

INSTITUTE OF BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS GUIDELINES

1.1 The Role of External Examiners

1.1.1 Role of External Examiners: General

The role of the external examiner(s) approved by IBSL is to ensure that quality assurance procedures are carried out on behalf of the Institute and that the awards of qualifications for learners are made in accordance with assessment guidelines for each qualification.

1.1.2 Role of External Examiners: Individual Programmes of Study

External examiners may also be involved in the approval of programmes of study for individual learners.

1.1.3 Rights and Responsibilities: General

In order to exercise their rights and carry out their responsibilities, external examiner(s) must be:

- Competent in assessing learners' knowledge and skills at the appropriate level being studied;
- Expert and/or experienced in the field of study concerned;
- Impartial in judgement;
- Properly briefed on their role, the programme and IBSL's requirements.

The functions and attributes of external examiners are specified below:

a) **Impartiality**

Be able to judge learners impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with:

- the submitting Centre staff
- learners.

b) **Confirm Standards for Awards**

Confirm that the standards set for the awards are appropriate by referencing:

- relevant national subject benchmark statements
- the framework for the qualifications
- the qualifications and credit framework (QCF)
- IBSL approval and validation documentation
- any appropriate professional, statutory and regulatory requirements.

c) **Compare Performance of Learners**

Be able to compare the performance of learners with that of their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere, and across different programme deliveries.

d) Approve Assessment

Approve:

- the form and content of proposed assessment papers, coursework and other assessments which count towards an award at the appropriate level being studied.

In order to:

- ensure that the assessments are capable of measuring achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- in such a way that external examiners will be able to judge whether they have fulfilled the objectives of the programme and reached the required standard.

e) Proposed Changes to Assessment: Consultation

Be consulted about:

- any proposed changes to the approved assessment regulations which will directly affect learners currently registered for the qualification.

f) Examiners' Meetings

External Examiners have the right to attend or participate in the following meetings:

- Boards of Examiners
- Examination Committees
- Any meetings in which a review of the decision about individual awards is taken during the examiner's period of office

g) Access to Assessed Work

In order to ensure that each learner is fairly placed in relation to the rest of the cohort, external examiners have the right:

- to see the work of a representative sample of learners from any Centre;
- to see samples of the work of learners proposed for each qualification;
- of appropriate access to all assessed work where practicable.

h) Moderation

External examiners have the right to moderate the marks awarded by Teacher-Assessors or Centres

i) Alteration to Sets of Marks

Exceptionally, the external examiner(s) may propose to the Board of Examiners or Examination Committee the moving of the threshold boundary in relation to a particular cohort of learners on a particular qualification.

Such a proposal may be made in respect of:

- the pass/fail threshold
- other classification boundaries.

In such a case, discussion will be held with internal examiners in accordance with the provisions for the conduct of Boards of Examiners.

j) Viva Voce Examinations

Have the right to conduct a *viva voce* examination of learner. Such additional assessment can only raise and may not lower a learner's marks.

k) Attendance at Board of Examiners Meetings

Have the right:

- to attend Examination Committees;
- to attend any meeting of the Board of Examiners at which decisions on recommendations for awards are made;
- and
- to ensure that those recommendations have been reached by means according IBSL' requirements.

l) Participation in Reviews of Decisions

Have the right to participate as required in any reviews of decisions about individual learners' awards taken during the examiner's period of office.

m) Annual Standardisation Meeting

It is compulsory for an external examiner to attend an annual standardisation meeting.

n) Return Annual Reports

External examiners are required to report annually in writing to IBSL and within four weeks of the date of the Board of Examiners for the award they examine on:

- the effectiveness of the assessments
- and
- any lessons to be drawn from them.

o) Other Reports

External examiners are required to provide other reports as required by IBSL.

p) Matters of Serious Concern

External examiners have the right to report to IBSL through the Chair of the Board of Trustees or its appointed Chief Executive on any matters of serious concern arising from the assessments which put at risk the standard of IBSL's award, or jeopardise the fair treatment of learners.

