

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

*Published by the Academic Regulations, Quality  
and Standards Office, Students and Education  
Directorate*

*Academic Session 2023-24*

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. Introduction	1
2. Quality assurance framework	1
3. Programme approval	2
4. Programme review	2
5. External specialists	2
Criteria and engagement	
Role of external specialists	
Information	
Payment	
6. External peers	3
Appointment	
Information	
Role in programme approval	
Role in programme review	
Report	
Payment	
7. Financial information	5
 <i>Appendices</i>	
A Faculty (Institute/School) core governance functions	6
B External specialist report form	7
C List of local hotels	10

## 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 College. Further advice and information if necessary can be obtained from the Associate Director, Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (email: lynne.barker@kcl.ac.uk, telephone: 020 7848 3397).
- 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 College's quality assurance processes. Recognising the ever-increasing demands on colleagues' time, the College is extremely grateful for the contribution that external specialists and external peers will be making to the work of the College in the coming session.

## 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The College's structure and operation is characterised by the devolution to the Faculties (Institutes/School)<sup>1</sup> 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 College. 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 College Academic Standards Sub-Committee.
- 2.2 The nine Faculties of the College are:
- Arts and Humanities
  - Business School
  - Dental Institute
  - 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 and Mathematical 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 College 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 College Academic Standards 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 College 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 College are eligible to act as external specialists, provided that a period of three years has elapsed since their employment with the College. External specialists are not formally appointed by the College 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 College'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 College'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 \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#) 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 College will appoint on a two year basis only, with no consideration of extending tenure to an additional two years being allowed;
- wide experience as a 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 College 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 College are eligible to act as external peers, provided that a period of three years has elapsed since their employment with the College. 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 College'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<sup>2</sup> 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 College procedures. This will involve scrutiny of documentation and attendance<sup>2</sup> 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 College'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, Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (email [lynne.barker@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:lynne.barker@kcl.ac.uk), tel 020 7848 3397).

### 6.7 *Payment*

---

<sup>2</sup> Faculties determine whether this is physical attendance or other means.

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 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 College 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 College 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 College's insurance policy does not cover the use of private vehicles for College 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. A list of suggested hotels is provided at Appendix C.

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 College'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 College'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 College's tax office, giving full details of their personal

circumstances on the forms obtainable from the College's Payroll Office specified below. Until such time as the tax office authority is received, the College 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 College pension scheme. Guidance on opting out of the scheme can be obtained from the payroll department at: <https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/about/ps/finance/payroll-pension/Pens-Auto-Enrol.aspx>.



## APPENDIX A

### FACULTY<sup>3</sup> 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 College'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 College'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 College Assessment and Standards Committee<sup>4</sup> 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

---

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> During 2014/15 a revised structure to College Assessment Board is likely to come into effect and these review reports will then report to that revised Committee.

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.

**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:.....

## APPENDIX C

## LIST OF LOCAL HOTELS

Please book direct with the hotel and reclaim the hotel bill as an expense.

Campus	Hotel	Telephone/email/ web	Location
Strand	Doubletree By Hilton London West End 92 Southampton Row London WC1B 4BH	020 7242 2828	Nearest tube: Holborn or Russell Square
Strand	Bedford Hotel 83 Southampton Row London WC1B 4HD	020 7636 7822  info@imperialhotels.co.uk <a href="http://www.imperialhotels.co.uk/bedford">www.imperialhotels.co.uk/bedford</a>	Nearest tube: Holborn or Russell Square
Waterloo, Guy's and St Thomas'	Travel Inn Capital London Tower Bridge 159 Tower Bridge Road London SE1 3LP	0870 238 3303  <a href="http://www.premiertravelinn.com">www.premiertravelinn.com</a>	Nearest tube/train: London Bridge or Tower Hill and also DLR Tower Gateway
Waterloo, Guy's and St Thomas'	Comfort Inn Vauxhall 87 South Lambeth Road London SW8 1RN	020 7735 9494  <a href="mailto:stay@comfortinnvx.co.uk">stay@comfortinnvx.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.comfortinnvx.co.uk">www.comfortinnvx.co.uk</a>	Nearest tube/train: Vauxhall
Waterloo, Guy's and St Thomas'	Days Inn – Waterloo 54 Kennington Road London SE1 7BJ	020 7922 1331  reservations.waterloo@dayshotel.co.uk <a href="http://www.daysinn.com">www.daysinn.com</a>	Nearest tube: Lambeth North Nearest train: Waterloo
Waterloo, Guy's and St Thomas'	Travel Inn London County Hall Belvedere Road London SE1 7PB	0870 238 3300  <a href="http://www.premiertravelinn.com">www.premiertravelinn.com</a>	Nearest tube/train: Waterloo
Waterloo, Guy's and St Thomas'	Holiday Inn Express (Southwark Street) 103-109 Southwark Street London SE1 OJQ	020 7401 2525  <a href="mailto:stay@expresssouthwark.co.uk">stay@expresssouthwark.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.hiexpress.com">www.hiexpress.com</a>	Nearest tube/train: Blackfriars, Southwark or Waterloo