, as set out in the Quality Code Chapter B7:

‘Institutions do not appoint as external examiners anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

- i) a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;
- ii) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
- iii) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- iv) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
- v) anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question;
- vi) former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s);
- vii) a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;
- viii) the succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner’s home department and institution;
- ix) the appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department of the

same institution.’ (Quality Code Chapter B7 p 13)

- 2.3 In respect of (v) above the University College normally expect a period of five years to have passed since the nominee’s engagement with the institution although depending on the nature of the previous interaction, a shorter period may be considered.
- 2.4 Exceptionally, it may be appropriate to make an appointment that does not fulfil all the criteria. The rationale for any such appointment will be recorded on the nomination form and considered by ADQC.
- 2.5 External examiners from outside the higher education system, for example, from relevant professions, who may not necessarily fulfil all the criteria above may be appointed where their knowledge and/or experience is appropriate to the course to be examined. Such appointees should not normally be the sole external examiner for the award.
- 2.6 Nominees should ideally have previous experience acting as an external examiner for taught courses within the UK. If the proposed nominee has no such experience it must be clearly specified by the Course Team as part of the nomination process how they will receive any additional induction and/or support they may require.
- 2.7 In order to have sufficient time for the proper performance of the role individuals would normally be expected to hold no more than two external examinerships for taught courses at any one time.
- 2.8 Where nominees have had less significant prior involvement with the institution, for instance through involvement in a Framework/Programme evaluation, the institution will consider the extent of this carefully to ascertain whether the nomination would compromise future independence.
- 2.9 All external examiners must confirm their eligibility to work in the UK. This will be verified by sight of applicable documentation prior to the commencement of the duties of the external examiner. This verification process will be managed through Human Resources.
- 2.10 Framework/Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that any requirements set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) in relation to external examining are met, and should record this in section 15 of the nomination form.

### **3. Period of Service**

- 3.1 The duration of an external examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity. External examiners may be appointed for shorter periods.
- 3.2 External examiners should remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.
- 3.3 An external examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

### **4. Process for Approval of Nominations**

- 4.1 The approval process for the external examiner/s of new courses should take place in the academic year prior to the start of the course. For existing courses it should normally take place in the year prior to the current external examiner completing his/her term of office, to enable a period of observation/shadowing to take place if required. External examiners must normally be in post for the annual start of the courses for which they are responsible.
- 4.2 The Framework Leader or Programme Leader (where a Programme is outside a Framework) is

responsible for the initial identification of a preferred nominee to act as external examiner, in discussion with relevant colleagues.

- 4.3 The Framework/Programme Leader should outline to the prospective external examiner the role, duties and responsibilities of an external examiner for this institution, with reference to the Role and responsibilities of External Examiners - Taught Programmes document and confirm the prospective external examiner's willingness to be nominated.
- 4.4 At this stage the Framework/Programme Leader should check for potential conflicts of interest and should check with the Quality and Enhancement Manager that no reciprocal external examination relationship will result from the appointment (i.e. no members of the School currently act as external examiners in the nominee's own disciplinary area).
- 4.5 If no conflicts or reciprocal arrangements exist the Framework/Programme Leader should then ask the prospective external examiner to complete Part I of the nomination form.
- 4.6 The external examiner may submit a curriculum vitae (CV) in lieu of completion of the form but the CV must cover all the relevant information and relevant sections of the CV should be cross-referenced on the form. Information on conflicts of interest and on the right to work in the UK must be completed on the form and signed by the nominee. The prospective External Examiner should then return the form to the Framework/Programme Leader.
- 4.7 The Framework/Programme Leader should, if the nominee has submitted a CV rather than completing all sections of Part I, ensure that the CV contains all the required information and is appropriately cross-referenced on the form, and should follow up any queries with the prospective external examiner so that all the required information is available for ADQC.
- 4.8 The Framework/Programme Leader should check with the Quality and Enhancement Manager that no reciprocal external examination relationship will result from the appointment (i.e. no members of the Faculty currently act as external examiners in the nominee's own disciplinary area), and confirm that there are no other conflicts of interest.
- 4.9 The Framework/Programme Leader must complete Part II of the nomination form. Should the Framework/Programme Leader wish to nominate an individual who may not fully meet the selection criteria they must set out clearly the rationale for doing so in section 17 of the form ('Exceptional arrangements'). Experience and expertise which is considered as a replacement for academic qualifications should be clearly explained.
- 4.10 The Framework/Programme Leader should forward the nomination form to the Quality and Enhancement Manager who will review the nomination in relation to the selection criteria listed above; any queries will be discussed with the Programme/Framework Leader. If required the Quality and Enhancement Manager may highlight comments/propose conditions to the nomination for consideration by ADQC, in discussion with the Framework/Programme Leader.
- 4.11 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will submit the nomination to ADQC for consideration. If timing requires, nominations may be considered on Chair's action or in circulation
- 4.12 Approval is given by ADQC and reported to Academic Board.
- 4.13 Should ADQC decline to approve a nomination the Vice Principal (Quality) as Chair of the Committee will convey this decision to the nominee, with an explanation. The Framework/Programme Leader should then identify a further nominee as soon as possible.

