For APRC APRC.13.06.**06**
17th June 2013

Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision) – amendments for 2013/14

Topic and purpose of the paper

1. APRC is asked ***to consider*** and, if thought appropriate, ***to approve*** the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision) (Appendix A) to take effect from 1 August 2013.

Commentary

2. The University introduced a revised Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision) for 2012/13 in response to Chapter B7: External Examining of the Quality Assurance Agency's new UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which also came into effect for 2012/13.

3. During 2012/13 the University Registry has received feedback on the Code of Practice from Schools. As a result of this feedback minor amendments are required to the wording of three clauses (5.8, 5.9, and 5.11).

4. The University Finance Office's recent decision to remove FIN14 forms from use also requires a change to one clause in the Code of Practice (3.3).

5. The proposed amendments to the Code of Practice are listed below. The revised sections of the Code (showing tracked changes) are detailed in Appendix A. The amendments were approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and reported to the University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC) on 1 May 2013.

Clause	Description
3.3	Removal of reference to the FIN14 form
5.8	Clarification that any additional moderation proposed by external examiners must be carried out by internal markers
5.9	Separating this statement from 5.8 helps to emphasise that external examiners are not permitted to alter the marks for an individual student
5.11	Re-wording of the clause to enable external examiners to participate in further duties (e.g. in the case of clinical assessments) but not restricted solely to PSRB requirements

Recommendation(s)

6. APRC is invited to ***consider and, if thought appropriate, approve*** the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision) (Appendix A) to take effect from 1 August 2013.

M Jeffery
Academic Policy Partner
Registry
May 2013

Appendix A

Code of Practice on External Examining (Taught Provision) – 2013/14 Revisions

3. Induction

3.1 On appointment each external examiner will receive a confirmation of appointment letter from the University, specifying the programme(s) or module(s) to which the external examiner is assigned and details of the fee to be paid.

3.2 All newly-appointed external examiners will also receive an invitation to attend the University's external examiner induction event.

3.3 The University will send all newly-appointed external examiners:

- a copy of this Code of Practice;
- a copy of the University 'Guidance for External Examiners' document;
- web links to relevant University legislation;
- the web link to the external examiner online resource (www.birmingham.ac.uk/external);
- guidance on claiming fees and expenses, ~~and a FIN14 claim form~~;
- links to the relevant national regulatory framework (QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education).

3.4 Schools will supplement this information with documentation specific to the external examiner's appointment. Schools are required to send the following information to newly-appointed external examiners, as a minimum:

- programme handbooks (to include programme specifications);
- module specifications;
- student handbooks;
- marking and assessment criteria;
- guidance on marking and moderation practices;
- relevant QAA subject benchmark statements;
- details of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements where appropriate.

3.5 Schools should also provide newly-appointed external examiners with a copy of the previous external examiner's final report and any actions resulting from the issues raised therein.

3.6 Schools should ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for external examiners, particularly in the case of less experienced external examiners who may benefit from some form of mentoring or working within a team of external examiners.

3.7 Schools should inform external examiners of the dates of meetings they are required to attend (e.g. Board of Examiners meetings) at the earliest opportunity.

3.8 Schools should also provide, in advance of the assessment period, the process and timescale for the moderation and return of students' work, with clearly stated deadlines.

5. Scrutiny of marking

5.1 External examiners are appointed to act as a moderator of academic standards, to comment on the quality of academic provision and comparability of standards and student performance.

5.2 For programmes of study with only one appointed external examiner, the examiner should have access to all assessments set for each module that contributes to the final degree

classification. Where a team of external examiners is appointed to a programme, modules should be allocated to individual external examiners by agreement on the basis of their subject expertise.

5.3 External examiners should be provided with all draft examination papers and other major pieces of assessment that contribute to the final award for comment and approval, together with model answers where appropriate. Where suggestions for amendment are provided by an external examiner, Schools should reply to the external examiner to confirm how their advice has been acted upon.

5.4 External examiners are required to consider the consistency and accuracy of marking standards for a programme of study, through reviewing the marking within each module, and between modules of the same level.

5.5 External examiners should be provided with marking criteria used in relation to the assessment of a module, and a mark spreadsheet for each module to which they have been assigned. The mark spreadsheet should list the mean, standard deviation and pass/fail rate for each module with corresponding figures for the previous 3-5 years.

5.6 External examiners should review a sample of all forms of assessment from across the full mark range (including, for team-taught modules, a selection which shows the full mark range for each assessment question). This exercise should be completed for all modules that contribute to the final award.

5.7 Schools should agree in advance with the external examiner(s) the size and scope of the sample of work to be scrutinised, within the parameters outlined in 5.6 above, in order to provide sufficient evidence for the external examiner to determine that internal marking is of an appropriate standard.

5.8 If an external examiner does not agree with the marks awarded within a sample of work they may propose a level of moderation (additional to that already undertaken under School policy) or re-marking by the internal markers. This must apply to all students who had undertaken the unit of assessment. ~~External examiners are not permitted to alter the mark of an individual student's work from the sample sent for scrutiny.~~

5.9 External examiners are not permitted to alter the mark of an individual student's work.

5.10 External examiners should not normally be expected to adjudicate between internal markers. Disagreements between internal markers should be resolved before a sample of work is seen by the external examiner. This may be through the use of a third marker, or consultation with senior colleagues within the School. In all cases it should be transparent to the external examiner how the final mark was decided. If, in exceptional cases, a mark has not been agreed internally, the views of the external examiner can be taken into account in determining the final mark.

5.11 An external examiner may, as agreed with the School, complete further duties (e.g. participation in clinical assessments) in respect of the assessment processes, for instance where required by a PSRB. ~~Where required by a PSRB, external examiners may, as agreed with the School, complete further duties in respect of the assessment process as necessary.~~ The University Registry should be notified of such arrangements ~~(e.g. participation in clinical assessments)~~ by the School.