Notes of Guidance for External Specialists and External Peers involved in Programme Approval and Review

Academic Session 2024-2025

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Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 These *Notes of Guidance* have been drawn up to provide guidance on procedural matters to external specialists and external peers in their provision of services to the University. Further advice and information, if necessary, can be obtained from the Associate Director, Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (ARQS).

1.2 The involvement by external specialist and external peers in the process of programme design, approval and review is well embedded and now in its nineteenth year of operation. This external input compliments the external advice already provided via the external examiner system and thus provides an enhancement of the University's quality assurance processes. Recognising the ever-increasing demands on colleagues' time, the University is extremely grateful for the contribution that external specialists and external peers will be making to the work of the University in the coming session.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

2.1 The University's structure and operation is characterised by the devolution to the Faculties (Institutes/School)[1] of a wide range of responsibilities within a defined framework. The Academic Board is the principal corporate body with responsibility for assuring quality in the academic work of the University. It sets the framework and defines the standards and rules to which Faculties must work. It is aided in this task by a sub-structure of committees which develop, agree, and monitor the majority of the policies and procedures governing the operation of the framework. The relevant parts of Academic Board's sub-structure concerned with programme and module approval and review are the Programme Development and Approval Committee and Assessment and Regulatory Oversight Sub-Committee.

2.2 The nine Faculties of the University are:

Arts and Humanities
King's Business School
Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences Directory of Services
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience
Dickson Poon School of Law
Life Sciences and Medicine
Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care
Natural, Mathematical & Engineering Sciences
Social Science and Public Policy

2.3 The internal structures of Faculties vary considerably in response to differences in their size and complexity, but each Faculty is required to ensure that certain core governance functions are carried out. Thus, in relation to teaching, each Faculty will operate a Faculty Education Committee (or recognisable equivalent). Faculty Education Committees vary in their size, membership and operation to suit the particular requirements of the Faculty and whilst some Faculties choose to call the Committee by a different name, all have to follow the core governance functions; these are available at Appendix A. A copy of terms of reference for Faculties Education Committee will be sent to external peers prior to the start of the academic year by the relevant Faculty.

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[1] Referenced as Faculties throughout the rest of the document.

3. PROGRAMME APPROVAL

3.1 Faculty Education Committees, as specified in the core governance functions, are responsible for approving and modifying programmes and modules in accordance with University policies. These are available at: *https://www.kcl.ac.uk/governancezone/governancelegal/quality-assurance-handbook*

4. PROGRAMME (PERIODIC) REVIEW

4.1 Programme (Periodic) review operates on a six-year cycle. Reviews are conducted by Faculty Education Committees, or a sub-group of the Committee, and the report of the review is submitted to the University's Assessment and Regulatory Oversight Sub-Committee for formal approval. This process re-approves the programmes to run for a further six years. Faculties can decide how to group programmes for review to suit their particular circumstances, so some Faculties choose to review programmes on a departmental basis, others group programmes by theme or level. The review process is described in the document entitled *Quality Assurance Handbook.*

5. EXTERNAL SPECIALISTS

5.1 *Criteria and engagement*
The external specialist will be either an academic from another higher education institution, a member of a professional, regulatory or statutory body, or an employer with links to the subject area or from business or industry. Former External Examiners to the University can act in this capacity, as can current External Examiners, provided that the latter do not subsequently act as External Examiner for the programme in question for a period of three academic years. Former members of staff of the University are eligible to act as external specialists, provided that a period of three years has elapsed since their employment with the University. External specialists are not formally appointed by the University as the anticipated pattern of use is that specialists will be engaged on a one-off basis for the requirements of a particular programme.

5.2 *Role of external specialists*
The role of the external specialist is to provide expert subject advice at the design stage of a programme and therefore departments intending to introduce a new programme must identify a suitable specialist at the developmental stage of the programme. The specialist will be invited to comment on the content of the proposed programme which will include considerations such as academic standards, relationship with any subject benchmark statement and/or relevant professional regulatory or statutory body guidelines and the potential market for the programme. The interaction of the specialist with the department may involve attending meetings in the department, in addition to correspondence by written and other means.

5.3 The external specialist is asked to complete on a pro-forma a brief report of the nature of their involvement in the process and their views on the programme. This report forms part of the basis of programme approval. It is an important part of the evidence and Faculty Education Committees cannot approve a new programme if the external specialist's report is missing. A copy of the pro-forma for the report is provided at Appendix B.

