

Central Film School

2025-26

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External Examining Policy

1. Purpose of External Examiners

- 1.1. External examiners are used throughout higher education as a way of bringing external moderation into institutions, primarily to ensure the comparability of national standards across the sector. All contact with external examiners, including correspondence and general questions or requests, should be directed through the Director of Courses & Curriculum, Course Leader or the Learning & Teaching Support Manager.
- 1.2. External examiners (and other external experts) are asked to provide informative comment and recommendations upon whether or not:
 - The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.
 - The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.
 - Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.
 - The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.
- 1.3. All undergraduate and postgraduate courses must appoint an external examiner. Some external examiners may be shared across courses within a subject area where there is sufficient commonality for this to be beneficial to the process.

- 1.4. External examiners are experts in the relevant disciplines of the course, with experience of examining, and able to commit to the time required for the work.
- 1.5. No course or part of a course contributing to an award of the School should be without an external examiner at any stage, unless in exceptional circumstances. New external examiners should be appointed to overlap or immediately succeed their predecessors.

2. Criteria for Appointment

- 2.1. Proposals for the appointment of external examiners shall be submitted to the Quality Assurance and Registry Committee accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae, which together shall include the following information:
 - name and designation
 - current post (or, if retired, most recent post)
 - qualifications
 - expertise (academic and/or professional)
 - experience of examining either internally or externally
 - other current appointments as external examiner
 - proposed dates of appointment and programme subject areas (or modules) to be covered by appointment.
- 2.2. After initial review, the proposed appointment will be confirmed by the Academic Board or representative of the board.
- 2.3. All external examiners should be fluent in the English language and be able to evidence eligibility to work in the UK.
- 2.4. External examiners must be able to take an independent, critical and informed view of the programmes for which they are appointed. They will be expected to be persons of seniority and experience who are able to command authority, that is to say, they should normally be equivalent to CFS' level of senior academic. Other kinds of seniority, such as evidence of peer esteem and leadership, may however be deemed appropriate in certain circumstances, particularly in professional specialist areas.
- 2.5. External examiners should have experience of teaching and internal examining in the area of expertise and at the level for which they are to be appointed. It is desirable that they should also have experience of external examination elsewhere to provide a wider basis for comparison of standards. A less experienced external examiner may be considered for appointment to a team that includes more experienced external examiners.
- 2.6. Where applicable, external examiners must meet any additional criteria set by the relevant professional body or regulatory body responsible for accrediting or recognising the course.

- 2.7. External examiners who already hold two or more external examining positions at first degree level should not normally be considered eligible for appointment.
- 2.8. External examining appointments should not be reciprocal. The department concerned should state if a member of its staff holds an external examining position in the same institution at which the proposed external examiner is employed.
- 2.9. External examiners should not be concerned in course delivery, advice to students about the course or its examination and assessment, nor have been a consultant for validation within the last three years.
- 2.10. The examining team should not contain two examiners who are (or were recently) colleagues in the same department. Nor should such colleagues be appointed consecutively to take over from each other. Close acquaintances of the outgoing external examiner should also not be appointed consecutively.
- 2.11. Former members of staff or students of the School or of its associated institutions should not become external examiners before a gap of three years has elapsed.

3. Appointment Period

- 3.1. External examiners shall be appointed for an initial period of three years, extendable by one year only.
- 3.2. The maximum term of appointment is four years, after which time external examiners cannot be re-appointed until a period equal to their last term of office has elapsed.
- 3.3. In very exceptional circumstances an appointment may be extended to five years, for example, when a small number of students are the final cohort on a scheme.
- 3.4. Where an external examiner holds two external examining positions in the same Institution, one of which may have commenced later than the other, the overall period of appointment as external examiner to the School shall not normally exceed four years.

4. Post Appointment

- 4.1. Following approval of the appointment of an external examiner by, or on behalf of the Academic Board, the Director of Courses & Curriculum will send a letter of appointment to the external examiner concerned. A copy of this letter will be sent to the course leader concerned and the Learning & Teaching Support Manager.
- 4.2. The letter of appointment will contain the following information:

- dates of term of office and programme subject area modules for which the external examiner is responsible
- information leaflet on external examiners duties including background to the assessment process and guidelines on external examiner's reports
- information about fees and expenses
- a copy of the report of the previous external examiner, which will include an end of term appointment summary.
- the assessment requirements and criteria regulations

5. Induction of Examiners

- 5.1. On appointment, examiners will be invited to attend the institution to meet with relevant staff and students, see the facilities, and to gain background information on the course, its history, and the aspirations for the course and its students.
- 5.2. During this visit, necessary documentation such as policies on assessment, reporting forms and guidance will be provided to the examiner.
- 5.3. If a site visit is not feasible due to distance, or other circumstances, the Academic Team or Learning & Teaching Support Manager will arrange these meetings to take place online.

