



**University College Birmingham**  
**Code of Practice on External Examining for Nursing**  
**Programmes**

(Updated September 2020)

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## **1. Principles**

- 1.1 This Code of Practice is based on the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) chapter (B7) on External Examining in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 1.2 External Examiners for Nursing Programmes are appointed to provide the University with expert, impartial and independent advice and informed comment on the institutions academic and practice standards and student achievement in relation to the Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards and student achievement in relation to those Standards.
- 1.3 External Examiners are appointed to provide the University with expert, impartial and independent advice and informed comment on the institution's academic standards and student achievement in relation to those standards, through oversight of the assessment process at the module and programme/award level.
- 1.4 All University programmes of study, and modules therein, leading to an award of credit at foundation, undergraduate or postgraduate level must have one or more External Examiner(s) appointed to carry out the role of External Examiner as laid out in this Code of Practice.
- 1.5 All External Examiners appointed by the University for Nursing Programmes are required to adhere to the clauses contained in this Code of Practice.
- 1.6 Within the University it is the responsibility of the Executive Dean or their nominee to ensure the information in this Code of Practice is adhered to and communicated to the nominated Examinations Officer and all academic staff designated as internal examiners.

## **2. Appointment of External Examiners for Nursing Programmes**

- 2.1 The number of External Examiners appointed to each programme of study should be sufficient to ensure the appropriate expertise is available to cover all areas of the syllabus under assessment.
- 2.2 All nominations for External Examiners for Nursing Programmes must be submitted using the University's standard nomination form by Curriculum & Quality Department staff.
- 2.3 All nominations for External Examiners for Nursing Programmes should meet the criteria for appointment as listed in Appendix A of this Code of Practice.
- 2.4 Completed nomination forms should be returned to Curriculum & Quality Department to be reviewed and signed by the Executive Dean or nominee and then submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching & Learning) or their nominee for approval. All completed nomination forms should be submitted with a scanned colour copy of their right to work documents as listed in Appendix B of this Code of Practice.
- 2.5 Once approval has been given by Curriculum & Quality Department, nominated University College Birmingham External Examiners are scrutinised by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching & Learning) or their nominee for approval and formal appointment on behalf of Academic Board.
- 2.6 All nominations should state clearly the programme(s) or module(s) to which each External Examiner is appointed. On appointment, External Examiners should be made fully aware by Curriculum & Quality Department of their role and duties at module and/or programme level. Where more than one External Examiner is assigned to a programme their individual responsibilities should be made clear.
- 2.7 The annual flat fee paid to External Examiners is set by Curriculum & Quality Department and should be representative of the workload of the role. Information on

the annual fee will be set out in the External Examiner's letter of appointment. Curriculum & Quality Department will review the fee levels on an annual basis.

- 2.8 All External Examiners for Nursing Programmes will be appointed for a fixed term of 4 years and will only be confirmed when the original right to work documents have been checked, copied and validated in person on the first visit before duties commence, usually induction. Schools may, in exceptional circumstances, request an extension of the appointment for one additional year. All requests for an extension of appointment will be considered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching & Learning) or their nominee for approval.
- 2.9 It will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Department, or their nominee, to request from staff and hold information regarding where current University staff hold appointments as External Examiners in order to ensure there is no potential reciprocity in the nominations made. This list should be consulted when considering nominations for new External Examiners. An annual update of this list will be undertaken by the Human Resources Department and their records updated.
- 2.10 The University may terminate an External Examiner's appointment at any point during their term if they fail to fulfil appropriately their roles and responsibilities as set out in this Code of Practice or upon failure to provide the original right to work documents for checking before duties commence.
- 2.11 The integrity and security of the learning process is a fundamental tenet of the UCB approach to quality. Whenever possible, where programmes are replaced or discontinued UCB will seek to maintain the 'contract' with those students by seeking to give sufficient notice that the last cohort of students are able to complete the final phase of their programme. In circumstances where programmes are brought to a close it will be necessary to end the contract of the External Examiner for this programme. Should the External Examiner only have this one programme responsibility, their contract will end before their 4-year term is completed.

2.12 If a University College Birmingham External Examiner wishes to resign from their appointment they should do so in writing to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) and Curriculum & Quality Department giving a three month notice period

2.13 The University Academic Board will receive an annual report on information relating to all External Examiner appointments.

