



TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS POLICY

Effective Date	7 June 2017	Version	04
Approved By	Academic Council	Date Approved	7 June 2017
		Review Date	1 June 2020 <i>or as required</i>
Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)		Owner	
Appointment of External Examiners – Policies and Procedures (2011)		Office of the Registrar	

1. Purpose of Policy

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) is committed to external examining procedures that support public confidence in our academic qualifications. Appointing appropriate, independent, impartial, and highly-qualified external examiners is a vital element in those procedures. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a transparent, effective and consistent procedure for the appointment of external examiners to the academic programmes delivered by Carlow College.

This Policy will replace *Appointment of External Examiners – Policies and Procedures (2011)* and draws upon guidelines and procedures outlined in the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) documents *Assessments and Standards, (Revised 2013)*, *Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Rev. February 2015)* and *Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (Rev. 2013)*. It has also been informed by *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May, 2015)*, pp. 15 – 16.

2. Definitions

External examiner: An external examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role.¹

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the external examining of QQI approved programmes and modules currently delivered by Carlow College.

¹*Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining*, (Dublin: Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2015), p. 10.

4. Policy Statement

External examiners are appointed to all taught programmes at Carlow College in order to report on and monitor the quality of the content, organisation and assessment of these programmes. Their role is also to ensure that the education provided by Carlow College programmes is benchmarked to that of comparable higher education institutions and universities.

The number of external examiners is determined by the needs of each programme and should ensure that both the overall programme and the core individual disciplines within each programme are adequately covered. When a programme has a number of examiners with specialist subject expertise, one of these examiners will be additionally asked to act as examiner for the programme.

Carlow College gives careful consideration to the appointment of eminent research-active external examiners who add value by virtue of their academic standing. These examiners are usually attached to a third level institution and in addition to having subject matter expertise, should also have experience of delivering similar programmes and knowledge of teaching, learning and assessment best practice. In some cases, particular in the more practice-based subjects, external examiners may be drawn from the appropriate professions, provided they have the necessary expertise in degree awarding standards and student achievement. In addition, the external examiners must be available to fulfil their duties and produce their reports at the appropriate times (see Appendix 1: *Guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners* and Appendix 2: *Template for External Examiner Report*).

External examiners must be demonstrably independent of Carlow College and are required to declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest before agreeing to their nomination. The following will automatically render a candidate ineligible for appointment:

- a) He/she teaches on the programme of study to which he/she is being considered for appointment.
- b) He/she holds a teaching or other appointment of the College or has held such an appointment within ten years prior to the date of commencement of the proposed appointment.
- c) He/she is a close relative of a member of staff of the College.
- d) He/she has served as External Examiner for the same programme for any period in the previous four years.

The external examiners' functions are of critical importance to the reputation of Carlow College and the procedure for their appointment involves the whole academic community. The following procedure is in place:

- a) The Registrar seeks nominations for the position of External Examiner from the Chair of the relevant Programme Board.
- b) The Chair of the Programme Board consults with the academic staff on the Programme seeking suitable nominations. These nominations should be submitted in writing and should outline the suitability of the proposed examiner. The Chair will review the nominations with regard to the criteria for appointment.
- c) The Chair of the Programme Board then reports to the Registrar on the nominations made. The Registrar may suggest alternative names for nomination if he/she decides it is necessary to do so.

- d) The Programme Chair or the Registrar then consults with the person proposed for nomination, without commitment, to seek his or her consent and availability to act as External Examiner.
- e) Nominations for the appointment are submitted to the Academic Council by the Registrar.

Following approval by the Academic Council, the Registrar issues a letter of appointment to the External Examiner specifying the following:

- Guidelines on the duties and responsibilities of the External Examiner
- Term of office
- Conflict of interest declaration
- Programme schedule and module descriptors
- *QQI Assessment and Standards* (2013)
- Carlow College *Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies* (2017).
- College Prospectus and Student Handbooks
- External Examiners reporting arrangements and requirements
- External Examiners Report Form
- Termination of contract procedures

An external examiner's term of appointment is sufficiently long to allow him or her to assess trends, and sufficiently short to provide diversity and maintain the required level of independence. Therefore, the appointment of external examiners is normally for a period of three years and commences from 1 October. In exceptional cases, the appointment may be extended by one further year. In this case the circumstances shall be advised to the Academic Council prior to the proposed extension taking effect.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Registrar** maintains a register of External Examiners' appointments and period of tenure. He/she will notify the relevant Programme Director when an external examiner is within six months of completion of their term of office.

The **Programme Director** will consult with **academic staff on the programme** and request nominations. These nominations will then be reported to the Registrar.

