NCAD DUBLIN

National College of Art and Design
A Recognised College of University College Dublin

External Examiner Process

Contents

1. NCAD Academic & Programme Structure

1.1. The National College of Art and Design (NCAD) is organised into four Schools: Design, Education, Fine Art and Visual Culture, each with their own programmes. The fundamental responsibility for the design, delivery, assessment, evaluation and quality of programmes lies with the School that offers those programmes.

1.2. NCAD is a recognised college of University College Dublin (UCD). Each of NCAD's degree programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) result in a qualification accredited by UCD, and awarded by National University of Ireland (NUI), of which UCD is a constituent university.

1.3. UCD's University Programmes Board approves NCAD's programmes, on recommendation by NCAD's Academic Council.

1.4. The NCAD Programmes Board, under delegated authority of the Academic Council, is responsible for the oversight of design, delivery and quality assurance of the programmes which it governs, oversight of assessment and progression within each programme, and the academic welfare of the students registered to each programme.

1.5. The quality of modules, assessment practices and grade outcomes are assured by Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments and Programme Co-ordinators in conjunction with each External Examiner.

1.6. Finally the Academic Council and subsequently the Examinations Board act as the bodies responsible for assessment and grading practices in the College.

1.7. The Head of Academic Affairs and Research is responsible for oversight of assessment results across the College

1.8. The School Examination Boards are responsible for:

    1.8.1. finalising all module grades

    1.8.2. approving semester, stage and final award of individual students

    1.8.3. determining compensation, progression, and award classification for all students on the programme.

1.9. The Programmes Board is responsible for:

    1.9.1. design, delivery, and quality assurance of programmes.

    1.9.2. oversight of assessment and progression within each programme, and

    1.9.3. academic welfare of students.

1.10. Module Co-ordinator and Head of Department is responsible for design, delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of their modules.

1.11. The NCAD Examination Board and Academic Council are responsible for oversight of assessment practices across the College

1.12. The External Examiner reviews within a programme:

    1.12.1. academic standards,

    1.12.2. curriculum development,

    1.12.3. assessment and grading strategies and practices.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this policy document is to provide clear guidance on the appointment, role and responsibilities of External Examiners at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD, hereafter referred to as the College), as a recognised college of University College Dublin (UCD, hereafter referred to as the University).

2.2. The University is responsible for the academic standards of awards made in its name, and for ensuring that the quality of learning experiences is adequate and appropriate to enable students to achieve these standards. In order to discharge these responsibilities, the University has a range of systems and procedures for assuring and enhancing the academic standards of awards and the quality of the educational provision provided to students of NCAD. External Examination is one of these.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to the external examination of the College's taught provision. External examination arrangements for Graduate Research Programmes are described in separate regulatory and guidance documentation.

4. Definitions

4.1. This document is to be read in conjunction with University Academic Regulations.

4.2. **External Examiners**: External Examiners provide an important consultative and advisory function in supporting the development of the subjects that contribute to NCAD programmes as well as the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices.

While External Examiners do not grade students' work, the title 'External Examiner' is retained here due to common international usage of this title for the role defined herein.

External Examiners play a vital role in assisting the College in fulfilling its obligations to assure the academic standards and integrity of the University's awards and form part of the University's broader system of quality assurance and enhancement.

External Examiners are appointed to subjects at undergraduate or graduate level, as appropriate. Each subject at the College shall have an external examiner.

Some subjects may require more than one Subject Examiner while some External Examiners may be given responsibility for more than one subject.

Module: A module is as defined in University Academic Regulations.

Head of School: A Head of School is responsible for the management of one of the four Schools at NCAD, namely:

School of Design

School of Education

School of Fine Art

School of Visual Culture

4.3. **Programme Director and Head of Department**: Programme Directors and Heads of Department support the Head of School in assuring that the highest standards are met for the design, delivery, assessment and quality of modules and programmes in each School.

4.4. **Governing Boards**: Governing Boards are as defined in University Academic Regulations.

In addition, each School at NCAD has a School Board, which is responsible for the design, development, delivery, assessment, evaluation and review of NCAD's programmes.

The NCAD's Academic Council has overarching responsibility for management of NCAD programmes, and for the wellbeing of NCAD students.

5. Principles

The key principles that underpin the role of the External Examiner are:

5.1. Academic Expertise

The External Examiner should have the necessary academic expertise and international standing to evaluate the subject to which they are appointed and its constituent modules at all applicable levels.

5.2. Quality

The fundamental role of the External Examiner is to assure academic standards and the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and feedback. The External Examiner confirms that the academic standards are comparable to those achieved in equivalent universities internationally. Due regard should be given for professional requirements where necessary.

5.3. Equity

The External Examiner helps to ensure that the assessment practices at the University and the College are fair, valid and rigorous.

5.4. Enhancement

External Examiners provide feedback on the quality of subjects, the overall student experience, and on how teaching, learning, assessment and feedback may be enhanced.