### **3. Induction**

3.1 On appointment each External Examiner will receive a confirmation of appointment letter from Curriculum & Quality Department, specifying the programme(s) or module(s) to which the External Examiner is assigned and details of the fee to be paid.

3.2 All newly-appointed External Examiners for Nursing Programmes will also receive an invitation to attend the University's External Examiner induction event. Should this take place after the commencement of their contract and online induction will be given and any queries will be dealt with upon their first visit to UCB. Right to work documents will be checked, copied and validated at this event so it is important that all new External Examiners for Nursing Programmes attend before duties commence.

3.3 The University will send all newly-appointed External Examiners:

- A copy of this Code of Practice;
- A copy of the University 'Guidance for External Examiners for Nursing Programmes' document;
- Web links to relevant University legislation;
- The web link to the External Examiner online resource for University College Birmingham Examiners (<https://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/external-examiners/>)
- Guidance on claiming fees and expenses;
- Links to the Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards (NMC) and the relevant National Regulatory Framework (QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education).

3.4 Curriculum & Quality Department will supplement this information with documentation specific to the External Examiner's appointment. Schools are required to send the following information via Curriculum & Quality Development upon request to newly-appointed External Examiners, as a minimum:

- Programme handbooks (to include programme specifications);
- Module specifications;
- Student handbooks;
- Marking and assessment criteria;
- Practice assessment documentation;
- Practice Learning Policies and Procedures;
- Guidance on marking and moderation practices;
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements
- NMC Standards and Regulatory requirements
- RPL Policy

3.5 Curriculum & Quality Department should also provide newly-appointed External Examiners for Nursing Programmes with a copy of the previous External Examiner's final report and any actions resulting from the issues raised therein.

3.6 Curriculum & Quality Department should ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for External Examiners, particularly in the case of less experienced External Examiners who may benefit from some form of mentoring or working within a team of External Examiners.

3.7 Curriculum & Quality Department should also provide, in advance of the assessment period, the process and timescale for the moderation and return of students' work, with clearly stated deadlines.

#### **4. Enhancement of quality**

4.1 External Examiners should have the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of

the student learning experience in theory and practice settings during their term of appointment.

- 4.2 Schools are encouraged to utilise the External Examiner's experience through discussions with academic and practice staff on the structure and content of programmes of study. External Examiners may also be asked to comment on any proposed changes to programmes of study or to provide advice following changes to NMC requirements or similar.
- 4.3 Informal meetings between External Examiners and groups of students, practice assessors and academic assessors are also encouraged.
- 4.4 External Examiners are requested, through their annual report, to comment on particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment, and to provide suggestions for the enhancement of the provision under scrutiny.

## **5. Scrutiny of marking**

- 5.1 External Examiners are appointed to act as a moderator of academic and practice documentation standards, to comment on the quality of academic and practice provision and comparability of standards and student performance.
- 5.2 For programmes of study with only one appointed External Examiner, the Examiner should have access to all theory and practice assessments set for each module that contributes to the final degree classification.
- 5.3 External Examiners should be provided with all draft assessments from theory and practice that contribute to the final award for comment and approval, together with model answers where appropriate. Where suggestions for amendment are provided by an External Examiner, Schools should reply to the External Examiner to confirm how their advice has been acted upon.

- 5.4 External Examiners are required to consider the consistency and accuracy of marking standards for a programme of study, through reviewing the marking within each module, and between modules of the same level.
- 5.5 External Examiners should be provided with marking and assessment criteria used in relation to the assessment of a module, and a mark spreadsheet for each module to which they have been assigned.
- 5.6 External Examiners should review a sample of all forms of assessment from across the full mark range (including, for team-taught modules, a selection which shows the full mark range and pass/fail criteria for each assessment). This exercise should be completed for all modules that contribute to the final award across theory and practice.
- 5.7 Curriculum & Quality Department should notify the External Examiner(s) in advance the size and scope of the sample of work to be scrutinised, within the parameters outlined in 5.6 above, in order to provide sufficient evidence for the External Examiner to determine that internal marking is of an appropriate standard.
- 5.8 If an External Examiner does not agree with the marks awarded within a sample of work they may propose a level of moderation (additional to that already undertaken under School policy) or re-marking. This must apply to all students who had undertaken the unit of assessment. External Examiners are not permitted to alter the mark of any student.
- 5.9 External Examiners should not normally be expected to adjudicate between internal markers. Disagreements between internal markers should be resolved before a sample of work is seen by the External Examiner. This may be through the use of a third marker, or consultation with senior colleagues within the School. In all cases it should be transparent to the External Examiner how the final mark was decided.

