I. Appointment

a. The University of Hong Kong appoints External Examiners to serve as academic advisors to its degree, diploma and certificate curricula and to assist it in maintaining the standards of such curricula at a level comparable with other major universities in the world.

b. Appointments are approved by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee on the advice of the Faculty Boards under the powers delegated by the Senate and the Council. The appointment of additional External Examiners to examine individual courses, dissertations and students are made by the respective Faculty Boards, except for such appointments as may be approved by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee to be funded centrally.

c. External Examiners for a diploma, certificate, or higher degree by coursework shall normally be appointed by curriculum or field of study, as may be defined in the curriculum regulations or syllabuses.

d. The standard length of appointment of External Examiners shall cover the study periods of two consecutive cohorts of students unless otherwise approved by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee. If the same External Examiner is appointed for different modes of study of a curriculum or for cognate/articulated curricula/programmes of different lengths of study, the appointment period shall follow the one with the longest duration.

e. An External Examiner may be invited to oversee a group of cognate curricula/programmes in order to enhance academic consistency and coherence; and the same External Examiner shall normally be appointed for a curriculum with different modes of study and for articulated qualifications in the same discipline. However, the same External Examiner shall not normally be appointed for curricula/programmes across different levels of award.

f. External Examiners are persons of seniority and with considerable and recent experience in University teaching. External Examiners for an entire curriculum or a specialism across one or more curricula shall normally be of the rank of Professor and preferably possess experience in overseeing a curriculum or a major programme. Emeritus Professors may be appointed if they are within 5 years of their retirement from a full-time teaching post. For External Examiners with a more focused scope of review, Associate Professors may be appointed; and Assistant Professors with substantial teaching experience may be appointed as External Examiners for examining dissertations. Exceptions can be considered for professional curricula/programmes, for which appointment of experts from outside the higher education system (e.g. from the professions or industry) may be more appropriate.
g. External Examiners shall not normally be appointed from a department in an institution where a teacher of the inviting University department is serving as an External Examiner, on the understanding that exceptions may occasionally be unavoidable in the case of subjects being taught in only a small number of institutions.

h. A former University teacher shall not be invited to be an External Examiner before a lapse of at least five years or of sufficient time for students taught by that teacher to have passed through the system, whichever is the longer.

i. An honorarium shall normally be payable for each curriculum/discipline examined in each academic year of the period of appointment, except for articulated qualifications in the same field for which one single honorarium shall be payable.

II. Duties of the External Examiner

a. External Examiners are expected to comment and advise on the design, objectives/learning outcomes and content of the curriculum/programme; the effectiveness of the assessment processes; assessment standards set by the department; and other issues relating to teaching and learning as reflected in the performance of students. They should comment on the overall performance of the students as compared against students’ academic performance at other international universities. They may be requested by the Chief Examiner to also participate in the assessment of individual students.

b. In the case of optional Bachelor’s degree papers being included in the relevant diploma, certificate, or higher degree curricula, the External Examiner appointed for the Bachelor’s degree concerned will be required to comment and give advice on the papers. It will therefore not be necessary for the External Examiner for the diploma, certificate, or higher degree curricula to comment and advise on the Bachelor’s degree papers even though he or she shall have access to the scripts and other assessment materials so submitted by the students through the Chief Examiner concerned.

Reference Material

c. To enable the External Examiners to perform their duties, they should be provided by the Chief Examiners with all relevant materials and documents, such as course outlines and objectives/learning outcomes, grade descriptors, reading lists that are distributed to students, question papers, samples of different types of assessment activities including marked scripts, information on the teaching and learning process, etc.

d. For the degree of MSW the internal examiner(s) shall assess in writing the candidates’ performance in the field work prescribed, and the External Examiner shall have access to any or all of the assessments upon request.

e. The External Examiner shall have access to all or any of the scripts and assessment activities upon request. If only a selection of scripts or assessment activities is sent, the principles for such selection shall be agreed in advance between the Chief Examiner and the External Examiner. The guiding principle is that the External Examiner shall see a proportion of the scripts and assessment activities sufficient to enable him or her to judge the overall quality of performance, and the consistency and appropriateness of internal marking and classification. This should include as a minimum a sample of the scripts and assessment activities from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range.
Visit to the University

f. Except for non-degree curricula, an External Examiner is required to visit the University once during the period of appointment. The visit should normally be made in the penultimate year of the term of appointment so as to allow the External Examiner sufficient time during the last year of appointment to discuss with the Faculty how the curriculum/programme can be improved. The visit should occur during the main assessment period of the department, and insofar as possible, tie in with any review of the curriculum. It should last for at least one week, and a longer period is usually beneficial both to the External Examiner and to the University. If an External Examiner oversees more than one curriculum/programme, he or she shall review all the concerned curricula/programmes in the same visit. External Examiners appointed over and above those required by the University as set out in paragraph I(c) above are however not expected to be visiting, unless their visit(s) are funded by the Faculty or approved by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee on exceptional grounds. An External Examiner appointed or re-appointed for a period shorter than the study periods of two consecutive cohorts of students is also not required to visit.

g. The relevant department shall use the opportunity afforded by the visit of the External Examiner to discuss with him or her the structure and content of the courses and of the curriculum/programme, the assessment procedures, and the schemes for marking and classification.

Membership of the Board of Examiners

h. An External Examiner, at the time when he or she is present in Hong Kong, is a full member of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners, and where appropriate, the subordinate departmental or inter-departmental boards.

External Examiner’s Report

i. At the end of each academic year, the External Examiner is required to write a general report for the Senate, and send the report to the Vice-Chancellor in the first instance (see also paragraph (m) below). In the report, the External Examiner shall give his/her opinion on the areas set out in paragraph II(a) above following the reporting template of the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee.

j. A copy of the report made by each External Examiner at the conclusion of his or her term of office may be copied to the incoming External Examiner for reference.

Comments of the External Examiner

k. Any comments given by the External Examiner during his or her visit or in the External Examiner’s Report shall be considered for response to the comments by the department through the Chief Examiner and an explicit decision shall be made about whether or not to introduce consequential changes. The views of the External Examiner and the Chief Examiner’s response thereto on behalf of the department shall be considered by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committee and any other relevant Faculty committees, including the Board of Examiners. The Secretary of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committee shall keep the External Examiner and the Examinations Secretary informed of the Faculty’s feedback, including the Chief Examiner’s response and a report of the comments and follow-up actions of the relevant Faculty committees.
1. On behalf of the Senate, the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee will receive annually through the Examinations Secretary the External Examiners' Reports, which following deliberations, where necessary, may require further action by the relevant Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committees. A copy of each External Examiner’s Report shall also be given to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for consideration of matters with resource implications.

m. For dissertation/student examinations and for External Examiner appointments made at Faculty level, the External Examiner’s Report shall be sent to the Dean of the Faculty directly who shall arrange for its review and consideration at Faculty level following the processes set out in paragraph II(k) above.

December 2003
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