

Educational Partnerships Policy

External Examining for taught programmes or modules offered in multiple locations

Background

This policy outlines the role of the external examiner in programmes and modules offered in more than one location, as part of the University's Educational Partnership activity. The document explains the purpose and nature of external examiner visits.

This policy was approved by ULTSEC September 2015 and is to be introduced 2015/16.

Scope

The following arrangements fall within the scope of this policy:

- Partnership with Singapore Institute of Technology
- Programmes delivered in Singapore
- Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia
- INTO Newcastle University
- Newcastle University London (with INTO University Partnerships)
- MA Writing Poetry with the Poetry School
- Any future partnerships as determined by the Educational Partnerships Sub-Committee.

Principles

Newcastle University has an agreed set of principles for the academic governance of TNE and partnership activity. These principles are provided in full at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/gsh-ep-acad-governance-principles.pdf>.

In relation to external examining, the principles state the following:

“External examiner(s) should be appointed to cover the programme in each location in which it is delivered to enable the External to ensure the comparability of standards across provision.

External examiner(s) should normally visit the TNE or partner provision twice during their period of appointment, and in no circumstances should visit less than once during their period of appointment.”

Additionally, it is strongly recommended that external examiners do not undertake a visit to the TNE or partner provision during their first year of appointment as external examiner.

New locations and programmes

1. Briefing of existing external examiners

External examiners shall be briefed as early as possible and in writing about University activity that will impact on their duties. This is likely to be after completion of all internal approval processes (partner and programme approval) but certainly before the commencement of any academic activity.

The briefing shall be sufficiently early to allow for new or additional appointments to be made, should the existing External Examiners have any objections to a change in their duties.

Briefings on large scale strategic projects shall be communicated to External Examiners by LTDS.

Briefings on programme level partnerships shall be communicated by the Degree Programme Director or nominee.

2. First year of programme/location

The external examiner shall normally be expected to conduct an initial visit during the first year of a new programme, or the first time a programme is offered in a new location. This visit shall count as one of the two visits an external examiner will normally undertake during their period of appointment. The purpose of this visit is:

- To ensure that the external examiners understand the University's vision for the new programme in that location.
- To provide the external examiners with the opportunity to meet key staff at the location.
- To seek the external examiner's views on any proposed differences in academic content or delivery at a sufficiently early stage.
- The normal duties as outlined in 2 below.

Processes/procedures

1. Fees

UK arrangements (e.g. Newcastle University London, The Poetry School etc.):

- Band payments need not automatically increase due to an additional location, but will continue to be calculated on the basis of student numbers, with possible increase to a higher band for particularly complex arrangements.
- A flat additional annual fee of £100 per additional location, to be added to the standard band payment to all external examiners covering more than one location. This fee will apply to all years of appointment.
- The additional payment of £50 for up to two extra visits per year will still apply should there be a need for the external examiner to make visits to Newcastle, at times other than the Board of Examiners.
- External examiners will receive a *per diem* additional fee of £100 for visiting other locations.
- Visits are not expected to be longer than one day in duration.
- The external examiner will be able to claim expenses for all visits required under Educational Partnership and External Examining policies.

International arrangements (e.g. Singapore, NUIS, NUMed etc):

- Band payments need not automatically increase due to an additional location, but will continue to be calculated on the basis of student numbers, with possible increase to a higher band for particularly complex arrangements.
- The external examiner will be able to claim expenses for all visits required under Educational Partnership and External Examining policies. For long distance visits, and to ensure the best

use of time, Business Class travel may be permitted with the express prior agreement of the Academic Unit*.

- External examiners will receive a *per diem* additional fee of £200 for their visits to other international locations of study (normally 2 visits during a 4 year appointment period) in addition to expenses.
- The *per diem* fee is payable on travel days as well as days spent at the location. However the *per diem* fee is not payable on any rest days that the external examiner may choose to take.

*Or whoever is the agreed budget holder for the visits

2. Core Duties

External examiners will also receive programme-specific guidance about how arrangements will be made to ensure that their duties do, in fact, cover both locations. For example, the Chair of the Board of Examiners will need to;

Confirm, when the external examiner is asked to comment on draft assessments or examination papers, whether they apply to one location or all locations.

Fully explain any differences in the syllabus, module content, learning outcomes, programme structure, including the reasons for these differences.

Explain how the sampling of student work will be conducted to ensure all locations are covered by the samples provided to the external examiner.