1.4 Powers of External Examiners**1.4.1 An Award of an IBSL Qualification**

No recommendation for the conferment of an award of an IBSL qualification may be made without the written consent of the approved external examiner(s).

Normally, this is through the signing-off of the relevant Coursework or Qualification documentation but may also be by oral agreement followed by written confirmation.

1.4.2 Confirmation of the Proceedings of the Board or Committee

Signing-off of the relevant Coursework or Qualification documentation is also confirmation that:

- the external examiner is satisfied that the learner has achieved the qualification in accordance with the relevant assessment criteria;
- and

- any further consideration of the decisions made at the Board of Examiners and/or Examination Committee is limited to a review of a decision of a Board of Examiners or Examination Committee and an appeal against the outcome of that review.

1.4.3 Matters of Principle

On any matter which the external examiner(s) have declared a matter of principle, the decision of the external examiner(s) shall either:

- be accepted as final by the Board of Examiners
or
- be referred to the Board of Trustees of the organisation or its appointed Chief Executive.
- Any unresolved disagreement between external examiners shall be referred to the Board of Trustees of the organisation or its appointed Chief Executive.

1.5.4 Disagreements

(A) Between External Examiner(s) and Board of Examiners
Any unresolved disagreement between external examiner(s) and the Board of Examiners shall be referred to the Board of Trustees or its appointed Chief Executive.

(B) Between External Examiners
Where an external examiner disagrees with other external examiners, and will not agree a recommendation, it is for the Board of Trustees or its appointed Chief Executive to ensure that the matter is resolved.

If the disagreement concerns only one or more individual learners, the recommendations for all other learners should be signed.

1.5 Duties of External Examiners

1.5.1 Duties of External Examiners

On appointment, external examiners are assigned specific duties, which may include:

- (A) Awards and Progression
Participation in decisions about recommendations for the award(s) and learner progression within a qualification.
- (B) Moderation
Moderation of:
- units of a programme
or
 - groups of units, appropriate to their subject or professional expertise.

The units may also contribute to an award for which the external examiner is not responsible.

- (C) Individual Programmes of Study (IPOS)
Participation in decisions about the approval of individual programmes of study.
- (D) Changes to Assessment Regulations
Participation in decisions about changes in the assessment regulations for a qualification.
- (E) Modifications
Participating in decisions and/or approval of:
 - new units and/or qualifications
 - modifications to existing units and/or qualifications.
- (F) Approving Centres
Participating in decisions that lead to the approval of:
 - A new Centre
 - Re-appointment of a previous Centre

11.6 The Appointment of External Examiners

1.6.1 Approval

All nominations of external examiners are required to be approved by the IBSL Board of Trustees or by approved sub-committees on their behalf.

Final approval of external examiners rests with Board of Trustees.

1.6.2 Process of Appointment

The process of appointment of external examiners must be in accordance with the current IBSL criteria.

1.7 Chief External Examiner

1.7.1 Circumstances of Appointment

A chief external examiner may be appointed from within the team of approved external examiners to lead the Board of Examiners, and provide guidance to other examiners.

1.7.2 Approval of Appointment

The approval of the appointment of an external examiner who is to act in this capacity is subject to the normal criteria and the person is expected to have had or to retain subject responsibilities within the examining team.

1.7.3 Experience of Chief External Examiner

Where a chief external examiner is to be appointed, the nominee should have sufficient external examining experience to:

- take an overview of the qualification (or suite of qualifications)
- ensure that a consistent standard is maintained across the range of subjects to be examined
- adjudicate in any dispute between a Centre and the decision of an external examiner

1.8 Criteria for the Selection of External Examiners

1.8.1 Number of External Examiners

The number of external examiners to be appointed will vary from time to time subject to demands placed on IBSL

1.8.2 Subject Expertise

The number of external examiners appointed will reflect the major subject areas of the qualification (or suite of qualifications). There may also be particular requirements laid down by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies in relation assessment of qualifications.

