

Notting Hill Academy of Music Policy External Examiners

Version	2.0
Effective date	August 2021
Date for review	August 2022
Policy owner	Head of Quality
Reference points	https://www.esc.ac.uk/about-esc/policies-and-procedures , https://www.bruford.ac.uk/about/who-we-are/policies-and-procedures/ , https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment
Audience/handling notes	Internal
Dissemination and implementation plan	<p>This External Examiner Policy and Procedure will be published on the NHAM website and student portal for reference by students, staff, and all other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Lecturers will receive training in how to apply this policy and its procedures. They will also be directed to where it is published. The Administration Manager will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to academic staff; the Administration Manager will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to support staff.</p> <p>Students will be informed by email that this information is available on the student portal and NHAM website.</p>
Date approved	September 2021

Introduction

1. The appointment of External Examiners and the scrutiny by them of the marks and awards made by the boards of examiners is a fundamental process of the NHAM. This process provides independent and external input into NHAM's assessment processes and is an important part of the Academy's quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms.

Nomination and appointment of External Examiners

2. In the nomination and appointment of external examiners regard must be given to the following:

- a) Only persons of seniority and experience should be appointed: external examiner nominees will need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of UK higher education regulatory framework for academic standards; competence and experience in the subject area; relevant academic and/or professional qualifications and/or extensive practitioner experience; and competence in assessing students' knowledge and skills at the relevant level;
- b) In order to have sufficient time for the proper performance of their function, individuals should not normally act as an external examiner for more than two other institutions;
- c) An external examiner should not normally be appointed from a department in an institution where a member of NHAM faculty is serving as an examiner, although exceptions may on occasions be unavoidable, for example, in the case of subjects taught only in a very small number of institutions;
- d) Former members of staff or students of NHAM shall not be appointed as external examiners at the College before a lapse of at least five years or, for former members of staff, sufficient time for students taught by that member of staff to have passed through the system, whichever is the longer;

e) Persons invited to act as external examiners will be asked at the time of appointment to declare any interest or connection with any student on the programme for which they would be acting as examiner; this includes personal and professional connections. This would normally preclude their appointment. The Academic Registrar or nominee should be advised of any such instances and will make the final decision on whether an appointment can be made;

f) External examiners must be eligible to work in the UK and provide evidence of this to NHAM;

3. Chairs of Boards should consider the practicalities of travel involved in enabling an External Examiner's to attend the College as required.

Role of External Examiners

4. The primary duty of an external examiner is to report on: a) whether the academic standards set for the awards, or part thereof, are appropriate; b) the extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students, and have been fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance; c) the standards of student performance in the programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine; d) where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in other higher education institutions; e) good practice they have identified.

5. External examiners have the right to inspect any assessed material.

6. The Head of Teaching and Learning will determine the distribution of duties between external examiners. External examiners may be asked to review a sample of assessed material (including essays/reports/dissertations) and to observe oral and practical examinations where these are specified. In those cases where it is agreed that the internal examiners should make a selection of scripts to be scrutinised by an external examiner, the principles for such selection must be agreed in advance.

7. External examiners should have enough evidence to determine that internal marking, and determination of award and where appropriate classification is of an appropriate standard and is consistent. External examiners should see a sample of examination scripts and other assessed material from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range. External examiners should also see all scripts and other material assessed internally as failures. To carry out these duties effectively external examiners should not be asked to carry out any marking duties.

8. External examiners should receive evidence of moderation processes in with the sample of assessed work.

9. External examiners may be given an opportunity to meet students to gain more insight into the views of students about their programme of study. Where this occurs, arrangements will be made by the administrative team. Students are not permitted to make direct contact with external examiners regarding their individual performance. External examiners may refer to feedback from meetings with students but this should be anonymised. External Examiners are not expected to be involved in

the assessment of any student, including vivas but can be invited to observe assessments where practicable.

