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This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

6N - External Examining: Policy and Procedure

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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and procedure is intended for Bournemouth University (BU) staff and BU appointed external examiners.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure outlines the principles and arrangements the University applies to external examining of taught awards, including the nomination criteria; information on how external examiners are prepared for their role; and the remit of external examiners, Faculties, partners and the University in managing the ongoing processes involved in external examining.
- 1.3 The arrangements for the examining of research degree awards which do not contain a formal credit-bearing taught element are outlined in a separate policy and procedure.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Senate:** to approve new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to external examining of taught awards.

2.2 **Education Committee:** to consider the effectiveness of the arrangements for external examining of taught awards and recommend changes to current policy to Senate. To approve new and revised procedures by exception. To act upon recommendations concerning external examining and approve the appointment of external examiners.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#)

3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are:

- *6H - Academic Offences: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards*
- *6J - Exceptional Circumstances: Policy and Procedure*
- *6K - Assessment Boards Policy*
- *6P – External Examiner’s Handbook*
- *11A - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards*
- *11D - Fitness to Practise: Procedure*

Policy

4. PRINCIPLES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING

4.1 Each taught programme of study leading to one or more awards of the University, including the award of credit, shall have at least one independent external examiner. The involvement of external examiners is required for all levels of assessment that contribute to the award classification. Therefore examiners are not normally required for Level 4 of standard degree programmes but are required for qualifications that terminate at Level 4. External examiners are also required for both levels of Foundation degrees to allow for external examiner involvement with the programme over a two-year period and to mitigate against risks associated with collaborative provision. Additionally, external examiners are required for taught programmes which lead to the award of credit in the absence of a named award and where research degree awards include an assessed credit-bearing Level 7 component.

4.2 Integrated apprenticeship programmes are also required to have at least one independent external examiner with the additional responsibilities of the external assessor role as defined in the External Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment guidance published by the UK Designated Quality Body (DQB).

4.3 ***Criteria for the appointment of external examiners***

4.3.1 External examiners must be impartial in judgement and independent of the University and its partners; be competent in the field of study and type of provision concerned; meet the University's criteria for the appointment of external examiners either individually or as a member of a wider external examining team; and meet, where appropriate, the relevant requirements of professional, statutory, or regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

4.3.2 The criteria are intended to ensure that only those with appropriate independence, experience and expertise are appointed to act as external examiners. External examiners are normally drawn from academia but, exceptionally, non-academic external examiners may be appointed to join a team of academic external examiners.

4.4 ***Appointment process***

4.4.1 External examining arrangements for programmes and units are determined in line with the University's requirements. All new external examiner appointments, reallocation of duties, and extension of the period of appointment of existing external examiners must be

approved by Academic Quality on behalf of Education Committee through a process agreed and overseen by Education Committee.

- 4.4.2 External examiners are normally appointed for a four-year period. If, during their term of office, an external becomes involved with the University in a way that could compromise their independence, the interest or involvement should be declared so that a judgement can be made on the continued appropriateness of the appointment. The University may also terminate an appointment where the responsibilities have not been fulfilled satisfactorily.

4.5 ***Remit of external examiners***

- 4.5.1 The principal role of external examiners is to provide an independent view to help ensure that the academic standards of the University's awards are appropriately set and maintained; the performance of students is comparable with that of their peers on similar programmes elsewhere in the sector; the assessment processes are sound and fairly operated; the quality of the learning opportunities is maintained; and the provision meets the requirements of relevant PSRBs. To achieve this, external examiners must have access to sufficient evidence of learning, teaching and assessment practices of the provision to which their appointment relates.

- 4.5.2 External examiners may be consulted on such matters as programme review and/or modifications.

- 4.5.3 External examiners may be asked to mentor other examiners who are new or inexperienced in the role. See section 6.10 for more information.

- 4.5.4 Additionally, external examiners undertaking external assessor duties for integrated apprenticeships maintain quality assurance oversight of End Point Assessment undertaken by BU.

4.6 ***Preparation of external examiners***

The University will inform all new external examiners in writing, at the time of their appointment, of the scope and requirements of their role and allocation of programme(s)/unit(s) of study. In addition, the external examiner receives institutional guidance on the role, remit and responsibilities of external examiners and appropriate Faculty/partner and programme level guidance and contact details. The University provides an induction programme for all new external examiners.