1.8.3 Criteria for Selection

Appointment of external examiners is subject to the criteria specified below.

- (A) **Academic/Professional Qualification**
An external examiner's academic and/or professional qualifications are in an appropriate subject and at a level appropriate to the topmost level in the suite of qualifications..
- (B) **Ratification by Professional/Statutory Bodies**
Any professional and statutory bodies ratify, where appropriate, the external examiner appointment.
- (C) **Academic/Professional Standing**
An external examiner is of an appropriate academic and/or professional standing to maintain the comparability of standards in the context of the qualification subject area.
- (D) **Experience**
An external examiner has sufficient recent experience of examining at the required level, preferably including experience as an external examiner, or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing learners in the subject area.
- (E) **Indications of Standing, Expertise and Breadth of Experience**
Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:
 - the present (or last, if retired) post and place of work;
 - the range and scope of experience across the subject area(s) of the qualification(s);
 - current and recent active involvement in research / scholarly / professional / consultancy activities in the field of study concerned.

1.9 Support of External Examiners by a Mentor

1.9.3 Mentors

- (A) **Requirement for a Mentor**
The external examiner should work initially, normally for one calendar year, alongside an appointed mentor

- (B) **The Role of the Mentor**
 The mentor role is to support an inexperienced external examiner in ensuring that the proper processes of assessment have taken place in terms of:
- confirmation of standards
 - justice to the learners.
- The mentor should provide advice to the mentee on:
- moderation of examination papers and other forms of assessment
 - sampling of learners' work
 - providing advice to the Board of Examiners
 - presenting an annual report
- (C) **Experience of Mentors**
 Normally mentors will have significant external examiner experience. It is acceptable to ask the retiring external examiner or another external examiner within the faculty to fulfil the role of mentor.
- (D) **Term of Office of a mentor (tenure)**
 The period of tenure for a mentor will be for one calendar year and this is usually the first year of appointment.

1. 10 Discharge of Duties

1.10.1 Other Examining Commitments

External examiners will not have other such extensive examining commitments that they cannot properly discharge their duties in respect of IBSL. Accordingly the following provisions apply.

- (A) **Limits on Concurrent Appointments**
 The examiner should not currently hold more than the equivalent of two substantial external examiner (or equivalent, i.e. verifier) appointments with other awarding organisations.
- (B) **Exceeding this Norm**
 If an examiner appears to exceed this norm, the external examiner must provide supporting arguments for his/her appointment with the other organisation

1.11 Structure and Continuity

1.11.1 Balance of the Board of External Examiners

The Board of External Examiners is expected to have an adequate balance including:

- examining experience
- academic and professional practice
- a range of subject specialisms
- gender.

1.11.2 Professional Awards

If a qualification is associated with, or may lead to, a professional award, at least one practitioner with appropriate experience should be in the examining team.

1.11.3 Phasing of Appointments

The phasing of appointments to an examining team should be structured to ensure continuity.

1.12 Period of Tenure (Term of Office)**1.12.1 Normal Duration**

The period of tenure for an external examiner will normally be four consecutive years running from the 1st November to the 31st October.

1.12.2 Cohorts of Learners

The tenure will normally allow an external examiner to assess four successive cohorts of learners.

1.12.3 Timing of the Appointment of a Successor

A new external examiner will normally take up appointment on or before the retirement of his/her predecessor.

1.12.4 Reviews of Decisions

External examiners must remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions.

1.12.5 Extension of Tenure

- In certain circumstances, for example in order to ensure continuity within an examining team, the period of appointment of an external examiner may be extended by a period of one year only. The external examiner must be consulted and should consent to the extension of tenure.
- IBSL has the right to offer an external examiner whose tenure is coming to an end the opportunity to renew the tenure for a further four year period.