## 5. Appointment

- 5.1 Once the appointed has been approved by ADQC the Quality and Enhancement Manager will issue an appointment letter on behalf of the institution. The appointment letter outlines the details and terms and conditions of the appointment and is signed by the Principal.
- 5.2 Together with the appointment letter new external examiners will receive from the Quality and Enhancement Manager the following documentation:
  - Policy and Procedures regarding the role and responsibilities of External Examiners
  - Policy and Procedures for Assessment Boards – Membership, Responsibilities and Operation
  - the relevant course specification(s) and unit specifications
  - Independent marking and moderation policy
  - the current external examiner's most recent report
  - the most recent Framework/course annual monitoring report and Continuous Action Plan
  - the Dignity, Diversity and Equality policy
- 5.3 The external examiner is asked to return a signed copy of the letter of appointment. This forms the basis of the contract for the external examiner's role.
- 5.4 On receipt of the signed letter the Quality and Enhancement Manager will advise the E-Learning Developer and IT Department, who will arrange for the new external examiners to be provided with access to the relevant sections of the VLE and/or other IT systems as required, with advice on its use and navigation.
- 5.5 The Quality and Enhancement Manager retains a central list of approved external examiners, which is presented annually to ADQC and available on the Staff Information Portal.
- 5.6 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will ensure that the name, position and institution of the external examiner is made available to students via the VLE.
- 5.7 A flowchart setting out the appointment and approval process is attached as appendix 1

### **Prevention of illegal working**

- 5.8 The University has a responsibility to prevent illegal working in the UK, as required under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act. Under this Act, the University College is required to check the right to work documentation of all external examiners, including those who are already working for another UK employer. Appropriate checks will be carried out via Human Resources.

## 6. Revision, Extension, Resignation or Termination of Appointment

- 6.1 When an External Examiner's term expires at the end of the normal appointment period the Quality and Enhancement Manager will arrange for him/her to be sent a letter of thanks.
- 6.2 If a revision of an existing external examiner appointment is necessary (for example to add new responsibilities to an external examiner's portfolio) then the Framework/ Programme Leader should complete the relevant template for submission to ADQC. If approved, the Quality and Enhancement Manager will send to the external examiner an amended letter of appointment on behalf of the institution. The letter will be signed by the Principal.
- 6.3 If the external examiner resigns before the end of his or her term of office, the Framework/ Programme Leader should take immediate steps, in discussion with relevant colleagues, to identify a replacement, in accordance with the policy and criteria in this document.