4.7 ***Engagement with the programme(s)***

- 4.7.1 In order to carry out their role effectively, external examiners must be able to review proposed assessment briefs to determine their appropriateness in relation to the level and intended learning outcomes of the awards to which their appointment relates. External examiners must have access to sufficient evidence of academic standards, including samples of students' assessed work which have been independently marked in order to confirm, through the process of moderation, whether the component parts they consider meet the required standard for the level.

- 4.7.2 External examiners must have access to staff who act as internal assessors but must not be used to resolve disagreements between internal assessors or to assess students directly. Where placements, work-based or practice-based learning contributes to the award of credit, external examiners must have access to internal academic assessors who have been involved in the independent marking process of the related components of the programme or unit(s). Where possible, this may include access to first markers and must include access to academic staff who have acted as second markers. Additionally, external examiners may request access to internal monitoring reports or reports produced by

professional bodies on these activities. External examiners may also meet with students during their mid-year or end-of-year visit.

- 4.7.3 External examiners are normally required to attend the Programme Board at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made, or at which decisions are made on elements of assessment which contribute to a named award (or the award of credit in the absence of a named award). Attendance at Boards which consider Level 4 or reassessment results is therefore not normally required unless the award terminates at Level 4 (see Section 4.1 above). Programme Boards which do not involve approved external examiners where required, are not normally authorised to assess students for an award or to confer on behalf of Senate awards of taught degrees without the endorsement of the external examiner.
- 4.7.4 External examiners undertaking external assessor duties for integrated apprenticeships are required to attend Assessment Boards at which End Point Assessment decisions are confirmed and ratified.
- 4.7.5 The University provides students with information regarding external examiners who have a responsibility for named programmes, including their name, position and institution/organisation and states where they have been appointed to their role on behalf of a PSRB.
- 4.8 ***Reporting by external examiners***
 - 4.8.1 External examiners report annually to the University on issues pertaining to standards and quality of the provision to which their appointment relates and receive a fee on receipt of their annual report. External examiners may also report confidentially directly to the Vice Chancellor on serious issues of concern which have not been resolved satisfactorily or invoke the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Concerns scheme (see Section 10.2.2 for details).
 - 4.8.2 Students have access to external examiners' annual reports through relevant programme management team meetings which include student representation¹.
 - 4.8.3 External examiners with external assessor duties for integrated apprenticeships must submit an additional annual report covering End Point Assessment activity to BU and the DQB.
- 4.9 ***External examining arrangements for collaborative provision***

The arrangements for the external examining of collaborative provision are outlined in the relevant policies and procedures which form part of the partnership agreement.
- 4.10 ***Sector expectations of external examining***

The University 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.

Procedure

5. CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 5.1 In order to align with the expectations set out in the QAA Quality Code, the University adopts the following criteria for external examining in Sections 5.2.1 (Person specification), 5.3.1 (Conflicts of interest) and 5.3.3 below.

¹ An exception to this is where a confidential report is received directly by the Vice-Chancellor.

5.2 ***Person specification***

5.2.1 All nominees must normally meet the following person specification for the appointment of external examiners:

- a) BU appoints 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 of experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, 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;
 - xi nominations for non-academic externals will be considered in exceptional circumstances only. In such cases, the external examining team must also include at least one academic external examiner;
 - xii where there is only one examiner, it is expected that he/she will come from the HE sector in order to fulfil the priority requirement which is to compare performance of students with their peers elsewhere in the sector.

In addition, when nominating new external examiners, Faculties/partners are encouraged to look to a wider pool of institutions and give consideration to the following:

- postgraduate degrees, preferably doctorates in a relevant subject area;
- active involvement in research;
- a significant publication record;
- involvement in non-traditional assessment.

5.3 ***Conflicts of interest***

5.3.1 In order to avoid conflicts of interest as per the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, the following restrictions apply to the appointment of external examiners:

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 partners, delivery organisations or support providers, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its partners, delivery organisations or support providers;

- 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. External Examiners may be considered from the same department of the same institution to a different programme in a different subject area. Where there is no clear departmental structure, Bournemouth University will use academic groupings as the basis for this restriction.