1.13 Re-allocation of Responsibilities**1.13.1 Re-allocation**

External examiners' responsibilities may be re-allocated within the period of appointment. This may be due to the award to which the examiner was first appointed ceasing to run or where it is decided to re-shuffle the responsibilities allocated within a large team of examiners. This may also occur when there is illness or where an external examiner ceases their tenure early due to resignation or IBSL has sought the early cessation of duties of an examiner.

1.13.2 Consultation and Process

In order to re-allocate an external examiner's responsibilities:

- the external examiner must be consulted and agree on the proposed re-allocation;
- appropriate IBSL processes must be followed.

1. 14 Cessation of Appointment

1.14.1 Normal Cessation

The appointment of an external examiner will normally cease at the end of their appointed tenure.

1.14.2 Early Cessation

In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the appointment to cease before the completion of the approved period of tenure.

Examples of reasons for the early cessation of an appointment may include:

- resignation
- changes in qualification structure
- non-fulfilment of duties
- unprofessional conduct
- breakdown in relationship with staff teams or
- other cause which may disadvantage learners

1.14.3 Temporary Cessation of Appointment

Examiners may request to temporarily cease their appointment, for example due to illness or maternity leave, and another suitable Examiner should be asked to temporarily extend their duties to cover the period of absence. If this extension of duties is not possible the examiner must resign and a new examiner be appointed.

1.14.4 Resignation

Resignations of external examiners should be made in writing addressed to the Chief Executive. The resignation must be notified to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

In the case of resignations late in the assessment cycle, IBSL may request the external examiner to perform some or all of their duties.

1.15 External Examiners' Reports

1.15.1 Annual Reports

External examiners are required to report annually in writing about the ways in which assessment has been conducted and on issues relating to assessment. Reports must be made using the template issued by the Administration Office and submitted electronically to the designated e-mail address.

1.15.2 Purpose of Annual Reports

The purpose of the report is to assure IBSL that the academic standards of its awards are appropriate to and enable IBSL to judge whether the qualification programme is meeting its stated objectives and to make any necessary improvements, either immediately or at the next review as appropriate.

1.15.3 Additional Reports

External examiners required to submit a Centre Report at the end of every qualification or suite of qualifications being moderated in that particular year.

1.15.4 Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

IBSL requires that:

- external examiners submit their reports within 2 weeks of the date of the qualification with which they are associated
- external examiners' reports are considered at appropriate qualification level and the outcomes of such consideration are formally recorded
- Reports do not reference individuals by name
- Reports are made publicly available
- The final report of an examiner's tenure will be shared with the incoming external examiner for the purposes of continuity.

1.15.5 Response to External Examiners

External examiners will be provided with a written response to their comments and recommendations by the Chief Executive, or his/her appointed representative officer.

1.16 External Advisers

1.16.1 External Advisers

In some circumstances, IBSL may appoint external advisers with particular subject expertise to assist the external examiners.

1.16.2 Approval of Nominations

All nominations of external advisers are required to be approved initially by the appropriate sub-committee.

Final approval of external advisers rests with the Board of Trustees.

1.16.3 Appointment

The process of appointment of external advisers must be in accordance with IBSL Regulations.

1.16.4 Duties

The duties of external advisers will be fewer than those of external examiners and do not necessarily include participation in meetings of the Board of Examiners. Normally, a schedule of duties will be drawn up and agreed with the Chief Executive or his/her appointed officer.

1.17 Independent Assessors

1.16.1 Independent Assessors

For some qualifications, IBSL may appoint independent assessors with particular subject expertise to provide specific external assessments.

1.16.2 Approval of Nominations

All nominations of independent assessors are required to be approved initially by the appropriate sub-committee.

Final approval of independent assessors rests with the Board of Trustees.

1.16.3 Appointment

The process of appointment of independent assessors must be in accordance with IBSL Regulations.

1.16.4 Duties

The duties of independent assessors will be confined to a schedule of duties specific to certain assessments drawn up and agreed with the Chief Executive or his/her appointed officer.