Code of Practice on External Examining of Taught Programmes

Code of Practice number	LT COP 06
Version:	2.0
Superseded Version:	1.2
Date approved by Management Committee	V 1.1 approved 30.01.15
Originator	Academic Registrar
Date for Review:	Jan 2018

Target Audience	
People who need a detailed knowledge of the Code of Practice	Director of Education; Academic Registrar; Directors of Studies; Staff in the LSTM Quality Unit; Current and prospective external examiners of LSTM taught programmes
People who need a broad understanding of the Code of Practice	All LSTM teaching administrative staff; Students
People who need to know that the Code of Practice exists	All LSTM academic staff

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1 Introduction and Context

1.1 The external examining system at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) ensures that degrees and other academic qualifications awarded in similar subjects or disciplines are comparable with those in different universities and institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom. It serves as a safeguard whereby LSTM can have confidence that its system of assessment is fair and is fairly operated in the determination and, where appropriate, classification of awards and that the quality of education and training it provides gives students a fair and reasonable opportunity to complete their programme of study successfully.

1.2 This Code of Practice is set within the context of the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B7 (External examining, October 2011) and Part A: Expectation A3.4 (Externality).

1.3 Related documents:

- Code of Practice on Monitoring Student Progress and the Conduct of Boards of Examiners
- Procedure for Responding to the Outcomes of the External Examining Process for Taught Programmes
- Procedure for Verifying Examination Questions

2 Scope

2.1 This Code of Practice applies to all LSTM taught programmes.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 External examiners will:

3.1.1 Assist LSTM in monitoring the standards of its awards

3.1.2 Verify that those standards are appropriate for the award, including reference, where appropriate, to national qualifications frameworks and external benchmarks

3.1.3 Ensure that awards made are comparable in standard with those for similar subjects and awards in other UK universities and that the performance of students is consistent with those awards

3.1.4 Ensure that assessment processes are appropriate, rigorous, fair and fairly operated and are in line with LSTM regulations and published programme guidelines

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3.1.5 Ensure that the accreditation requirements of any professional or statutory body are met

3.1.6 Highlight good practice and provide recommendations for the quality of learning opportunities provided to students

3.2 The Director of Education will:

3.2.1 Approve the appointments of external examiners upon the recommendation of the Quality Management Committee

3.2.2 Terminate the appointment of an external examiner whose performance in the role is felt to be unsatisfactory

3.3 The Academic Registrar will:

3.3.1 Ensure that the names, positions and institutions of external examiners are provided to students

3.3.2 Prepare draft responses to the reports of external examiners in consultation with the relevant Directors of Studies

3.4 The Director of Studies will:

3.4.1 Nominate a proposed external examiner for a programme in consultation with the Board of Studies

3.4.2 Arrange for the external examiner to meet informally with students on the programme to provide feedback to the Board of Studies on the students' perception of their learning experience

3.4.3 Ensure that the report from the external examiner is discussed by the Board of Studies and that appropriate actions are taken

3.5 The Quality Management Committee will:

3.5.1 Approve draft responses to the reports of external examiners

3.5.2 Provide Learning and Teaching Committee with an annual summary of issues raised in the reports from external examiners and any actions to be taken

4 Selection of External Examiners

4.1 No LSTM award will be made without the participation in the examining process of at least one examiner external to LSTM or a collaborating institution. For some programmes, more than one external examiner may be appointed to cover the range of subject matter. For a modular programme, each module will be assigned to a specific external examiner.

4.2 Proposed external examiners must demonstrate:

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4.2.1 Knowledge and understanding of agreed reference points in the UK higher education sector for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality

4.2.2 Competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme

4.2.3 Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined and/or extensive practitioner experience

4.2.4 Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures

4.2.5 Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers

4.2.6 Familiarity with the standards to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed

4.2.7 Fluency in English and, where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that external examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements)

4.2.8 The satisfaction of applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies

4.2.9 Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula

4.2.10 Competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience

4.3 Appointments will not be made of any individual in the following categories or circumstances:

4.3.1 A member of a governing body or current employee of LSTM or one of its collaborative partners

4.3.2 Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study

4.3.3 Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme

4.3.4 Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme

4.3.5   Former LSTM staff or students unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme(s)

4.3.6   The succession of an external examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department, or equivalent, and institution

4.3.7   Where an individual has previously been appointed for the maximum four year duration as external examiner, unless a period of five years has elapsed since their last appointment.