10. External examiners should have sufficient time to scrutinise examination scripts and other assessed work adequately, normally by receiving these at least seven days in advance of an Examination Board meeting. This requirement will normally only be waived by request of the external examiner (if, for example, the external examiner prefers to review the scripts by visiting the Academy in person before the meeting).

11. External examiners should not recommend the amendment of marks for individual students or pieces of work unless they have seen all of the assessed work for the module in question. External examiners can recommend that all marks within a module be “re-scaled” if, as a result of their moderation, they consider that the general standard of marking within the module is too harsh or too lenient.

12. External examiners normally are required to attend meetings of Boards of Examiners at which the majority of decisions are made. The Head of Teaching and Learning will ensure that external examiners are invited to attend such meetings and are given sufficient advance notice of the dates of such meetings. Where possible, travel arrangements for external examiners should be made well in advance to ensure the best rates are achieved.

13. External examiners must approve each programme’s report on finalists, normally at the meeting at which awards are recommended or awarded. In so doing external examiners must certify that the standard of the assessment was appropriate for a programme of study at a level consonant with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and that the assessments had been conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations and Programme Specification.

Induction and Training of External Examiners

14. Upon appointment each external examiner will be supplied with the programme’s regulations and specification, programme handbooks and module specifications, the past year’s External Examiners’ reports and the responses made to these, and minutes of the last meeting of the Board. These may be provided either electronically or in hard copy. External Examiners should also be given access to all NHAM policies relating to assessment.

15. The Head of Teaching and Learning is responsible for ensuring that external examiners are supplied upon appointment with any additional information on practices relating to assessment on programmes within the external examiner’s remit (including details of modules to be reviewed by that external examiner, details of any sampling policies developed in accordance with the NHAM Policy on Marking & Moderation and any other duties that the external examiner will be expected to perform as part of their role).

16. External examiners will also be provided with any updates to assessment policies and procedures and details of any programme or module amendments by the programme team, during their period in office.

17. Wherever possible, an experienced internal examiner should be nominated to act as a mentor / direct point of contact to individuals who are new to the post of external examiner, in order to give formal and informal advice on the requirements of the role.

Reporting

18. External examiners are required to make annual written reports to the Head of Teaching and Learning following the final Board meeting of the academic year. The Head of Teaching and Learning will arrange for any points requiring a response to be raised, at both subject and, if issues arise, at institutional level, these points will be copied to the Chief Operating Officer. If required, a response to the issues raised should be provided by the Head of Teaching and Learning and sent to the external examiner in question. This process should be completed within two months of receiving the report. Copies of the external examiners' reports and responses should be provided to all appropriate programme staff by the administrative team.

19. External examiners will be asked to comment upon: a) the academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses; b) the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort; c) the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance; d) the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration; e) the design, structure and marking of assessments; f) the procedures for assessments and examinations; g) whether they have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and are encouraged to request additional information where needed; h) the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform; i) the extent to which the external examiner's comments in his/her previous report have been considered and appropriately acted upon.

20. External examiners have the right to raise matters of serious concern at the highest level of the Academy through the Head of Quality. When all institutional avenues have been exhausted, external examiners may contact the QAA through its Concerns scheme.

21. External examiner reports will form part of the evidence base for annual quality monitoring and internal reviews. A summary report on themes arising from external examiner reports across the NHAM will be considered at Education Committee on an annual basis.

Termination of Appointment

22. External examiners may terminate their appointment at any time but should normally arrange this to take effect at the end of an academic year. Where this is not possible, the resignation is subject to three months' notice. A request for termination should be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar or Head of Teaching and Learning.

32. The NHAM may, where an external examiner fails to fulfil their duties (including regular non-attendance at boards and non-submission of annual reports) and/or where there is a breakdown in the relationship with the Academy, terminate that examiner's appointment. A request to terminate an external examiner's appointment may only be approved by Academic Board upon the recommendation of the Head of Teaching and Learning.