Make arrangements for the external examiner to visit the other location, normally twice during their period of appointment.

3. Visits

The normal expectation is that the Board of Examiners will be held in Newcastle and the external examiner will not need to visit any other location than Newcastle in order to participate in the Board of Examiners meetings, however if the external examiner is present at the location of delivery then they can video conference in to the meeting remotely.

The general policy regarding external examiner visits to Newcastle remains the same; external examiners may claim a small fee for up to two additional visits per year if they are essential to the role.

The visits required by the Educational Partnership Policy would be deemed to be essential to the role, and will normally occur twice during a period of appointment.

The purpose of the EP visits is:

- To consider the quality of the student experience – academic, and access to appropriate facilities - and its comparability to Newcastle.
- To develop and maintain relationships between teaching staff, who may be site-specific.
- To ensure an understanding about any differences in academic content or delivery (and the reasons for the differences).
- To provide an opportunity to meet with students.

It is possible that an external examiner may be required to visit another location in order to participate in a *viva voce* examination of a postgraduate taught student. On such occasions, the appropriate *per diem* payment as outlined above should apply.

4. Reporting

External examiners will continue to complete the standard online report form. For external examiners covering Educational Partnerships, the supplementary questions in Section E of the form will automatically appear. It is important that external examiners answer these questions.

- LTDS will continue to review the wording of the questions.
- Where external examiners have failed to respond to the Section E questions, their form will be returned to them to complete.
- If their responses raise particular concerns about the Educational Partnership, LTDS acting on behalf of EPSC may investigate the matter further. This may include direct contact with the external examiner (normally by email).

Initially, in addition to the standard annual report form, external examiners will be requested to complete a visit form (Annex A) each time they visit a location of study other than Newcastle. The visit form should be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Studies and the secretary of Educational Partnerships Sub Committee (educational.partnerships@ncl.ac.uk). Timing of the visit reports is unlikely to tie in with regular external examining business, but copies of reports should be taken to the next meeting of the Board of Studies.

Visit reports will be considered regularly by EPSC as part of the committee's responsibility to retain oversight of academic aspects of TNE and partnership activity on behalf of ULTSEC.

Annex A

External Examiners of TNE and Educational Partnerships Visit form

Notes: We ask that External Examiners of programmes offered in more than one location endeavour to visit each location during their period of appointment. The normal expectation is that an External Examiner is likely to visit Newcastle every year and any other location at least twice during their four year period of appointment. External Examiners should visit Newcastle, and be inducted in Newcastle University processes and procedures, before conducting a visit to an Educational Partner.

The purpose of the visits is to allow you to:

- *Consider the quality of the student experience – academic, and access to appropriate facilities - and its comparability to Newcastle.*
- *Develop and maintain relationships with teaching staff, who may be site-specific.*
- *Ensure an understanding about any differences in academic content or delivery (and the reasons for the differences).*
- *Meet with students studying at the location.*

The general aim is to ensure that as an External Examiners you have sufficient access to information, both written and verbal, to be satisfied of the academic quality of the offering. It may be that there are specific areas of the programme where your input would be most valued – it is perfectly acceptable to combine your visit with meetings about proposed module or assessment changes for example.

Visits should be planned in advance via the Degree Programme Director or School Examinations Contact and in consultation with location staff. It is preferable that all visits include a planned opportunity to meet with students.

External Examiner details:	
Name:	
Institutional Address:	
Programme(s) examined:	
Date of visit:	
Location of visit:	
Visit Report:	
1. Was this your first visit?	
If no, please comment on any changes (positive or negative) since your last visit:	

2. Please comment on the general standard of the facilities and resources, and their comparability to those available in Newcastle:	
3. Were you given the opportunity to meet with students on the programme(s)?	
4. Please comment on the satisfaction (or otherwise) of the students that you met:	
5. Which staff members did you meet?	
6. Any comments on differences in curriculum and delivery compared to Newcastle	
7. Please provide any general comments or observations that you wish to draw to the attention of the University:	
8. Do you wish to make any recommendations?	
Confirmation of report submission and consideration:	
Received and acknowledged by Chair of Board of Studies	
Name:	Date:
Reported to the meeting of the Board of Studies	
Meeting date:	
Copy of report and extract of BoS minutes sent to Learning and Teaching Development Service (educational.partnerships@ncl.ac.uk)	
Date:	

Visit reports should be brief and are not expected to exceed approx. 4 sides once completed.