5.4 *Information*
The department proposing the new programme will provide the external specialist with:

i)   a copy of these Notes of Guidance for external specialists and external peers
ii)   advice on how to access the University's *Procedures for programme and module approval* and modification on the web
iii) any relevant departmental information

5.5 *Payment*
Once a Faculty Education Committee has approved a new programme, the documentation, including the appropriate payment claim forms, is passed to the Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (ARQS) section of the University's Students and Education Directorate who will arrange the payment of fees and expenses. The fee for acting as an external specialist is £200 (subject to tax). The forms for claiming expenses and the fee are available at: [Payments and Expenses - King's College London (kcl.ac.uk)](kcl.ac.uk) and should be returned to the Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards office (please see section 7 below for further financial information).

6.   EXTERNAL PEERS

6.1 *Appointment*
One or two external peers will be appointed to each Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent). Appointments will be approved by the Chair of the College Education Committee on the recommendation of Faculties. External peers should meet three or more of the following criteria:

- experience within their own institution of either the role of Head of Department/Dean of Faculty or Programme Director and/or chairmanship of an institutional level committee concerned with teaching and learning or other senior role. If the nominated peer is a recent retiree i.e. retired in the last year, then the University will appoint on a two year basis only, with no consideration of extending tenure to an additional two years being allowed;
- wide experience as an External Examiner;
- familiarity with research-led teaching;
- familiarity with national quality assurance policies;
- knowledge of and experience of using subject benchmark statements;
- previous experience as a QAA subject reviewer, review chair of institutional auditor and/or experience of being a subject contact for a QAA Subject Review.

Former External Examiners to the University will be eligible to be nominated as external peers but current External Examiners are not eligible to serve in this capacity. External peers will not be able to subsequently act as External Examiner for any programmes they have been involved in approving until a period of five years has elapsed. Former members of staff of the University are eligible to act as external peers, provided that a period of three years has elapsed since their employment with the University. An appointee shall not normally belong to an institution in which a member of staff of King's College London is appointed to act as an External Examiner in the same discipline to which the Peer would be asked to review.

6.2 External peers are appointed on a two-year contract in the first instance, with the possibility of renewal for a maximum of one further two-year period. On completion of the appointment an

external peer will not normally be eligible for re-appointment until a period of two years has elapsed. The appointment process will be organised by the ARQS office.

6.3   *Information*
        The ARQS office will provide external peers with:

        i)   a copy of these Notes of Guidance for external specialists and external peers
        ii)   a copy of the University's *Quality Assurance Handbook*

        Faculties will provide external peers with:

        i)   any additional local guidance on programme approval and review
        ii)   terms of reference of the Faculty Education Committee
        iii)   dates of meetings of the Faculty Education Committee and liaison over dates of programme reviews
        iv)   copies of proposals for all new programmes in advance of the meeting of the Faculty Education Committee
        v)   copies of programme review documentation in advance of the review

6.4   *Role in programme approval*
        The role of external peers in programme approval is to take an overview of the process and to ensure that appropriate attention is given to the setting and maintenance of academic standards during this process. External peers will be invited to attend all meetings of Faculty Education Committees at which proposals for new programmes are considered. However, in recognition of the time commitment this would entail, the minimum requirement is for the external peer to attend[2] at least 50% of the Faculty Education Committee meetings each academic year (meetings at which programme review and approval documentation is considered). At other times input into the scrutiny of programme approval documentation can be conducted by electronic or other means. The external peer will be asked to sign-off the programme approval documentation once it has been approved by the Faculty Education Committee.

6.5   *Role in programme review*
        External peers will be full members of review panels and will carry out this role in accordance with University procedures. This will involve scrutiny of documentation and attendance[2] at the review. In exceptional circumstances where a peer is unable to attend, they should provide a written report for the panel. In multi-department Faculties where the Faculties external peer is not a specialist in the subject being reviewed, another external peer/specialist should be co-opted onto the panel.

6.6   *Report*
        At the end of their contract external peers will be asked to provide a report on their experience and to suggest any areas for further improvement. However, comments or suggestions on any aspect of the University's operation of programme approval and review will be welcomed at any time and should be addressed in the first instance to the Associate Director, ARQS.

6.7   *Payment*
        The ARQS office will arrange the payment of fees and expenses. External peers will receive an annual payment of £1,000 (subject to tax) which can be paid in one or two instalments. Reimbursement of expenses for travel and any other associated costs will be made as they

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[2] Faculties determine whether this is physical attendance or other means.

occur, on presentation of a claim supported by receipts. The forms for claiming expenses and the fee are available at:
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/quality/academic/prog/ExtSpecialistsPeers.aspx and should be returned to the ARQS office. Please also advise this office whether you would prefer to be paid in one or two instalments. (Please see section 7 below for further financial information).

7. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

7.1 *Expenses*
The following expenses will be reimbursed upon satisfactory submission of valid receipts.

