

Guidance for Faculties on the use of external specialists and external peers for programme approval and review

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The involvement of external specialist and peers in the process of programme, design, approval and review compliments the external advice already provided via the external examiner system and thus provides an enhancement of the College's quality assurance processes.
- 1.2 For programme approval there are two forms of external input expected: input from externals at the subject level, external specialists, who provide comment on the content of a new programme from a specialist viewpoint: and input from externals at the level to the Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent), external peers, who have a broader understanding of the discipline, their main function to provide an external viewpoint on the approval process. The same external peers are also used for programme review.
- 1.3 The following guidance is designed to make clear the responsibilities of departments, Faculties and the College at the various stages of the process.

2. External specialist

- 2.1 At the development stage of a new programme, Departments identify a suitable external specialist. The role of the external specialist is to provide expert subject advice at the design stage of a new programme. The specialist can be an academic, a member of a professional or statutory body, an employer with links to the subject area or from business or industry. Former External Examiners 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.
- 2.2 The Department should provide the external specialist with a copy of the *Notes of Guidance for external specialists and external peers* which is available from the Quality and Academic Support (QAS) section or on the web at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/quality/academic/prog/ExtSpecialistsPeers.aspx> and direct the external specialist to the *Procedures for programme and module approval and modification* which can also be found on the Quality and Academic Support webpage <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/quality/academic/prog/approvalandmod/index.aspx> Departments should also provide copies of any relevant department information.
- 2.3 The external specialist should be invited to comment on the content of the proposed programme. This will include considerations such as the academic standard of the programme, relationship with any subject benchmark statement and/or relevant professional, regulatory or statutory body guidelines and the potential market for the programme. The specialist is asked to complete a brief report of the nature of their involvement in the process and their views of the programme. The department should then indicate briefly how the comments have been taken on board to ensure that the final documentation reflects the recommendations from external specialists. The report from the external specialist and the department response forms part of the programme approval process and should be submitted alongside the other approval documentation to the Faculty Education Committee (or equivalent). The Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent) should not approve any programme that is missing this report.

- 2.4 The external specialists are not formally appointed by the College as the anticipated pattern will act in a “one-off” capacity. They will receive a payment of £200 for this engagement. Faculties should ensure that the external specialist is provided with the appropriate payment forms and these have been completed and approved by the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent). Once the programme has been approved by the Faculty the paperwork, including the external specialist payment forms, are forwarded onto QAS section; they will arrange the payment of fees and expenses to the external specialist.

3. External peers

- 3.1 One or two external peers will be appointed to each Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent) for all quality assurance matters. In multi-department Faculties where the Faculty’s external peer is not a specialist in the subject being reviewed, an additional external specialist should be co-opted onto the panel. Appointments will be made by 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/Dean of Department/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 extension to tenure;
 - 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 institutional auditor/reviewer.
- 3.2 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 three 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 in which the peer would be asked to review.
- 3.3 External peers will be 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 QAS section will organise the appointment process and will provide external peers with copies of College policies relating to programme approval and review and the *Notes of Guidance for external specialists and external peers*. Faculties should provide external peers with any additional local guidance on programme approval and review, together with terms of reference of the Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent) and dates of meeting of the Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent). External peers are expected to attend at least 50% Faculty Education Committee meetings each year. Faculties should also liaise with the external peer over dates for periodic reviews.
- 3.4 *Programme approval*
External peers will be expected to take an overview of the approval process and to ensure that appropriate attention is given to the setting and maintenance of academic standards during this process. Faculties should ensure that external peers receive copies of proposals for all new programmes in advance of the meeting of the Faculty Education Committee (or its equivalent). The external peer will be expected to attend in person all programme approval panels, although in exceptional circumstances

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where this is not possible they should provide a written report for the panel. The external peer will be asked to sign-off the programme approval documentation (though this can be done via electronic signature).

3.5 *Periodic 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 in person at the review. Faculties should ensure that external peers receive copies of periodic review documentation in advance of the review.

3.6 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.

3.7 External peers will receive an annual payment of £1,000 which will be paid at the end of the academic year. 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 QAS section will arrange the payment of fees and expenses to the external peers.