- 6.4 An appointment cannot be made or continued where such an appointment would give rise to a conflict of interest between the role of external examiner at this institution and any other position held by the External Examiner. Should such a conflict arise during the period of appointment, the external examiner must draw this to the attention of the Vice-Principal (Quality) immediately.
- 6.5 The external examiner is required to discharge satisfactorily his or her responsibilities and duties. The appointment of an external examiner may be terminated at any time in the following circumstances:
- a) by either party upon giving the other one month's written notice; or
  - b) by the University College, by giving written notice with immediate effect
    - (i) in the event of a breach by the external examiner of the terms of the appointment, such as -
      - failure to attend Assessment Board meetings without the prior agreement of the Chair and without arranging an alternative means to input to the meetings
      - failure to submit an annual report within the specified time
      - submission of more than one inadequate annual report
      - failure to carry out other duties outlined in Section 2 of this document.
    - (ii) in the event of a conflict of interest arising during the term of office which cannot be resolved or addressed by other means.
- 6.6 The submission of a confidential report to the Principal, and/or a report to HEFCE under the Unsatisfactory Quality procedure will not be regarded as valid reason for termination of appointment.
- 6.7 Recommendations for termination of contract for non-performance of duties in line with paragraph 6.6 above must be made by the Vice-Principal (Quality), using the termination form, and approved by the Principal. Upon approval, the Quality and Enhancement Manager will arrange for a termination of appointment letter to be sent to the external examiner, signed by the Principal. Terminations of appointment will be reported to ADQC. If an external examiner wishes to discuss the reason for termination, they should be directed to the Vice-Principal (Quality) in the first instance.

## 7. Induction

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the relevant Programmes Office working with the Quality and Enhancement Manager to arrange for the induction of newly appointed external examiners to ensure that they are suitably prepared to fulfil the requirements of the role and have access to the information they require for this purpose.
- 7.2 The induction will include:
- reference to the QAA Quality Code Chapter B7 External examining
  - the information available to external examiners from the Higher Education Academy website, <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/assessment-and-feedback/external-examining>; in particular the Handbook for External Examining ([https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/HE\\_Academy\\_External\\_Examiners\\_Handbook\\_2012.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/HE_Academy_External_Examiners_Handbook_2012.pdf)) (particularly for inexperienced external examiners)
  - background information about the institution, its values and culture
  - a meeting with the Framework/Programme Leader (and where appropriate other members of the programme team) to outline the context, philosophy, and assessment criteria/ procedures of the programme(s). This should include a review of the course and unit specifications, marking criteria and assessment briefs. Criteria relating to the requirements of relevant professional bodies should be addressed where appropriate

- the individual examiner's role and the extent of their discretion, making clear that it is not the role of external examiners to determine marks or degree classifications for individual candidates
- review of the Assessment regulations, Academic Appeals, FTP, disciplinary and academic offences procedures and relevant assessment policies and procedures
- review of the reporting structure, timelines, format, procedures and institution's responses, including the annual report template
- information and documentation relating to claims procedures and expenses allowances.
  - information about the timetable/schedule of the examining process for the programme, including dates of relevant meetings.
- Information/advice on the use of the VLE or equivalent electronic systems.

At induction there should also be an opportunity for the external examiner to request any additional materials or information to assist them in the performance of their role.

- 7.3 Where an inexperienced external examiner is appointed the Quality and Enhancement Manager, working with the Framework/Programme Leader will ensure that the external examiner is provided with any additional support he/she requires in order to be fully informed about what the role entails, and about the academic standards and quality expected of courses at the relevant level in UK higher education.

## Part 2: Role and responsibilities of External Examiners

### 8. Information to support the role

- 8.1 The Head of the relevant Programmes Office must ensure that the following documents are supplied or made available electronically to all external examiners annually:
- Assessment and marking criteria and policies for the programme(s) to be examined.
  - Assessment briefs for the units concerned
  - A timetable/schedule of the examining process for the Framework/Programme, including when work will be available for scrutiny and the dates of practical assessments when external examiners are expected/invited to attend
  - Assessment marks
  - Independent marking reports, as applicable
  - Details of procedures for claiming expenses and fees.
  - Information about completing the external examiner's report, and a copy of the report form template.
  - Any other quality assurance materials that the external may request.