5.10 Where required by the NMC, External Examiners may, as agreed with the School, complete further duties in respect of the assessment process as necessary, for example, review of student admission onto the progression through the RPL process. Curriculum & Quality Department should be notified of such arrangements by the School.

## **6. Board of Examiners meetings**

6.1 External Examiners should be informed, in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners, of the recommendations to be made by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel/s, including relevant supporting information where appropriate.

6.2 External Examiners are full members of the Board of Examiners and should attend relevant meetings, relating to the provision to which they are appointed.

6.3 Where a team of External Examiners is appointed to scrutinise different modules within a programme of study and there are separate meetings of Boards of Examiners to consider module-level and programme-level results, a representative from the team may be identified to attend the relevant Board of Examiners to endorse programme-level decisions.

6.4 Where an External Examiner is unable to be present at the relevant Board of Examiners meeting this should be agreed with the School in advance ( without contravening 6.2-6.3). A mechanism should be put in place for obtaining the External Examiner's agreement with the marks and awards confirmed at the meeting. Where possible, telephone or video conferencing may be utilised.

6.5 External Examiners attend Board of Examiners meetings to scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes to which they have been appointed, confirming a set of results at module-level or the decisions taken (e.g. progression decisions, awards, withdrawals) at programme-level as appropriate.

6.6 The endorsement of the decisions taken by the Board of Examiners should be given through the signature of the relevant External Examiner(s) on the mark lists, award lists or similar documents.

6.7 Any instances where an External Examiner does not endorse a decision taken by the Board of Examiners should be recorded and referred to the University's Academic Board for consideration. Schools should ensure that where this occurs the final decision of the University's Academic Board is communicated back to the External Examiner.

## **7. Reporting**

7.1 As part of their duties all External Examiners are required to complete a written annual report, using the Nursing Report Template provided by the University.

7.2 External Examiners are required to submit their reports, via email directly to Curriculum & Quality Department, according to the deadlines set by the University.

7.3 In their annual report External Examiners are expected to provide comment on:

- The academic standard of the University's awards in accordance with the NMC Standards and regulatory requirements, QAA Framework for HE qualifications and any applicable subject benchmark statements, and in comparison with other similar HE institutions of which the External Examiner has experience;
- The rigour of the assessment process which measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes of the programme in theory and practice and in line with the University's policies and regulations;
- Any instances of good practice observed and opportunities to enhance the learning opportunities of the students;
- Any issues specifically required by the NMC.

- 7.4 External Examiners are also expected to confirm whether:
- Sufficient evidence and information was available to them in order to fulfil their role;
  - Issues raised in previous reports have been addressed satisfactorily.
- 7.5 External Examiners in their final year of appointment are requested to give an overview of their term of appointment at the end of the report form.
- 7.6 External Examiners may, at any point during their appointment, submit a separate confidential report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning). This may be to raise confidential concerns such as instances where the External Examiner considers it is necessary to identify an individual member of the University. In such cases the Pro-Vice-Chancellor or their nominee will respond to the External Examiner on actions resulting from their report.
- 7.7 The University reserves the right to terminate an External Examiner's appointment if a report is not received within a reasonable timeframe of the deadline.
- 7.8 The University also reserves the right to request additional information from an External Examiner if the report submitted is considered to be of insufficient detail to assess their opinion of the academic standards of the programme(s) or module(s) concerned.
- 7.9 Payment of the annual fee to External Examiners is conditional upon the timely receipt of a satisfactory annual report.

## **8. Consideration of External Examiner reports**

- 8.1 All University College Birmingham External Examiner for Nursing Programmes' reports will be reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) or nominee before being passed to the Executive Dean or nominee to prepare a written response to the External Examiner.