4.4   The following restrictions will also normally apply to the appointment of external examiners. However, exceptions may be approved by the Director of Education where the number of potential external examiners is limited due to the specialist nature of the programme:

4.4.1   Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question

4.4.2   A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution

4.4.3   The appointment of more than one external examiner from the same department, or equivalent, of the same institution

4.4.4   Where an individual would consequently hold more than two external examiner appointments at the same time

4.5   If a programme needs to meet the requirements of a professional and statutory body, it may be appropriate to appoint an external examiner from outside the higher education system.

5   Appointment of External Examiners

5.1   External examiners will be appointed for one year with the possibility of annual renewals for a maximum term of four years. In exceptional cases an extension period of one additional year will be granted (for example to ensure continuity if a programme is coming to an end). Except with special approval from the Director of Education, no external examiner will serve for more than two terms. Appointments will be phased wherever possible to facilitate the mentoring of new examiners.

5.2   External examiners will be responsible to the LSTM Director of Education for the execution of their duties. They will be given a written offer of appointment outlining their specific duties, including information on how they may raise a matter of serious concern, together with information on the module(s)/programme for which they will be responsible. New external examiners will be offered the opportunity to visit LSTM to discuss their responsibilities and to familiarise themselves with the institution.

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5.3   If the performance of an external examiner is felt to be unsatisfactory, or there is a change in circumstance relevant to Section 4.3, LSTM reserves the right to not renew an appointment or, exceptionally, to terminate an appointment mid-session. Termination will be made with immediate effect with no right of appeal and any fee due may be made on a *pro rata* basis at the discretion of the Director of Education. Grounds for non-renewal or termination of an appointment may include:

5.3.1   Non-submission of reports by the prescribed deadlines

5.3.2   Non-attendance at advertised Boards of Examiners, whether in person or remotely

5.3.3   Any conduct deemed unprofessional

6   Participation of External Examiners in Assessment Procedures

6.1   All draft examination papers should be approved by the responsible external examiner in line with the *Procedure for Verifying Examination Questions.*

6.2   External examiners appointed at 'subject' level will be expected to review assessment practice, performance, content and structure across a suite of modules or programme components; to endorse module or component marks; and to attend the Module Review Board. External examiners appointed at 'programme and subject' level will be expected in addition to review assessment practice, performance, content and structure across a programme; to endorse final awards; and to attend the Final Board of Examiners.

6.3   External examiners have the right to see all assessed work contributing to a module or programme for which they are responsible. In practice, they should review a sufficient sample of assessed work to reach a judgment on whether marking has been carried out consistently and to an appropriate standard and the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Any mark adjustments suggested by an external examiner based on consideration of a sample must be reflected in similar adjustments to work not included in the sample.

6.4   External examiners must not hold selective *viva voce* examinations except for the specific purpose of determining recipients of student prizes.

6.5   External examiners will participate in meetings of the Board of Examiners as detailed in the *Code of Practice on Monitoring Student Progress and the Conduct of Boards of Examiners.* External examiners will be given advance notice of the dates of meetings that they are expected to attend. In the exceptional circumstance that an external examiner is unavailable, arrangements must be made for consultation by telephone or other means.

6.6   External examiners will be invited to attend meetings of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee and will be given the minutes.

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6.7 Following the final Board of Examiners, external examiners must indicate their approval of the outcomes of the assessment process by signing the final mark sheet. If an external examiner is unwilling to endorse the outcomes, the Board of Examiners will withhold all results and the Director of Education will arrange for another external examiner to give an independent view.

7 Reports and Feedback

7.1 An external examiner is expected to submit a report within three weeks of the final Boards of Examiners. External examiners in their final year of appointment are expected to include an overview of their experiences as part of their final report. Reports must not refer to students or staff members by name or provide any means of identifying individuals.

7.2 External examiners have a right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Director of LSTM by means of a separate confidential report.

7.3 Where an external examiner expresses a serious concern regarding systemic failings with the academic standards of a programme or programmes, and is not satisfied with the action taken by the Director of LSTM, the examiner may invoke the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) concerns scheme, or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

7.4 Reports will be received, responded to and acted on in line with the *Procedure for responding to the outcomes of the external examining process for taught programmes.*

7.5 Reports and responses will be made available to current students and staff. Anyone wishing to raise any issues arising from a report or response will be advised to contact the Director of Education.

8 External Examining by LSTM Staff

8.1 The mutual benefit and importance of the work undertaken by LSTM staff as external examiners for other institutions is recognised. LSTM staff wishing to undertake external examining duties will be supported to do so.

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Annex of Modifications		
Version	**Date of issue**	**Details of modification from previous version**
1.1	30.01.15	Minor edits following review by Management Committee 29.07.15
1.2	13.04.15	Sub-paragraphs 7.2 & 7.3 inserted following UoL accreditation visit on 02.03.15
2.0		Change of name of Mitigating Circumstances Committee to Extenuating Circumstances Committee

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