The Head of the relevant Programmes Office should also ensure on an annual basis that the External Examiners have the required access to the VLE or equivalent systems for accessing student work, and understand how to access the relevant material.

### 9. Responsibilities of External Examiners

- 9.1 In fulfilling their role, external examiners are expected:
- (i) to be given the opportunity to comment on the form and content of proposed examination papers and an agreed sample of coursework and other assessments that count towards the award, and the relevant marking criteria.

- (ii) to review samples of assessed work which have been independently marked in order to comment whether the assessment processes are robust and the students have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the course and reached the required standard.
  - (iii) to comment on whether the academic standards for the programme(s) are set and maintained in line with the requirements within the QAA Quality Code [Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards: Chapter A1: UK and European reference points for academic standards](#) (October 2013) and, where applicable, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and/or professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements;
  - (iv) to compare the standards of the award and performance of students with that of their peers on comparable courses of higher education elsewhere in the UK
  - (v) to satisfy themselves and then confirm that the assessments have been conducted in accordance with the relevant assessment regulations
  - (vi) based on moderation, to advise Assessment Boards on the adjustment of whole sets of marks awarded by internal markers subject to the agreement of the Assessment Board;
  - (vii) to participate in the meetings of the Assessment Board and ensure that the decisions accord with the University College's regulations, policies and procedures
  - (viii) to satisfy themselves that all Assessment Board recommendations have been reached by means according with the institution's requirements, including those relating to mitigation or academic offences, and normal practice in higher education;
  - (ix) to provide expert and impartial feedback to the Framework/Course Team on the effectiveness of the assessments, including comment on good practice and innovative practices to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of the learning opportunities provided to students;
  - (x) to submit an annual report using the approved University College report template, by the agreed deadline.
- 9.2 In addition to the above, whilst in office external examiners may be invited to offer an independent view regarding the provision to which their appointment relates in a number of ways:
- (i) to provide advice for use in Framework/Course review or have an advisory role to play in the development of additional provision;
  - (ii) to comment on proposed changes to the course structure or content, applying judgement in regard both to the assessment of the modified course(s)/unit(s) and to its appropriateness to the level of the award;
  - (iii) to comment on the suitability of assessment policies, procedures, and regulations.
- 9.3 External examiners may be asked to mentor other examiners who are new or inexperienced in the role. There is no additional fee for mentoring as this is not likely to incur a significant amount of extra work and is therefore covered by the standard basic fee.
- 9.4 As a part of the process for monitoring standards of performance the external examiner will have a role in commenting on unit assessment data.
- 9.5 If a course is delivered in different locations external examiners should highlight if they have any issues or concerns related to comparability of student performance or experience arising specifically from this delivery.

## 10. Review of assessment briefs and marking criteria

- 10.1 External Examiner review of assessment briefs, draft examination papers and marking criteria is to help ensure that all assessments are appropriate for the subject(s), the level(s) and in relation to the anticipated intended learning outcomes and that students will be assessed fairly in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

- 10.2 External examiners should be given opportunities to review the form and content of proposed examination papers (including resit papers) and assessment briefs. Marking schemes, and any specific guidance associated with PSRBs should also be included where appropriate. Examination papers and assessment briefs should be provided in final draft form and in a timely fashion. External examiners should not be used as proof-readers.
- 10.3 As a minimum, external examiners should receive all assessment briefs which contribute toward classification in order to have an opportunity to review them, therefore normally excluding Level 3 and 4 assessments (except in any cases where awards are designed to terminate at these levels). To include:
- all examination papers (including resit papers);
  - all assessment briefs\* (including reassessment where appropriate);
  - marking schemes for the above;
- \* A sample of assessment briefs which are assessed by 100% coursework (including those assessed by one formal element worth 100% or those assessed by a number of sub-elements worth 100% in total) must be reviewed.
- 10.4 The Unit Leader must provide the External Examiner with feedback as to how their comments on draft assessment material have been taken into consideration and whether changes have been made as a result, by the deadline specified by the relevant Programmes Office. The relevant Programmes Office will have oversight of this process.
- 10.5 A copy of the assessment guidelines, schedule and independent marking plan should also be provided for information