- 8.2 Schools are expected to consider any issues raised in the report through the appropriate forum (programme team meeting, School committee etc.) and construct a response detailing how appropriate actions will be taken. Where an External Examiner's suggestion is not to be acted on a detailed explanation should also be given.
- 8.3 Responses, in the form of a letter from the Executive Dean or nominee, should be sent to the External Examiner within 6 weeks of receipt of the report within the School. Where, for good reason, it is not possible to inform the External Examiner of the resulting actions within this timeframe an initial response acknowledging that this issue is under discussion can be given, provided a follow-up communication is sent.
- 8.4 A copy of each School response should be forwarded to Curriculum & Quality Department and, if required, to the appropriate staff within the School.
- 8.5 Where an External Examiner raises an issue at University-level (e.g. relating to the academic regulations) it will be the responsibility of Curriculum & Quality Department, in conjunction with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) or nominee to provide a response. In these cases a copy of the response will be forwarded to the School for information.
- 8.6 Where an External Examiner raises an issue about practice (e.g. relating to the Academic or NMC regulations) it will be the responsibility of Curriculum & Quality Department, in conjunction with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) or nominee to provide a response. In these cases a copy of the response will be forwarded to the School for information.
- 8.7 The University's Curriculum and Quality Development Committee and Academic Board will consider summary reports of External Examiner comments in order to identify, and where necessary act upon, any common themes emerging at School or University or practice level.

8.8 External Examiner reports and School responses will be used to inform the University's annual review and periodic review processes and exception reporting to the NMC.

## **9. Student and Practice Learning Partners Involvement**

9.1 Curriculum & Quality Department should include information as to the name, home institution and post held of the External Examiner(s) appointed to the programme(s) of study made available to students via Canvas.

9.2 Schools should provide External Examiners with the opportunity, normally once per academic year, to informally meet representative groups of students and practice learning partners to gather their views of the programme on practice placements or in the University.

9.3 Where a meeting is arranged with an External Examiner clear guidance should be given by the School to the students and practice learning partners present about the purpose of that meeting and its limitations, particularly with regard to not influencing individual assessment outcomes.

9.4 Under no circumstances should students and practice learning partners attempt to contact an External Examiner and, External Examiners are not permitted to respond to contacts made by third parties including students or their representatives. If any such contacts are attempted the External Examiner should report the details immediately to the University, through the Executive Dean of School.

9.5 If a student is found to have contacted an External Examiner they may be subject to University disciplinary procedures.

9.6 External Examiner reports (and the School responses) should, as a matter of course, be discussed with Student Representatives as part of Subject Boards and Board of Studies Meetings. These discussions should be minuted, published and available for all students on the programme to access.

- 9.7 All students and practice learning partners may request access to an External Examiner's report, and the actions resulting from the School's response. Schools should ensure they have a mechanism in place to respond to these requests.
- 9.8 Students and practice learning partners may also request access to an External Examiner's report, and the actions resulting from the School's response, directly from Curriculum & Quality Department.
- 9.9 Officers of the Guild of Students will be present at University Quality Committees where summaries of issues raised by External Examiners and responses at School and University level will be discussed.

## **10. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) & Freedom of Information Act**

- 10.1 The GDPR regulates the processing of personal data, both as electronic and paper records. The University requires all staff and agents to abide by the provisions of the GDPR.
- 10.2 All personal information supplied by the External Examiner for the purposes of their appointment will be held securely for the duration, and for 1 year after the end, of the contract, and in accordance with the GDPR. As stated in 9.1 the name, home institution and post held will be included in programme information made available to students (e.g. student handbook).
- 10.3 It should be noted that External Examiner reports will be disclosable upon receipt of a request. Therefore the University would not expect any identifiable reference to individual staff or students (by name or ID number) in the report.
- 10.4 The University has been designated a Public Authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Upon receipt of a request for copies of External Examiners' reports the University has a statutory obligation to consider their release subject to any applicable exemption under the provisions of the Act.

## **11. Causes for Concern**

11.1 Through the normal reporting process, as laid out in Section 7 of the Code, the University should be able to respond to any concerns an External Examiner may raise in relation to their duties or which may arise during their tenure.

11.2 In exceptional cases External Examiners may have serious concerns about academic and practice assessment standards and quality of provision which cannot be resolved through the normal reporting process. In such an instance an External Examiner may write, in confidence, directly to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning).

11.3 If an External Examiner still has a serious concern about academic and practice assessment standards or quality of provision, and has exhausted all internal procedures, including writing to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning), they can use the Office for Students or the NMC procedure for raising an issue about quality and compliance.