(a) Travel
Claim for travel should be at the cheapest practical method of transport. Unless there are special circumstances, reimbursement must be claimed on the lower of:

i) Cost of standard class rail travel. The University is unable to pay for first and business class fares (unless evidence is provided showing this was the cheaper option).
ii) Underground/bus fares
iii) Cost of short taxi journeys
iv) Economy air fare only when there is no feasible alternative. The University is unable to pay for first and business class fares.
v) Mileage rate of 40p per mile where private motor vehicle is used. Please note that the University's insurance policy does not cover the use of private vehicles for University business.

(b) Miscellaneous
Reasonable telephone and postage costs incurred in relation to the appointment, supported by appropriate details.

(c) Subsistence
The cost of overnight accommodation up to a maximum value of £150 per night, only for those travelling 250 miles or more or required to attend for two consecutive days.

The reasonable cost of meals incurred during the journey and an evening meal where overnight stay is required (up to a value of £50).

7.2 *Tax*
The payment of £200 to external specialists will be made through the University's payroll system and will be subject to deduction of income tax at the basic rate. Under the Inland Revenue regulations, these payments must be included in the Self-Assessment Tax Returns and income tax accounted for by individuals.

7.4 The payment of £1,000 to external peers will be made through the University's payroll system and will be subject to deduction of income tax at the basic rate. Those who regard themselves as self-employed should contact the University's tax office, giving full details of their personal circumstances on the forms obtainable from the University's Payroll Office specified below. Until such time as the tax office authority is received, the University is required to deduct income tax.

7.5   *Pensions*
        With the change in pension rules all eligible external advisers will be automatically enrolled into the University pension scheme. Guidance on opting out of the scheme can be obtained from [Human Resources](#).

APPENDIX A

FACULTY[3] CORE GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS

In June 2008 the Academic Board received and approved a report of the first year of the operation of the revised committee structure that had been introduced following the 2006/07 quinquennial review of the Academic Board. As part of that report a set of core governance functions for Faculties (Institutes/School) in the broad area of teaching and learning were agreed. Faculties (Institutes/School) can either operationalise these through their current committee structures or re-structure to reflect the University's governance structure by establishing a strategic Faculty Education Committee supported by sub-committees or scrutiny panels. The following core functions cover admissions, teaching, learning, assessment and quality assurance for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate programmes. Faculties (Institute/School) are free to include functions additional to these core functions as required by their specific circumstances.

1. To maintain an overview of the quality of the teaching and learning experience of all students in the Faculty (Institute/School) at all levels, to ensure quality of provision and to regularly monitor the following processes and procedures:
    - quality assurance mechanisms (including academic support systems)
    - academic standards eg progression and withdrawal rates, awards, thesis submission success rates
    - student feedback and how this is input into curriculum design, monitoring and review and teaching and learning activity.

2. To consider and address issues raised in External Examiners' reports as referred by the Executive Dean of Faculty (Institute/School) or relevant Assessment Board.

3. To disseminate good practice in respect of teaching, learning and supervision and in the development of teachers and supervisors both within the Faculty (Institute/School) and across Faculties (Institutes/School).

4. To monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the University's policies on admissions.

5. To consider and approve proposals for new programmes and modules.

6. To ensure that periodic reviews of all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes within the Faculty (Institute/School) are undertaken and to report on such reviews to the University Assessment and Regulatory Oversight Sub-Committee for approval.

7. To support the development of bids for teaching and learning (and other related funds and initiatives) and to rank such bids if appropriate.

8. To encourage innovation in teaching, learning and assessment.

Faculties (Institute/School) may wish to convene sub-committees or panels of their Education Committee or equivalent to deal with areas either not covered by the core functions above, or to deal with more specific issues. Some examples of these are:

- programme and module modifications
- overseeing arrangements for the training of postgraduate research students
- facilitating arrangements for postgraduate funding

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[3] The term "School" also includes the grouping of free-standing Global Institutes and the English Language Centre which operates as a "virtual" School for the purposes of academic governance and quality assurance

Terms of reference of the Faculty Education Committee, or equivalent body, should be followed by information on the membership of the Committee, together with the frequency of meetings. It is a requirement of the College Education Committee that there should be students sitting on Faculty (Institute/School) Education Committees, or their equivalent.

<div style="text-align: right">**APPENDIX B**</div>

EXTERNAL SPECIALIST REPORT FORM

PROGRAMME APPROVAL FORM
SECTION 5 – EXTERNAL SPECIALIST ADVICE

1. Report of the external specialist

Please include comments on the following:

1. The nature of the interaction with the Department/Faculty (Institute/School) ie attendance at programme planning meetings, electronic communication, scrutiny of documentation

2. The extent to which programme meets a defined market need

3. Subject content

4. Engagement with the various points of reference of the national quality assurance framework such as the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* and subject benchmark statements, if applicable

5. Engagement with the requirements of a professional regulatory or statutory body, if applicable

6. Any other comments

Name: ....   Signature:................................

Position: ....   Institution: ....

Address:..   Date:....................