

Annex H.1: External Advisors Policy and Procedures

Policy owner:	Northern School of Contemporary Dance – Quality Office
Lead contact:	Quality & Regulations Manager
Audience:	Applicants/Students/Staff for Northern School of Contemporary Dance Courses of higher education
Approving body:	Northern School of Contemporary Dance: Senate
Date approved:	January 2026
Policy Implementation date:	This policy takes effect from January 2026
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous approved version(s) dates:	N/A
Review cycle:	4 Years
Next review due date:	July 2030
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Validating Universities’ Academic Regulations
Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance:	Academic Regulations
UK Quality Code reference:	Quality Code Expectations for Quality; Advice and Guidance: Teaching, learning and assessment
OfS Conditions reference:	Condition: B conditions
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy should be available in accessible format for all students.
Date Equality and Diversity Assessment Completed:	
Further information:	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. When proposing new programmes, Faculties should seek the views of an external subject specialist, sector professional and/or related advisor who can be supportive as a 'critical friend' who has the industry or Higher education experience, to lend a voice to your proposal. This should be done in accordance with the requirements of *Annex C.1 Curriculum Policy for Programme Approval and Revisions*.

2. When to Appoint an External Advisor

- 2.1. A Faculty is required to seek external involvement when it:
 - 2.1.1. Undertakes Programme validation or revalidation
 - 2.1.2. When major changes are made to a programme
 - 2.1.3. When a programme requires clarity on overall academic coherence or support from the industry to ensure industrial competence is visible in the programme
- 2.2. When programme developments fall into the categories described above, the Head of Faculty is required to nominate, for approval by the School, an adviser from outside the School who is qualified to provide authoritative advice relating to its academic content and delivery.

3. Types of External Adviser

- 3.1. External advisors may come from other academic institutions and/or from professional/employment backgrounds, as appropriate to the proposal under consideration.
- 3.2. External academic colleagues to provide subject expertise in relation to the programme curriculum.
- 3.3. Industry professional or employer representatives should offer a view on the value and relevance of the proposed programme in relation to industry, the profession and/or employer needs, and giving close consideration to any work placement, work-based learning or employment-related aspects of the programme.
- 3.4. Sector specialist who may bring quite specific knowledge to the forefront and be renowned in their identity for holding this knowledge e.g. researcher.

4. Selection and Criteria for Appointment

- 4.1. External advisors should meet the following criteria:
 - 4.1.1. Nominations should be discussed with the leadership team prior to submission of the nomination form and CV to the Quality Office.
 - 4.1.2. Nominees must have current academic experience and subject expertise to be able to advise on new modules, the appropriateness of the programme and its comparability nationally. This must be to the FHEQ level of the programme being validated/reviewed.
 - 4.1.3. Nominees must hold an academic qualification that is at least of the same FHEQ level as the programme being validated/reviewed.
 - 4.1.4. For nominees who do not have a current academic contract, further detail should be provided to evidence their currency, in order to allow a judgement to be made about their academic credentials.
 - 4.1.5. Nominees must be independent of the programme being validated/reviewed.
 - 4.1.6. Nominations will not be accepted from current or previous external examiners (within the last 5 years).
 - 4.1.7. Nominations will not be accepted from former employees/students of NSCD (within the last 5 years). There should be no close association between the nominee and the Faculty, or any other factors which may compromise objectivity (for example, placement tutor, research collaborator, relative or close friend) – see section 5 for further details.
 - 4.1.8. A nominee may be appointed as an external panel member/external advisor no more than 2 times in a 5 year period.
- 4.2. It is recognised that in some new and highly specialised areas the number of individuals working in the field is very limited and this can cause difficulties in selecting external panel members. In such cases, a rationale must be provided on the nomination form, in support of the proposal of an individual who does not meet all the specified criteria. It is expected that, where possible, there will be some variety in the institutions from which the external panel members, for a particular programme, are being drawn over time. Should a validation/review necessitate the input of a practitioner external panel member, a second, academic, external panel member (whose experience and expertise fully align with the NSCD's agreed appointment criteria) must also be secured for the panel.

5. Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1. NSCD will not appoint an external advisor who is aligned to one of the following categories or circumstances:
 - 5.1.1. A member of a governing body or committee of the institute or NSCD, or current employee of the institute or NSCD.
 - 5.1.2. Anyone involved in the teaching, management or assessment of students on

programmes validated by NSCD or conducting collaborative research with an institute/NSCD member of staff.