## 11. Arrangements for the review of assessed students' work and moderation

- 11.1 External examiners are required to review assessed students' work, once this has been independently marked in accordance with the Independent Marking Policy, to review internal consistency and external comparability of standards.
- 11.2 The Framework/Programme Team and external examiner should agree the nature and sample size of assessed students' work to be provided for moderation during the academic year, and timescales for feedback. The Team should consult with the external examiner to take into account their wishes in respect of receiving assessment criteria, model answers, marking schemes and any statistical data required.
- 11.3 To facilitate external examiner moderation, the agreed sample must clearly identify the independent marking audit trail and the first and second markers must be identifiable to the external examiner.
- 11.4 Where multiple choice questions, tests which utilise automated assessment packages, or live assessments (e.g. presentations) are the sole method of assessment for a unit, then external examiners must be provided with access to these. Where live assessments make up 100% of coursework, the Framework/Course Team must agree with the external examiner(s) an appropriate sample size and how the external examiner will be given access to relevant materials.
- 11.5 The external examiner should have access to the work of students proposed for the highest available category of the award and for failure, and samples of the work of students proposed for each category of the award
- 11.6 Examples of students' work can be made available for review by the external examiners during a visit if these have not been made available to the external examiner in advance of the Assessment Board. Where external examiners wish to view students' work before they arrive, the relevant Programmes Office will arrange for the agreed documents to be made available. This may happen throughout the academic year or in advance of Assessment Boards. The sample provided to

external examiners should be organised through the relevant Programmes Office. Where external examiners choose to review students' work prior to the Board during their visit to the institution, sufficient time should be made available for this task.

- 11.7 External examiners must not be directly involved in assessing students or in marking. The Independent Marking Policy sets out the internal arrangements to be followed where markers disagree.
- 11.8 External examiners should not have any special role in individual student matters involving mitigating circumstances or academic offences; their role in such cases is to ensure that the institution's procedures are applied appropriately.

### **External Examiner recommendations for the adjustment of marks**

- 11.9 If an external examiner disagrees with the standards of marking for assessed work within a sample he/she may, on the basis of moderation, make recommendations to the Assessment Board for the adjustment of whole sets of marks awarded by internal markers, if all students are considered to have been unduly advantaged or disadvantaged by errors in the marking or assessment process. The external examiner should have reviewed a sample of sufficient size to confirm the trend, but all work need not have been reviewed by the external to reach this judgement. The external examiner may request to see a larger sample size to facilitate making this decision.
- 11.10 Moderation by external examiners should not normally result in changes to the marks for individual candidates. Unless all the students work for that assessment has been reviewed by the external examiner before any such changes are made, to ensure no student will be unduly advantaged or disadvantaged. This may involve, for example, review of all assessments by a particular marker whose marking has raised a concern. Should an external examiner identify a specific marking error (rather than a trend) this should be drawn to the attention of the course team, to enable this to be rectified before the Assessment Board.

## **12. Assessment Boards**

- 12.1 The policy relating to Assessment Boards is set out in the Policy and Procedures for Assessment Boards – Membership, Responsibilities and Operation.
- 12.2 It is the responsibility of the relevant Programmes Office to arrange the date of the Assessment Boards. Arrangements will normally be made for external examiners and the Framework/Course team to meet prior to the Board.
- 12.3 An external examiner is a full member of the Assessment Board. External examiners are required to be present at all relevant Assessment Boards at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made in the subject/s in which they are involved.
- 12.4 If an external examiner exceptionally cannot attend a meeting of the Assessment Board this must be reported in advance to the Chair for approval of the alternative arrangements through which the external examiner will exercise his/her responsibilities at the Board for example by participation by Skype, consultation by telephone or some other effective way. In such cases the Assessment Board must receive, and record in the minutes clear evidence for the views of the external examiner and confirmation that the external examiner has been consulted on the recommendations made by the Assessment Board. Where this is the case, another member of the Framework/Course external examining team will be exceptionally asked to sign the Board Report and the external examiner in question must still signal their agreement to the recommendations in writing before the results can be published to students. See the Policy and Procedures for Assessment Boards – Membership, Responsibilities and Operation.
- 12.5 At the meeting of the Assessment Board the role of the external examiner is:

- to ensure that recommendations accord with the requirements and normal practice of the regulations for that course and the institution;
  - to ensure that decisions made are fair and consistent;
  - to sign the Assessment Board Report as confirmation that he/she is satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process.
  - to make general comments, where applicable, on the academic standards and quality of the course and the assessment process including good practice in learning, teaching and assessment and the enhancement of learning opportunities, and any other observations.
- 12.6 Should the external examiner, in exceptional circumstances, be unwilling to endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes following the Assessment Board, he/she should be asked to meet with the Chair of ADQC (or nominee if there is a perceived conflict of interest) as a matter of urgency to seek to resolve the issues of concern. The external examiner should be asked to make clear whether his/her concerns are such that he/she is unable to confirm the outcomes for the students on the relevant programmes; if this is not the case and the concerns are more general in nature the external examiner should be encouraged to sign off the outcomes and raise the concerns separately in a confidential letter to the Principal. Should it appear that investigation of the external examiner's concerns may delay release of marks to students the Vice-Principal will discuss with the Academic Registrar the most appropriate way to communicate with those affected, including determining the timescale by which results would be released.

### 13. External examiners' annual report

- 13.1 External examiners are required to make an annual written report, using the approved Template.
- 13.2 The report must be submitted electronically to the Vice-Principal (Quality) via the Quality and Enhancement Manager no later than two weeks after the Assessment Board has taken place. Payment of fees will be conditional upon the receipt of these reports.
- 13.3 As external examiners' reports will be in the public domain, they should not refer to staff or students by name.
- 13.4 In his/her final report submitted at the end of his/her term of office the external examiner is asked to provide retrospective comments on his or her experience as an external examiner at the institution and to draw attention to any significant changes in standards or procedures observed during the period.
- 13.5 An external examiner may make a separate report directly and confidentially to the Principal on any matter of serious concern arising from the assessments that may put at risk the standard of the AECC University College's awards. Should an external examiner choose to make such a confidential report, the Principal will ask the Vice-Principal (Quality) (or nominee if there is a perceived conflict of interest) to follow up the issues raised and coordinate a response on his/her behalf. A report on the issues and response will be made to ADQC (anonymised as appropriate, if the issues relate to specific individuals).
- 13.6 If the external examiner is not satisfied with the response they receive, and/or if they believe there to be systemic failings to address concerns regarding the standards of the institution's awards, they may, if they so wish, take up an issue through the HEFCE Unsatisfactory Quality Scheme. Alternatively or additionally, the external examiner may wish to raise a concern directly with the relevant professional body. These options will be drawn to the attention of the external examiner in the response letter from the Principal.

### 14. Consideration of External Examiners' reports

- 14.1 External examiners' reports are an important element in monitoring the standards and quality of provision.