5.5. Objectivity

External Examiners provide objective feedback from a position of independence from the University's activities. <u>As such, External Examiners will not directly participate in the grading of students' work</u>.

5.6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

External Examiners should support the University's strategic commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. UCD provides a positive working, research and learning environment which is open to all regardless of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, race (including ethnic or national origin, nationality or colour), religion or belief, sexual orientation, family status, membership of the travelling community, or socio-economic status. External Examiners should, where possible, ensure that this principle is upheld by the assessment processes within their purview.

6. Approval of External Examiners

6.1. NCAD School Boards nominate External Examiners for submission to Programmes Board (subject Externs) or Research Committee (PhD Externs).

6.2. Programmes Board or Research Committee submit External Examiner CV to Academic Council for approval.

6.3. Following approval at Academic Council, the NCAD External Examiner Co-ordinator forwards External Examiner CV to UCD's Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) for approval.

6.4. On approval by ACCE, UCD informs External Examiner individually confirming their appointment, and confirms approval with NCAD External Examiner Co-ordinator.

7. Process of External Examiners

7.1. External examiners visit for one or two days for interim report (between 01 December and 28 February), and for one or two days for their Final Report (between 01 May and 30 June).

7.2. External Examiners make their own arrangements for travel and accommodation. Alternatively, the School in question may arrange accommodation.

7.3. External Examiners submit Interim and Final Report and Fee & Expenses Claim Form to their programme contact at NCAD.

8. External Examiners' Report and Claim Form

8.1. Programme Contact submits claim form and report to External Examiner Co-ordinator.

8.2. External Examiner Co-ordinator posts the report on Google Drive, and submits expenses to Accounts.

9. Responses to External Examiners' Reports

9.1. Heads of Schools/Departments respond to External Examiners' Final Report on template provided, and submit copy to External Examiner Co-ordinator, who posts the response onto Google Drive.

9.2. Head of Academic Affairs and Research responds to External Examiners on their reports and to the Heads of Programmes on their responses.

9.3. Heads of School carry out a peer review of External Examiner reports from other Schools, which are submitted to Programmes Board, and reported on to Academic Council.

10. Criteria for the Appointment of Subject External Examiners

10.1. The appointment of Subject External Examiners will be based on the following criteria:

10.1.1. External Examiners should have the appropriate academic expertise, experience and, where necessary professional qualifications relating to the subjects to which they are appointed.

10.1.2. They should have up-to-date knowledge of international best practice in the design, development and assessment of relevant curricula.

10.1.3. They should be adequately experienced to adjudicate on comparability of academic standards with peer universities and colleges.

10.1.4. They must not be a staff member or be involved in teaching or assessment in any capacity at NCAD, UCD, or within the National University of Ireland (the latter permitted by exception, under extraordinary circumstances). Care should be taken to ensure that no other possible conflict of interest may arise. Any potential conflicts of interest should be made known to the ACCE upon nomination or as may arise during the term of appointment.

10.1.5. They should not be appointed from the same institution as their predecessor. Exceptions may, on occasion, be permitted in cases where no other option exists.

10.1.6. Former members of NCAD, or UCD staff may not be appointed as External Examiners for a period of at least five years after they have left NCAD or the University. Once an External Examiner has completed their duties, a three-year time interval is required before a Subject External Examiner can be reappointed as an External Examiner at NCAD in any capacity.

11. Term of Appointment

11.1. Subject External Examiners may be appointed for a term of up to four years.

11.2. In very exceptional circumstances, an extension to the appointment of one year may be sought.

11.3. Should a Subject External Examiner not be able to fulfil their term of appointment, formal notification from the NCAD External Examiner Co-ordinator should be given to ACCE, giving at least three months' notice where possible.

11.4. NCAD and UCD reserve the right to terminate the appointment if the Subject External Examiner fails to fulfil their responsibilities or if serious conflicts of interest arise.

12. Role and Responsibilities of the External Examiner

12.1. The External Examiner shall visit NCAD at least once per year (usually twice) during the period of appointment. The duties and responsibilities of the Subject External Examiner shall include the following:

12.1.1. Review curricula and learning outcomes of modules associated with a subject.

12.1.2. Review the content of modules to ensure appropriateness and enhance quality.

12.1.3. Review module terminal examination papers in advance of the examination.

12.1.4. Review assessment strategies and feedback practices.

12.1.5. Meet with a representative group of students to assess the student experience and student quality at NCAD.

12.1.6. Engage in discussions with Schools or key committees within Schools. It is expected that a formal period for such discussions would be arranged by the School during the External Examiner's visit.

12.1.7. Audit of a sample of graded assessments to confirm standards.

12.1.8. Review grade distributions for modules.

12.1.9. Recommend enhancements to teaching, learning, assessment and feedback practices.

12.1.10. Advise on enhancements to module or subject development with reference to applicable Programme Outcomes.

12.2. Additionally, the External Examiner may:

12.2.1. Exceptionally, advise on the potential re-scaling or adjustment of grades for a student or cohort of students.

12.2.2. Raise any appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion issues (covering disability, race and gender etc.), relevant to the assessment of students with the School.