5.3.2 In order to safeguard impartiality in judgement, Bournemouth University would normally expect a period of five years to have passed since the nominee's engagement with the University although in some cases a shorter period may be appropriate for an appointment to be considered

5.3.3 The University sets the following additional conditions for appointments:

- i external examiners should not have too heavy a workload in respect of external examining duties. As a norm, an examiner should not normally have more than two substantial appointments or their equivalent;
- ii former Bournemouth University staff or external examiners may be appointed/re-appointed after a minimum of five years has elapsed since their involvement with the University;
- iii where nominees have had less significant prior involvement with the University, for instance through involvement in a programme evaluation, the University will consider the extent of this carefully to ascertain whether the nomination would compromise future independence;
- iv in small discipline areas which have limited scope for nominations, the University will consider each individual nomination carefully to ascertain how potential issues of reciprocity might be addressed;
- v external examiners with little or no prior experience of external examining are required to work alongside experienced academic external examiners who are normally, but not always, allocated to the same programme(s).

5.3.4 The additional criteria for external examiners undertaking external assessor duties for integrated apprenticeships are set out in appendix to the [BU End Point Assessment internal guidance document](#).

6. APPOINTMENT PROCESS

6.1 *Determining external examining requirements*

6.1.1 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) (normally 6-12 depending on the credit size and/or instances of delivery). These are allocated according to the external examiners' subject and pedagogic expertise, any relevant PSRB and other external requirements, the size and complexity of the provision, and associated workloads.

6.1.2 External examiners may be appointed individually or as a member of a wider external examiner team. When deciding on the number of external examiners for a programme(s), Faculties should also consider their role in relation to credit-bearing placements, work-based and/or practice-based learning, and how the overall standards and coherence of the programme will be judged in instances of combined studies, cross and interdisciplinary programmes, including programmes leading to a joint award. An External Examiner must be appointed to the overarching Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit framework although individual short courses/units may be dealt with through existing External Examiner arrangements where possible, including reallocation of duties where appropriate. Similarly, where research degree awards include an assessed credit-bearing Level 7 component, an external examiner will be allocated responsibility for the unit.

6.1.3 Where teams of external examiners are appointed to a programme, they should include an appropriate balance of examining experience and expertise, including a range of academic and, where applicable, professional or industry perspectives. External examining teams must, between the examiners, cover all units relating to the provision, but normally no more than one external examiner would be required for each unit (dissertations/project being an exception to this). Where an external examiner is appointed from industry they are required to work alongside an academic external examiner to ensure that all units have academic oversight.

6.2 ***Periods of appointment***

6.2.1 The standard term of office for external examiners will be four years but may exceptionally be amended by a period of a few months to allow for phasing on programmes which have a single external examiner. Where possible, appointments run September from September but may be phased to allow continuity and mentoring of new members of the examining team. (See section 6.10 for further clarification on Mentoring arrangements)

6.2.2 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. The period of appointment should also normally allow each external examiner to be involved at least once in assessment for the highest level within the programme for which they are responsible.

6.3 ***Extensions***

An existing external examiner's period of appointment may exceptionally be extended by a maximum of one year, for example, to ensure continuity where a programme is due to be closed.

6.4 ***Reallocation of duties***

Normally, external examiners retain their programme and unit allocations for the duration of their appointment unless a change is required due to changes to the wider external examiner team or due to modification(s) or review of the provision. Where changes to programme allocations take place, these must be formally approved as outlined below. Changes to unit allocations which do not result in changes to programme allocations may be approved by programme teams and Academic Quality must be informed of any changes approved at Faculty level.