- 14.2 Once received, the Quality and Enhancement Manager will review the report on behalf of the Vice-Principal (Quality), to scan for concerns raised suggesting that standards are not being met. Any such issues will be drawn to the attention of the Vice-Principal (Quality) to consider appropriate action to discuss with the Framework/Programme Leader.
- 14.3 The report will then be circulated to the Framework/Programme Leader for consideration and formulation of an initial written response. The response should be a considered response from the programme to issues raised (not just to recommendations detailed in section 12) with details of any actions to be taken as a result, and should include a clear rationale for any decision not to take action in response to any recommendation made in section 12 of the form. Where the team disagrees with a recommendation made by an external examiner in section 12, and the issue is deemed substantial, advice should be sought from the Quality and Enhancement Manager to progress the situation.
- 14.4 If the Framework/Programme Leader has concerns that comments made by external examiners in their reports do not fall within the remit of external examiners, as outlined in this document (for example, commenting on detail on an individual student's work) the Framework/Programme Leader should discuss this with the Vice-Principal (Quality) and the Quality and Enhancement Manager to determine the most appropriate way to respond.
- 14.5 Reports and initial responses will be considered at the earliest opportunity at Framework/Programme Steering Groups, and addressed in the relevant annual monitoring report and continuous action plan.
- 14.6 As part of the annual monitoring process external examiner reports and initial response will be presented to ADQC for consideration and discussion at institutional level. Particular attention will be drawn to any areas where the Course Team disagrees with the recommendation. As part of the consideration of reports and responses at ADQC the committee will identify any common themes or trends arising.
- 14.7 Where applicable, external examiners' reports, or relevant issues arising from them, will be made available to relevant PSRBs, and other external bodies as such Bodies may require.
- 14.8 External examiners' reports and course team response are made available to all staff via the Staff Information Portal (SIP).

## 15. Student engagement

- 15.1 Where possible, and particularly if the external examiner requests the relevant Programmes Office will make arrangements for external examiners to meet with students, to assist with the external examiner's understanding of a programme and the way in which it operates from a student perspective; however this is not part of the assessment process. Such meetings may take place by Skype or similar, if necessary.
- 15.2 Where meetings with students are arranged, the relevant Programmes Office will provide the students in advance with information about the scope and purpose of the meeting.
- 15.3 The name, position and institution of the relevant external examiner(s) are made available to students through inclusion of this information in the University College Student Handbook. Students are advised that they must not contact external examiners directly. Should any external examiner be contacted by a student they are asked to forward the letter to the Framework/Programme Leader for a response. Similarly if an external examiner is approached by a student or group of students in person with a request to discuss particular issues about a programme or module the External Examiner should refer to students to the Programme Leader.
- 15.4 External examiners' reports will be made available in full to students via the VLE. Students will also be engaged through discussion of the reports and responses at Programme Steering Groups,

Student:Staff Liaison Subcommittee and ADQC at which they are represented.