The **Registrar** will submit those nominations and/or his/her own nominations to **Academic Council**.

Academic Council will approve the nomination of the external examiner.

6. Associated Documentation

- Appendix 1: Guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners
- Appendix 2: Template for the External Examiner Report

7. Monitoring and Review

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee will monitor the implementation of the Policy on the Appointment of External Examiners annually and provide a report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs / Registrar. It will review the Policy at the direction of the Vice President for Academic Affairs / Registrar, but at a minimum of every three years and provide a report with recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs / Registrar and the Academic Council.

Appendix 1: Guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners

The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) document *Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining* (Rev. 2015) defines the main functions of the external examiner as follows:

- (a) Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal), and other programme objectives. These should accord with the relevant awards standards and any other standards the programme is designed to satisfy, e.g. professional standards.
- (b) Probe the actual attainment of learners (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by the provider.
- (c) Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant awards standards, with the National Framework of Qualifications, and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond.
- (d) Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent
- (e) Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures and, flowing from this, consider subsidiary module assessment strategies.
- (f) Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and learners' prerequisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include key continuous assessment tasks, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the external examiner.
- (g) Report findings and recommendations to the provider.

In order to facilitate the external examiner in carrying out these duties, Carlow College undertakes to:

- Ensure that the external examiner is provided with all relevant programme and module descriptors outlining learning outcomes and assessment strategies.
- Ensure that the external examiner has access to the relevant QQI documentation on Assessment and Standards.
- Ensure that the external examiner is provided with all relevant assessment criteria and rubrics.
- Ensure that the external examiner is sent details of key assessment tasks, in particular, examination papers (and their associated marking schemes), to review before the assignment is set.
- Ensure that the external examiner is given access to the full range of assessed material and statistics relating to same as well as sufficient samples of work achieving high, middle and low grades.
- Facilitate the examiner on his/her visit to the College and attendance at the QQI External Exam Board meeting.

- Ensure that the findings and recommendations of the external examiner are systematically addressed by the college's quality assurance system and are considered as important inputs into programme's quality assurance cycles and related processes.

Newly appointed external examiners will additionally be provided with:

- Carlow College policies relating to external examining, assessment, plagiarism etc.
- Carlow College, St Patrick's Strategic Plan with mission and context of the college.
- Copies of recent external examiner reports for the programme and/or discipline.

Carlow College determines the number of external examiners by the needs of each programme and the number of individual disciplines covered by each programme. When a programme has a number of examiners with specialist subject expertise, one of these examiners will be additionally asked to act as examiner for the programme.

The Report of the External Examiner

The external examiner is required to provide both verbal and written feedback using formal and informal channels of communication. The VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar is the principal point of contact and should, in the first instance oversee the induction of new external examiners. Comments and recommendations arising out of the review of assessment components, primarily exam papers, should be communicated to the VPA.

It is useful for external examiners to meet with Programme Directors when they visit the college to view student assessments in situ. Meetings with individual lecturers can also be arranged at this time and it is envisaged that informal meetings of this kind may also follow the External Exam Board meeting.

External examiners are expected to attend the External Exam Board meeting and deliver a verbal report on their findings.


Formal feedback, in the format of a written report, constitutes the official record. The external examiners are asked to submit this report within three weeks of the External Exam Board meeting and to follow the Carlow College Template for External Examiners' Reports.

External examiners' reports are securely retained by Carlow College and contribute to both quality assurance/enhancement and institutional research activities. Recommendations of the external examiner are discussed at the September meeting of the relevant programme board. Responses and actions taken are recorded in the annual Programme Monitoring Reports by the Programme Director. The external examiner is provided with a timely, considered response to his/her comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken by the programme.

Appendix 2: Templates for the External Examiner Report Form

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM (Programme)

Part 1: Examiner and Programme Details (To be completed by Carlow College, St Patrick's prior to forwarding the template to the external examiner)

 <p>CARLOW COLLEGE ST. PATRICK'S</p>		<p>External Examiner Report [Academic Year]</p> <p>Carlow College, St Patrick's</p>	
Date			
Name of External Examiner			
Institution/Company of External Examiner			
e-mail address of External Examiner			
Year of Appointment			
Date of Visit			
Programme Details	Programme Reference		
	Award Title:		
	NFQ Level:		
	Main Modes of Delivery Offered:		
	Semester (if applicable indicate whether first or second):		
Programme Learning Outcomes			

Part 2: Programme Classification, Distribution and Trends (To be Completed by Carlow College, St Patrick's prior to forwarding the template to the external examiner)