12.3. The External Examiner shall prepare a report at regular intervals (see Section 11) for the Registrar.

13. Role and Responsibilities of the School, Head of School and Programme Director or Head of Department

13.1. The Head of School shall:

13.1.1. Identify, in consultation with the Programme Director or Head of Department and wider academic community an External Examiner for the relevant subject. This must be done in alignment with the UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, to which NCAD is subject.

13.1.2. Submit nominations for External Examiners for approval as set out in this policy and in the manner required by ACCE.

13.1.3. In consultation with the Head of Department and/or Programme Director, and with the agreement of the External Examiner, determine the timeline and specific tasks of the External Examiner as outlined in Section 12.

13.2. The Head of Department or Programme Director will:

13.2.1. Ensure that assessments, including examination papers, have been properly reviewed before being submitted to External Examiners for consideration.

13.2.2. Provide the External Examiner with full information on the subject(s) and associated modules under examination, including any relevant materials such as Module Descriptors and the Programme Outcomes of Programmes in which subjects or modules are involved.

13.2.3. Agree with the External Examiner which assessment components are to be reviewed in advance of the completion of the assessment, and which may be reviewed in retrospect.

13.2.4. Provide statistical reports of module grading outcomes.

13.2.5. Ensure that a report is completed and submitted by the External Examiner within the required timeframe.

13.3. The Head Department or Programme Director shall, as soon as practicable following receipt of the External Examiner's report, provide a formal response to the External Examiner on their Report. The response shall address how any issues raised by the External Examiner shall be dealt with, or why, having reflected on the issues raised, a decision is made not to take any further action.

14. Role and Responsibilities of UCD and NCAD

14.1. Acting on the authority of UCD's Academic Council, ACCE shall review and approve nominations for External Examiners. Approved nominations shall be forwarded to the National University of Ireland (NUI) Senate for final approval.

14.2. It is the responsibility of the Registrar of UCD to:

14.2.1. Notify External Examiners of their appointment on behalf of the NUI.

14.2.2. Notify NCAD of the approval of External Examiners' appointments.

14.2.3. Ensure that External Examiners receive adequate information in relation to the University's Academic Regulations and relevant policies.

14.2.4. Supply External Examiners' Final Reports (received from NCAD) to the NUI.

14.2.5. Report annually to UCD's Academic Council on issues raised in External Examiners' reports and highlight examples of good practice across the University.

14.3. NCAD will:

14.3.1. Ensure that External Examiners receive adequate information in relation to NCAD's regulations and policies.

14.3.2. Provide adequate information in relation to NCAD's programmes and the assessment of programmes, relevant to the External Examiners' subject area.

14.3.3. Submit all External Examiners' Final Reports to UCD for supplying to NUI.

14.3.4. File External Examiners' Reports securely.

14.3.5. Circulate External Examiners' Reports to Heads of School, to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research, and to the Director of NCAD.

14.3.6. Remunerate External Examiners according to approved rates and make payment upon submission of their report.

14.3.7. Reimburse External Examiners for agreed expenses.

14.4. UCD's ACCE shall report annually to UCD Academic Council on gender balance in External Examiner appointments and suggest actions with a view to achieving and maintaining the gender balance target in line with the UCD Gender Equality Action Plan.

15. The External Examiner's Report

15.1. External Examiner Reports provide valuable and independent feedback to NCAD and to the University about their academic standards and the rigour of the assessment process.

15.2. External Examiners shall submit a completed Annual Report, in the form required by NCAD, for each year of their term of appointment. The report should normally be submitted within six weeks of the end of the academic year.

15.3. External Examiners shall complete all relevant sections of the External Examiner's Report.

15.4. External Examiners are asked to report specifically on the principles outlined in Section 4, drawing attention in particular to good practice, areas requiring attention and opportunities to make enhancements.

15.5. An Interim Report may be submitted should the External Examiner identify any issues that require immediate action to facilitate a review before the next academic session.

15.6. The External Examiner Report will be used for review:

    15.6.1. At module and subject level by Schools.

    15.6.2. At programme level by School Boards.

    15.6.3. At College level by the Academic Council.

    15.6.4. At University level by the Registrar.

15.7. In addition to the annual report, External Examiners may, in exceptional circumstances, submit a confidential report at any time to the Registrar of the University highlighting matters of concern.

15.8. At the end of their term of appointment, External Examiners shall complete a final report in addition to their annual report. This should provide the College with a synopsis of the External Examiner's experiences during their term of appointment. In particular, the final report should focus on:

    15.8.1. The practicalities of their experience.

    15.8.2. Whether the roles and responsibilities of an External Examiner, as defined by the College, were adequate.

    15.8.3. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the subject and its constituent modules.

    15.8.4. Trends observed over their term of their appointment.

    15.8.5. Suggested developments and improvements.

    15.8.6. Final comment on overall quality of the subject and its constituent modules.