## 16. Practical arrangements

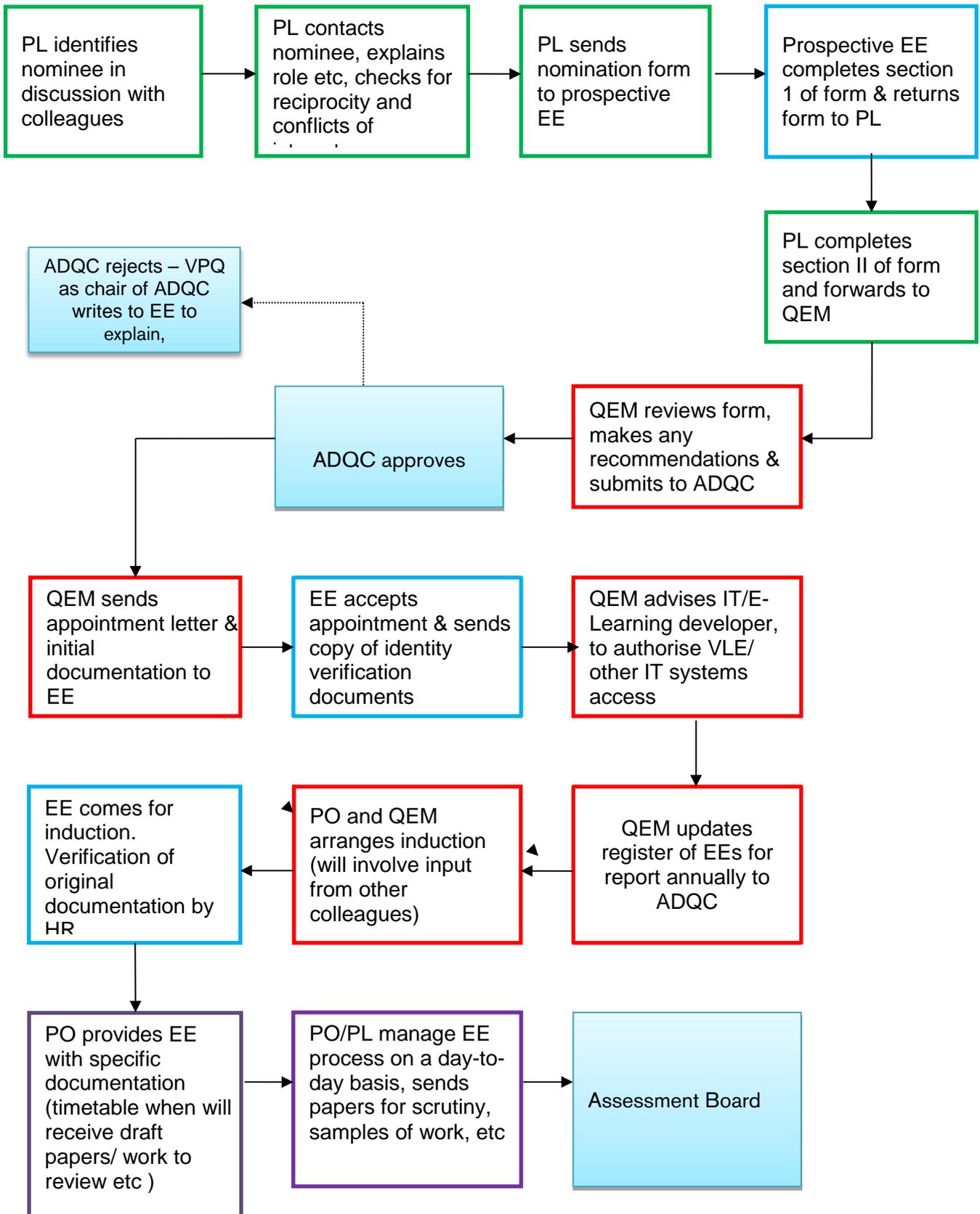
- 16.1 Fees are payable on receipt of the annual report
- 16.2 The fee to be paid to an external examiner is set out in the letter of appointment.
- 16.3 External examiners are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. The relevant Programmes Office will liaise with external examiners regarding these arrangements as required.
- 16.4 Details of costs and subsistence and other expenses should be submitted on the claim form provided: subsistence expenses will be reimbursed provided details are shown and receipts submitted.
- 16.5 Any hotel bookings required will normally organised by the relevant Programmes Office.

## 17. Associated documentation and forms

External Examiners for Taught Courses: Nomination Form  
External Examiners for Taught Courses: Revisions to Appointment, including extensions  
External Examiner Termination of Appointment Form  
External Examiner annual report form  
Independent Marking Policy  
AECC University College Assessment Regulations for all Higher Education Programmes  
Assessment Board conduct and operations policy

Version	1.0 of combined document
Ratified by	Academic Audit Committee/Academic Board
Originator/Author	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Owner	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Reference source	The Expectation and Indicators of sound practice set out in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)'s <a href="#">UK Quality Code, Part B, Chapter B7: External Examining</a> . Examples from other institutions used as source material (in particular Bournemouth University and University of Southampton)
Date approved	16 November 2018
Effective from	Immediate effect for courses with no BU award students/new external examiners for AECC awards from September 2017
Review date	Spring 2019
Target	External Examiners, Framework/Programme Leaders, Programmes Offices, Registry,
Policy location	SIP
Equality analysis	No direct impact

**Appendix 1: External examiner nomination and appointment process chart**



PL - Programme Leader  
 QEM Quality and Enhancement Manager  
 EE – External Examiner  
 PO Programmes Office s