Progression, Classification Distribution and Trends (Award Year)		Current Year ²	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	Number who started the stage					
	Number who completed the stage (i.e. attempted final stage examinations)					
	% H1/D					
	% H21/M1					
	% H22/M2					
	% P					
Classification Distribution and Trends (Years 1-3)		Current Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
Year 3	Number who started the stage					
	Number who completed the stage (i.e. attempted final stage examinations)					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-50					
	% 40-49					
Year 2	Number who started the stage					
	Number who completed the stage (i.e. attempted final stage examinations)					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					
Year 1	Number who started the stage					
	Number who completed the stage (i.e. attempted final stage examinations)					
	% 70+					
	% 60-60					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					

² Current year statistics are based on the first sitting of exams and do not include results from Autumn repeats.

Part 3: Report of the External Examiner

Please consult Carlow College's *Guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners* before beginning to write your report. More detailed information concerning expectations can be found in QQI's [Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining Revised 2015](#) and [Assessment and Standards Revised 2013](#).

In presenting opinions under the following headings the external examiner should make national and international comparisons.

All external reports should follow the template outlined below (italicised instructions should be discarded by the external examiner when drafting the report).

The Evidence Considered

Summarise the documentary evidence considered and any visits, meetings and interviews with learners and academic staff and others.

Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes

Comment on the educational objectives including their explicitness, appropriateness and consistency standards with the relevant awards standards and the National Framework of Qualifications

Actual Attainment of Learners

Include informed perception of the actual attainment of learners (knowledge, skill and competence)

The Programme

This section should identify some notable strengths and areas for improvement. It is not intended that the external examiner would attempt to systematically review the programme.

Assessment Procedures

This section should address the quality of the assessment instruments, the fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose of assessment procedures.

Trends


Evidence concerning the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment arrangements have changed in response to the feedback provided by previous external examiner reports; and progress on recommendations in recent external examiner and other relevant reports on the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

External examiner's signature and date

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM (Discipline)

Part 1: Examiner, Programme and Module Details (To be completed by Carlow College, St Patrick's prior to forwarding the template to the external examiner)

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">CARLOW COLLEGE</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">ST. PATRICK'S</h3>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">External Examiner Report</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">[Academic Year]</h3> <p style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;">Carlow College, St Patrick's</p>
Date		
Name and discipline of External Examiner		
Institution/Company of External Examiner		
e-mail address of External Examiner		
Year of Appointment		
Date of Visit		
Programme Details	Programme Reference	
	Award Title:	
	NFQ Level:	
	Main Modes of Delivery Offered:	
	Semester (if applicable indicate whether first or second):	
Modules examined	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Part 2: Module Classification, Distribution and Trends (To be

Completed by Carlow College, St Patrick's prior to forwarding the template to the external examiner)

Module 1 (insert name and stage of module)		Current Year ³	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	Number who started module					
	Number who completed the module					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					
Module 2 (insert name and stage of module)		Current Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	Number who started module					
	Number who completed the module					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					
Module 3 (insert name and stage of module)		Current Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	Number who started module					
	Number who completed the module					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					
Module 4 (insert name and stage of module)		Current Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	Number who started module					
	Number who completed the module					
	% 70+					
	% 60-69					
	% 50-59					
	% 40-49					

³ Current year statistics are based on the first sitting of exams and do not include results from Autumn repeats.

Part 3: Report of the External Examiner

Please consult Carlow College's *Guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of External Examiners* before beginning to write your report. More detailed information concerning expectations can be found in QQI's [Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining Revised 2015](#) and [Assessment and Standards Revised 2013](#).

In presenting opinions under the following headings the external examiner should make national and international comparisons.

All external reports should follow the template outlined below (italicised instructions should be discarded by the external examiner when drafting the report).

The Evidence Considered

Summarise the documentary evidence considered and any visits, meetings and interviews with learners and academic staff and others.

Fit between module and programme learning outcomes.

Comment on the educational objectives including their explicitness, appropriateness and consistency standards with the relevant awards standards and the National Framework of Qualifications

Actual Attainment of Learners

Include informed perception of the actual attainment of learners (knowledge, skill and competence)

Discipline-specific observations

This section should identify some notable strengths and areas for improvement. It is not intended that the external examiner would attempt to systematically review the discipline

Assessment Procedures

This section should address the quality of the assessment instruments, the fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose of assessment procedures.

Trends

Evidence concerning the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment arrangements have changed in response to the feedback provided by previous external examiner reports; and progress on recommendations in recent external examiner and other relevant reports on the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

External examiner's signature and date