- 5.1.3. Anyone from the same institution as a present external examiner.
 - 5.1.4. A former member of staff or student, unless a period of 5 years has elapsed since their departure.
 - 5.1.5. Any members of staff at accredited institutions.
 - 5.1.6. A member of the governing body or member of staff at a collaborative partner institute who has the same responsibility or closely cognate disciplinary area.
- 5.2. It may be appropriate for an External Adviser to be used more than once for a suite of programmes or similar programmes that are undergoing validation in different years. However, over reliance on a single external adviser should be avoided since it reduces the range of external involvement.

6. Process for Approval of Nominations

- 6.1. To gain approval from the School for the proposed External Adviser, the Director of Studies/Head of Faculty should complete a nomination form (*see Appendix A*). This should be submitted to the NSCD's Vice Principal. This should be completed in good time before the participation of the External Adviser needs to be confirmed.
- 6.2. If the proposed External Adviser does not fulfil all the criteria for nomination or if, in exceptional circumstances, it is proposed that a current external examiner be appointed as an external adviser, the NSCD Vice Principal should ensure that a specific rationale for the choice of external adviser is recorded and reported to Senate.

7. Appointment

- 7.1. On notification that the nominee has been approved, the Quality Office will contact the External Advisor to inform them of their appointment and outline their duties.
- 7.2. The Vice Principal or delegate will brief the External Adviser about NSCD's academic standards as well as more general context for the programme development – for example, school policies relating to equal opportunities/diversity, proposed markets, etc.

8. Role and Participation of the External Advisor – New and Revised Programmes

- 8.1. The External Adviser will receive the following documents:
 - 8.1.1. Programme specification and module specifications.
 - 8.1.2. Evaluative report (for existing programmes undergoing revalidation).
 - 8.1.3. The notification of appointment will contain a link to the approved [Privacy Notice](#)

- 8.2. To benefit fully from external involvement in programme design and approval, the Director of Studies should seek input from the External Adviser at an early stage in programme design.
- 8.3. The remit of the External Adviser is to some extent determined by their background, and may not cover all the points listed below:
 - 8.3.1. where appropriate, to advise on the appropriateness of the academic standards set for the programme in relation to similar programmes elsewhere in the UK;
 - 8.3.2. where appropriate, to consider the relevance of the programme in relation to vocational/ professional training and employment;
 - 8.3.3. to consider (as appropriate to the scope of the event) the proposed organisation, character, coherence and curriculum of the programme including assessment processes, drawing on general practice and norms which are current in their own professional area;
 - 8.3.4. to consider whether the intended programme aims and learning outcomes are realistic, attainable and set at an appropriate level, and that the programme is going to provide students with a high quality learning experience/academic qualification;
 - 8.3.5. to raise issues concerning the clarity of the programme documentation, the programme under consideration, to comment on the relevancy of the programme content, bibliographies etc.
 - 8.3.6. to consider the clarity of the programme documentation and how well this communicates the team's intentions;
 - 8.3.7. to raise issues concerning the operation of the programme in relation to the regulations and general guidelines of the School and where relevant professional and regulatory bodies.

9. Right to Work

- 9.1. If the External Adviser has previously completed work for NSCD and has previously submitted three or more expense claims, they will no longer be considered a supplier under the (IR35) Regulations. In this instance, if their appointment is approved by the School, it will be necessary to check their eligibility to work in the UK. More information is available on the [General Information for Suppliers web pages](#). For further guidance please contact QSAT or the appropriate Faculty Finance team.

10. External Adviser Report

- 10.1. The External Adviser will be required to complete a report on the proposed programme(s) via an advanced comments form to be submitted to the Validation Panel, which will be provided by the Quality Office. In the absence of a report the proposal should not be

considered.

- 10.2. The External Adviser's report will comment specifically on the proposal.
- 10.3. In the Programme Validation process, the Validation Panel will look for evidence that the Programme Proposer/Lead has responded to the report of the External Adviser. A response to the External Adviser should also articulate reasons for not accepting his or her comments (if required).

11. Fees and Expenses

- 11.1. External panel members will receive a single payment plus expenses incurred as a result of attendance at the validation event. This fee is in recognition of their attendance at (normally) a one day validation/review event (or where scheduled via video conferencing), reading the documentation, advance submission of written comments, and confirmation of the outcomes/event report in accordance with the process agreed with the Chair and Event Officer. External Adviser fees are reviewed annually and the fee will be stated in the notification of appointment.
- 11.2. The Faculty is responsible for paying fees and expenses to the External Adviser, which should be stated in the notification of appointment. Fees and expenses cannot be paid until the External Adviser submits an invoice (*see Appendix B*). For further details of allowable expenses, the NSCD Travel and Subsistence Policy can be made available upon request.