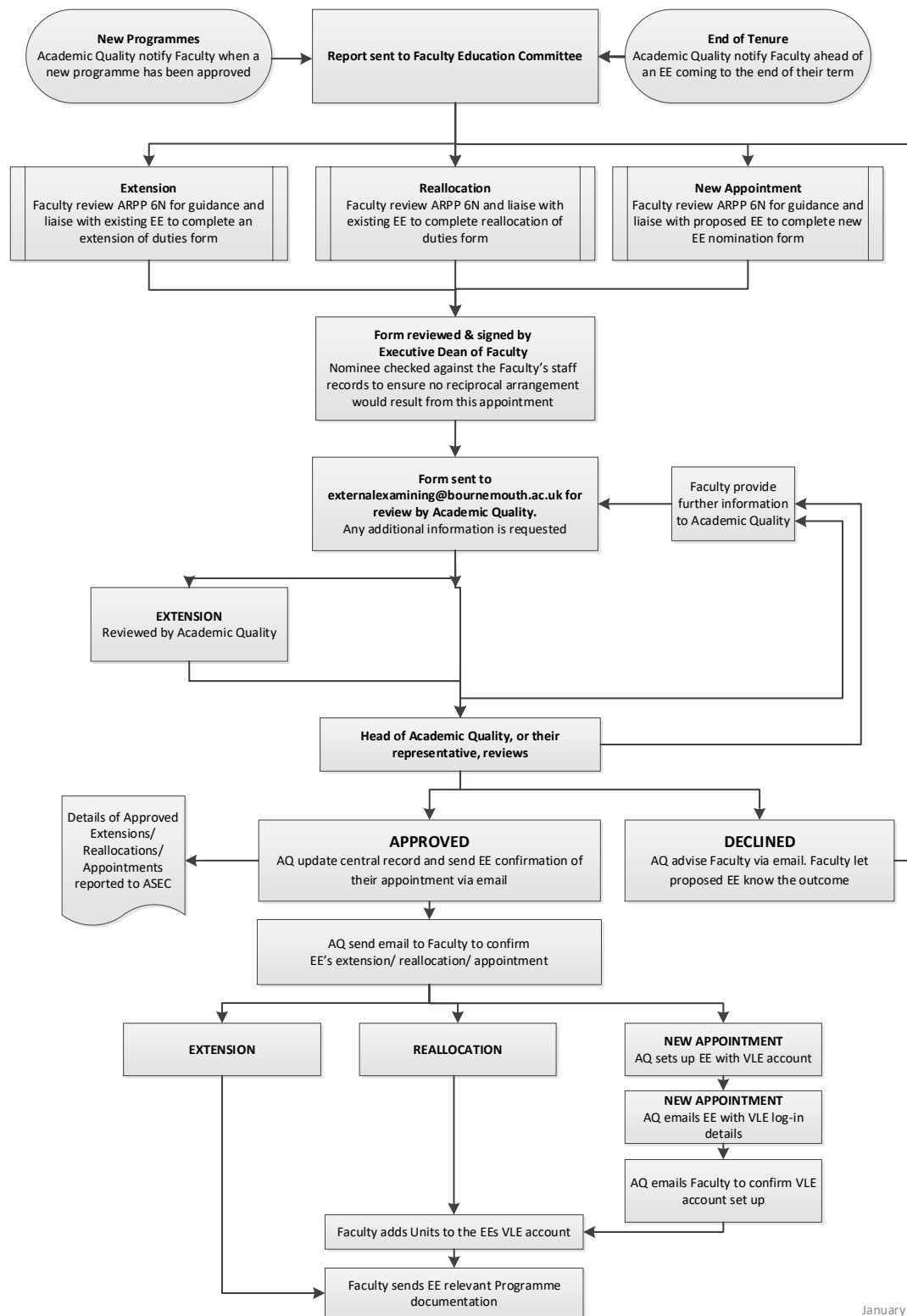
6.5 ***Faculty Responsibilities***

6.5.1 Faculties are responsible for the nomination of external examiners but may share this responsibility with partners involved in the delivery of collaborative provision. Any changes required to the existing arrangements are monitored through Faculty Education Committee which are responsible for ensuring that all programmes leading to the award of the University have appropriate external examining arrangements in place at all times.