## **Appendix A – University Criteria for Appointment of External Examiners for Nursing Programmes**

### **Conflicts of interest**

- a. 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, student or practice learning partner directly involved with the programme of study
  - iii) Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
  - iv) 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
  - v) 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)
  - vi) A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution
  - vii) The succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution
  - viii) The appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same institution.

## **Terms of office**

- a. The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, with an exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity.
- b. 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.
- c. External Examiners normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

## Appendix B – Right to work evidence

### Eligibility to Work in the UK

Nationality	Right to work in the UK
United Kingdom*, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.	If you are a national of one of these countries, you can live and work in the UK without restriction <b>subject to you providing evidence of your nationality.</b>
All other countries including Croatia	<p><b>You must provide the appropriate evidence from List A or List B below to confirm that you have the right to live and work in the UK.</b></p> <p>If you require sponsorship to carry out the work in question, as assessment will be made by the University to establish whether sponsorship can be offered for the role. If the University is able to offer sponsorship, your offer of employment is made on the condition that the University is granted permission by UKVI to employ you, that you are granted entry clearance/leave to remain in the UK on this basis and that you provide us with the appropriate evidence as set out in List B below prior to the commencement of work.</p>

\* A British citizen or a citizen of the UK and Colonies having the right of abode in the UK has the automatic right to work in the UK. The following categories of persons do not have the automatic right to work in the UK: British Overseas Citizens; British National (Overseas); British Dependent Territories Citizen; British Overseas Territories Citizen; British subject and British protected person. Individuals falling into these categories must produce other documents as set out in List A or B to evidence their right to work in the UK.

### Acceptable documents

The documents you may accept from a person to establish their right to work are set out in regulations. There are two lists – List A and List B which are detailed below. You must obtain an original document, or combination of documents, specified in one of these lists in order to comply.

**List A** contains the range of documents which you may accept for a person who has a permanent right to work in the UK. If you conduct the right to work checks correctly before employment begins, you will establish a continuous statutory excuse for the duration of that person’s employment with you. You do not have to conduct any further checks.

**List B** contains a range of documents which may be accepted for a person who has a temporary right to work in the UK. If you conduct the right to work checks correctly, you will establish a time-limited statutory excuse. You will be required to conduct a follow-up check in order to retain your statutory excuse. This will generally be when the permission to be in the UK comes to an end.

<b>List A</b>	
<b>Acceptable documents to establish a continuous statutory excuse</b>	
1	A passport showing the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder, is a British citizen or a citizen of the UK and Colonies having the right of abode in the UK.
2	A passport or national identity card showing the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder, is a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
3	A Registration Certificate or Document Certifying Permanent Residence issued by the Home Office to a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
4	A Permanent Residence Card issued by the Home Office to the family member of a national a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
5	A <b>current</b> Biometric Immigration Document (Biometric Residence Permit) issued by the Home Office to the holder indicating that the person named is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK, or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.
6	A <b>current</b> passport endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK, has the right of abode in the UK, or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.
7	A <b>current</b> Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the named person is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK or has no time limit on their stay in the UK, <b>together with</b> an official document giving the person’s permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
8	A <b>full</b> birth or adoption certificate issued in the UK which includes the name(s) of at least one of the holder’s parents or adoptive parents, <b>together with</b> an official document giving the person’s permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
9	A birth or adoption certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland, <b>together with</b> an official document giving the person’s permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
10	A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen, <b>together with</b> an official document giving the person’s permanent National Insurance number

	and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.
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<b>List B</b>	
<b>Documents where a time-limited statutory excuse lasts until the expiry date of leave</b>	
1	A <b>current</b> passport endorsed to show that the holder is allowed to stay in the UK and is currently allowed to do the type of work in question.
2	A <b>current</b> Biometric Immigration Document (Biometric Residence Permit) issued by the Home Office to the holder which indicates that the named person can currently stay in the UK and is allowed to do the work in question.
3	A <b>current</b> Residence Card (including an Accession Residence Card or a Derivative Residence Card) issued by the Home Office to a non-European Economic Area national who is a family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland or who has a derivative right of residence.
4	A <b>current</b> Immigration Status Document containing a photograph issued by the Home Office to the holder with a valid endorsement indicating that the named person may stay in the UK, and is allowed to do the type of work in question, <b>together with</b> an official document giving the person's permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.