6. Terms of Reference

- 6.1. Central Film School, in common with many similar higher education institutions, does not accept the model which gives absolute authority to the external examiner.
- 6.2. Whilst external examiners will always be accorded the respect due to their experience and academic standing, the School does not give them the power of veto. The role of the external examiner is perceived as that of a moderator, not a "second marker". As such, whilst external examiners may recommend an adjustment to marks across a cohort, they cannot change individual marks.
- 6.3. The School remains committed to the maintenance of standards and expects course teams to collaborate willingly and openly with external examiners, in the best interests of the School and its students.

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1. The main responsibilities can be summarised broadly as follows:
 - An external examiner should assess the standard of academic awards and student performance with regard to internal reference points and external standards and frameworks;

- They should verify that the process and outcome of assessment is rigorous, fair and equitable. They should ensure that the standard of award is maintained;
- External examiners should ensure that courses are comparable with the Higher Education sector;
- External examiners should comment on good practice and make recommendations for enhancement.

8. Duties

8.1. External examiners for the School's courses are charged with the following duties:

- to moderate the form and content of proposed assessments (and reassessments) and comment upon the suitability of proposed projects; to confirm the appropriateness of alternative assessment arrangements made to take account of student disabilities;
- to have an understanding of the structure and the delivery of the course(s) to be assessed (by documentation and by an appropriate involvement with the course team);
- to satisfy themselves that all students are assessed fairly in relation to the relevant syllabus and regulations, and that students have fulfilled the course aims and objectives;
- to moderate student assessments by seeing a sample/range of student assessments, in order to judge the standard of student performance;
- to satisfy themselves that:
 - assessment schemes are transparent;
 - they enable a fair and consistent consideration of the extent to which learning outcomes provide evidence demonstrating that learning objectives have been met;
 - the assessment criteria through which these judgements are arrived at are clear, easily communicated to, and understood by, students;
- to assist the assessment board by carrying out viva voce examinations, if these are thought to be appropriate;
- to see that the classification bands or distinction levels are correctly applied to the final assessment;
- to ensure that the performance of students is comparable with that of their peers on similar courses across the United Kingdom;

- to seek appropriate evidence that any marks or grades carried forward to the final assessment have been appropriately assessed;
- to comment upon the content and regulations of the course(s), and provide suggestions for its enhancement and strategic development;
- to provide the School with an annual report, using the template provided, reflecting on the assessment process and commenting on comparability with national standards. In addition to this report, the external examiner may, in exceptional circumstances, raise issues of concern directly with the CEO by way of a confidential report;
- to offer comment and advice on the learning aims of the course(s), the extent to which these are met and the contribution of the staff, learning environment and institutional management in achieving this.

9. Attendance at Assessment Boards

9.1. External examiners should:

- Be notified of, and attend, the Exam Boards and Awards Boards for all programmes which lead to an award, and to which they have been appointed as external examiner
- Assure themselves that School's policy and procedures have been applied fairly and equitably and any decisions made of the Board of Examiners are consistent with those policy or procedures;
- Provide initial reflections and commentary at assessment boards to highlight key strengths and weaknesses, including any initial recommendations for action.

10. Annual Reports

- 10.1. All external examiners at the School are required to produce an annual report within one calendar month of the end of the academic year. This is integral to the continuous improvement process conducted by all courses.

11. Termination

- 11.1. All external examiners are entitled to submit their resignation for any reason. However, the School would expect that such action would not put the standards of awards in jeopardy. The School would therefore

expect sufficient notice (a minimum of three months) in order to make revised arrangements for awards.

- 11.2. The School reserves the right to terminate the contract of any external examiner, subject to the agreement of the Academic Board. Such action will only be taken where there is evidence that key duties are not being carried out, resulting in a lack of evidence of the standards of University awards and normally following efforts to rectify the situation. Such actions may include non-receipt of an annual report or routine non- attendance at Exam or Awards Board meetings. The only other grounds for termination is when a conflict of interests arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

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