- 6.5.2 Programme Leaders should seek nominees for external examiner appointments. Academic Quality will be able to provide initial advice on the appropriateness of the nomination. Potential nominees should be advised that appointments are subject to University approval and completion of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) right to work checks. This also applies to reallocation of existing external examiners' duties and extensions.
- 6.5.3 To help facilitate timely replacement of outgoing external examiners and filling new posts, Academic Quality will notify the Faculty when external examiners are approaching the end of their appointment period or where appointments are required for new provision. Faculties are responsible for ensuring that all units are covered by an external examiner. Changes to unit allocations are not subject to formal approval, however Academic Quality must be informed of any changes.
- 6.6 ***Nomination, extension and reallocation forms and guidance***
The standard forms for the nomination of new external examiners, reallocation of duties, and extension of existing external examiners' appointment periods are available at the links found under section 11. Please see the following flow chart for details of these processes.
- 6.7 ***Scrutiny of nominations and reallocation/extension requests***
- 6.7.1 All new external examiner appointments, reallocations and extensions require formal University approval. Scrutiny of new nominations is undertaken by a group of reviewers which consists of members of Academic Quality, acting on behalf of Education Committee and Faculty Deans. The standard external examiner review form is available from Academic Quality. Faculties should normally allow three weeks for the scrutiny of each nomination. The level of scrutiny varies for new nominations, reallocation of duties and extension requests as follows:
- 6.7.2 The Head of Academic Quality (or their nominee) appoints new external examiners on the basis of a recommendation from Faculty Deans and their own scrutiny of the nomination.
- 6.7.3 Reallocation of an existing external examiner's duties (which is due to changes to programme allocations, see 6.4 above) is approved on the basis of scrutiny by the Head of Academic Quality (or their nominee) after being authorised by the relevant Faculty Dean.
- 6.7.4 Requests to exceptionally extend an existing external examiner's period of appointment may be approved by the Head of Academic Quality (or their nominee).
- 6.7.5 Education Committee approval is granted at the point at which Academic Quality, acting on behalf of Education Committee, are satisfied that the proposed arrangements are appropriate. All individual approvals are reported to the next scheduled meeting of Education Committee for University oversight. In addition, a summary of the operation of the appointment process forms part of the annual report on external examining to Education Committee.
- 6.8 ***Confirming new appointments and reallocation/extension requests***
- 6.8.1 Human Resources (HR) will inform external examiners, Faculties and Academic Quality of successful appointments. The appointment letter outlines the details of the appointment and includes standard institutional guidance for new external examiners. The Faculty informs partners as appropriate of any new appointments and/or changes to existing external examining arrangements. Where a requirement, Faculties will inform relevant professional bodies of new appointments.

Faculty Guide

External Examiner Nomination Process



January 2019

All nominations for external examiners undertaking external assessor duties for integrated apprenticeships must also be reviewed by the BU apprenticeships team prior to approval by the Head of Academic Quality or representative.

6.8.2 Where a nomination does not meet the University's criteria Faculties should inform the nominee and thank them for their interest in the post and the University.

6.9 ***Ending of appointments***

6.9.1 Where an external examiner's term expires at the end of the normal four-year appointment period, the Head of Academic Quality will send them a letter of thanks as an acknowledgement of the external examiner's contribution to the programme(s) and unit(s) they had responsibility for and support for the University's wider quality assurance and enhancement activities.

6.9.2 Where, during the appointment period, the relationship between the University and the external examiner has changed so that it may be deemed to compromise independence (see Section 5.3), any interest or involvement should be declared so that a judgement can be made on the continued appropriateness of the appointment. Academic Quality should be contacted for advice in all cases.

6.9.3 The appointment of an external examiner may also be terminated early by the University if Education Committee judges that the responsibilities of the appointment have not been or cannot be fulfilled in a manner consistent with the standards required by the University. Examples of these include failure to attend a scheduled Assessment Board without prior notice and/or alternative arrangements, or failure to submit an annual report, or submission of more than one inadequate annual report.

6.10 ***Mentoring***

6.10.1 Where inexperienced nominees are put forward to become an external examiner they need to be allocated a named mentor. The mentor needs to be an external examiner approved by the University who is preferably examining on the same programme as the inexperienced nominee or a cognate programme. The role of the mentor is to provide advice and guidance on the University's processes where required. External examiners normally get together prior to Assessment Boards and discuss all the programmes so the mentoring is likely to mainly take place at this point and then there may be an email or telephone call during the year if the new external needs advice on a particular academic question.

6.10.2 The University does not offer an 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.

6.11 ***Arrangements and participation at Assessment Boards***

6.11.1 External examiners are required to attend relevant Assessment Boards, as outlined in *6K - Assessment Boards: Policy*

6.11.2 If attendance at an Assessment Board where external examiner presence is required is not possible, alternative arrangements must be sought, such as video- or tele-conferencing, and the University will require the external examiner to confirm they have been consulted on the recommendations made by a Programme Board. Where this is the case, another member of the programme 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.

6.11.3 Where an external examiner does not deem it appropriate to endorse the Programme Board outcomes and will not sign the Board report, the matter should be referred to the Chair of Education Committee for resolution prior to students' results being released.

7. REPORTING BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

7.1 Purpose of annual reports

External examiners are required to report to the University on the programme(s) and units to which their appointment relates, normally on an annual basis although reporting periods may differ for non-standard delivery patterns (e.g. CPD programmes).

7.2 Annual reports

7.2.1 External examiners produce an annual report using an online survey tool provided by the University. This provides an opportunity to highlight any good practice or areas for improvement and offer assurance that relevant HE standards have been met. Reports must be submitted within two weeks of the Programme Board.

7.2.2 At programme level, external examiner reports are typically considered at the earliest opportunity at programme management team meetings in order to agree an appropriate course of action. External examiners will receive a considered, written response from the team to issues raised, including any action/rationale for not taking action in response to the comments made. Where partner programmes are concerned, the relevant link tutor should be involved in the formulation of the response. Where the team disagrees with a recommendation made by an external examiner, and the issue is deemed substantial, advice should be sought from the Deputy Dean (Education) or the Head of Academic Quality to progress the situation. External examiners may also receive a letter from the Head of Academic Quality on the issues they raise.

7.2.3 At Faculty level, Faculty Education Committees have oversight of external examiner reports through the annual monitoring process.

7.2.4 At University level, Education Committee receives an annual report on external examining activity from the Academic Quality team which considers the effectiveness of the University's external examining arrangements as part of ongoing institution-level monitoring activity, including any common themes or trends arising from the reports.

7.2.5 Faculty scrutiny includes consideration of external examiner report summaries which confirm whether the standards of the provision are set and maintained appropriately; whether student performance is comparable with similar programmes in other UK HEIs; and whether the assessment processes are robust and fair. Where an external examiner report summary contains a negative indicator to any of these categories, the Head of Academic Quality or their nominee follows these up with the Faculty as soon as the report has been received. The outcomes of any such case are captured and considered via the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) process.

7.3 Causes for concern

External examiners may report directly to the Vice-Chancellor or invoke the QAA's Concerns scheme. Alternatively or additionally, the external examiner may wish to raise a concern directly with the relevant professional body.

8. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

8.1.1 External examiner fees are paid from Faculty budget upon receipt of the annual report, which is verified by Academic Quality. Fees are set out in the current fees policy.

8.1.2 All hotel bookings will be made by the Faculty. Faculties should also liaise with external examiners regarding their travel arrangements.

8.2 Prevention of Illegal Working

As an employer, the University has a responsibility to prevent illegal working in the UK. The law on prevention of illegal working is set out in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act. Under this Act, the University is required to check the right to work documentation of **all** external examiners; this includes persons who are already working for another UK employer. All external examiners are therefore required to submit List A or List B documentation as outlined in the **Prevention of Illegal Working: Guidance on the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006** as part of the appointment process.

Appointment cannot be confirmed until the nominee's right to work in the UK is satisfactorily confirmed by HR.

General

9. FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

- 9.1 Bournemouth University maintains a [web based](#) overview of external examining, and resources within the Virtual Learning Environment for current external examiners.
- 9.2 The Higher Education Academy has established a national [website](#) and mail list to facilitate networking and support for those involved in external examining.

10. REFERENCES

10.1 *Internal references and further information*

- 10.1.1 *6H - Academic Offences: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards and Awards and 11D - Fitness to Practise: Procedure* provide guidance for Faculties when an assessment offence is suspected.
- 10.1.2 *6J - Exceptional Circumstances: Policy and Procedure* outlines the processes for dealing with circumstances.
- 10.1.3 *11A - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards* outlines the appeals process.

10.2 *External references and further information*

- 10.2.1 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018).
- 10.2.2 Concerns about the academic standards and/or quality of higher education provision where internal procedures have not resulted in a satisfactory outcome can be raised with the [Office for Students](#).
- 10.2.3 This policy was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) in July 2019.

11. FORMS

Forms are available from the intranet as follows:

[External Examiner nomination form](#)

[External Examiner extension/reallocation form](#)