

RICS International Partnership and Accreditation Board

# External examiners appointment regulations

The Royal Institution  
of Chartered Surveyors  
12 Great George Street  
Parliament Square  
London SW1p 3AD  
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 7222 7000  
F +44 (0)20 7222 9430

[www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)



March 2003/500/RICS Education and Training/50019/N. Unkong



# Contents

1. The appointment of external examiners	_____
2. Role and responsibilities of external examiners	_____
3. Regulations of appointment	_____
4. Criteria for appointment	_____
5. External examiners' reports	_____
6. The place of external examiners in validation and review	_____
7. Status of the regulations	_____
Appendix A: External examiners – guidance on assessment	_____
Appendix B: Application form	_____
Appendix C: Glossary	_____

## 1. The appointment of external examiners

1.1 This document sets out the requirements relating to the appointment and function of external examiners on RICS accredited courses providing admission to the Assessment of Professional Competence. Unless otherwise specified, these requirements apply to courses accredited under RICS – University partnerships, and to courses accredited outside such partnerships.

1.2 The appointment of external examiners is subject to the approval of the Regional Partnership and Accreditation Board, which covers the country in which the awarding university is located. There are three Regional PABs covering respectively Europe, Asia/Pacific and Western (Africa/America). Forms for the approval of external examiner appointments may be obtained from:

RICS Education and Training  
Surveyor Court  
Westwood Way  
Coventry  
UK  
CV4 8JE

1.3 For each accredited award, two approved examiners (one academic and one practitioner) are normally required. At least one of the examiners must be a Chartered Surveyor and a member of the RICS Faculty for which the course is primarily designed. For courses leading to membership of more than one faculty the regional PAB will consider appropriate arrangements based on the above criteria.

1.4 When a course which has not previously been accredited by RICS, becomes accredited under an RICS – university partnership, any current external examiners for that course may serve the remaining period of their appointment, subject to all new appointments following the normal procedure for RICS approval.

1.5 For postgraduate programmes with cohorts below ten students the number of RICS approved external examiners can be reduced to one.

1.6 In approving appointments, the regional PAB will have regard to the combined experience of co-examiners, one of whom should be experienced as an external examiner.

1.7 Co-terminus appointments should be avoided. The tenure of appointments should be staggered to provide an experience overlap.

1.8 Concurrent with the approval of an appointment of an individual as external examiner, RICS will send separate confirmation to the appointee with a copy of the details of regulations covering the role and responsibilities of external examiners.

1.9 Where a partner university offers a number of programmes in a related discipline, the requirement for two RICS approved external examiners for each programme remains, though an examiner may cover more than one programme and count this as just one external examiner appointment for the purposes of 3.1.c. below.

1.10 Where degrees are made up of a major-minor combination (the minor element being up to and including three-eighths of the course), the external examiners appointed for the major element of the course may cover the minor element as well.

## 2. Role and responsibilities of external examiners

2.1 The role of the external examiner(s) approved by the regional PAB is seen as one of the most effective means of assuring standards and maintaining the professional relevance of courses satisfying RICS academic requirements for professional qualification and admission to the Assessment of Professional Competence.

2.2 In order to carry out these responsibilities the external examiner must normally:

- a. be involved in all levels of assessment in order to exercise his/her role effectively in the classification of final awards
- b. attend meetings of the board of examiners and have access to all assessed work; it is expected that the board of examiners, with final authority for an award, will normally accept the decision of the external examiner on the results of a particular candidate or candidates should there be any difference of opinion amongst members of the board of examiners

c. be given the opportunity to comment on the management, development and resourcing of the course

d. be consulted over proposals to admit students to a higher level of study than normal for the institution and ensure compliance with RICS regulations

e. make annual written reports to the educational establishment concerned after each assessment on its conduct and effectiveness (see external examiner reports, section 5 and the place of external examiners in validation and review, section 6).

g. new external examiners must be briefed on their task as soon as possible after appointment, preferably by visiting the educational establishment to meet staff and students, the briefing will cover inter alia: the dates of examiners' meetings; the objectives of the course, its syllabuses and teaching methods; the methods of assessment and marking schemes; recent external examiner reports; the regulations for the programme including those concerned with compensation for failure and opportunities for reassessment; RICS approval reports and conditions of accreditation

h. fees are a matter solely between the external examiner and the educational establishment

i. if an educational establishment terminates the appointment of an external examiner, the regional PAB must be informed of the grounds for termination.

## 3. Regulation of appointments

3.1 The following conditions shall apply:

a. all external examiner appointments must be approved by the relevant regional PAB

b. appointments should be fixed terms, normally one year longer than the cycle of the course, or where mixed mode the period of office should relate to the length of the mode of attendance followed by the majority of students

c. normally external examiners should not hold more than two external examiner appointments at the same time

d. an educational establishment or other body responsible for the course must submit external examiner nominations for approval by the regional PAB before the date of the first assessments with which the proposed examiner is to be associated

e. new examiners should take up their appointments on or before the retirement of their predecessors; external examiners should remain available after the last assessments with which they are to be associated in order to deal with any subsequent reviews of decisions

f. in order to protect their independence, external examiners should not act concurrently as consultants to a course team for course design, or be members of an internal panel established to review the course they examine

## 4. Criteria for appointment

4.1 The following criteria are considered by the regional PABs when approving external examiner appointments:

a. an external examiner should have appropriate standing, expertise and experience indicated by:

- present post and place of work
- range and scope of experience in higher education or professional practice
- current and active involvement in academic activities, research or professional practice related to the field of study.

b. for postgraduate courses, RICS requires at least one of the external examiners to have either a postgraduate degree or senior level experience.

4.2 Normally an academic external examiner should have recent external examining or comparable related experience in assessing students. A proposed examiner who has no previous external examiner experience at the appropriate level, should be supported by a co-examiner with substantial experience and have either:

- other external examining experience
- extensive internal examining experience
- other relevant and recent experience likely to support the external examiner role.

4.3 Appointments should be complementary in terms of experience and expertise.

4.4 External examiners should be impartial in judgement, and should not have previous close involvement with the educational establishment concerned which might compromise objectivity. Appointments will not normally be approved if a proposal results in external examinerships which are reciprocal between departments or educational establishments, ie either concurrent or consecutive.

4.5 External examiners for RICS accredited course should not normally be re-appointed by a university within five years of completing a previous external examiner appointment to the university. Over the five years prior to the date of appointment, the proposed examiner should not have been a member of staff, a governor, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff in relation to the course.

4.6 The proposed external examiner should not normally be, and must always declare if he or she is:

- personally associated with the sponsorship of students on the course
- required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course
- corporately or personally responsible for students regarding bursaries or other emoluments to students on the course being examined.

#### 5. External examiners' reports

5.1 External examiners are required to report annually to the educational establishment on the conduct of the assessments just concluded and on the issues related to assessment, including:

- a. the overall performance of the students in relation to their peers on comparable courses
- b. the strengths and weaknesses of students
- c. the quality of knowledge and skills (both general and subject-specific) demonstrated by the students
- d. the professional relevance, the structure, organisation, design and marking of all assessments

e. the quality of teaching as indicated by student performance

f. the lessons of the assessments for the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods, resources and the management and review of the course

g. any other recommendations arising from the assessments.

5.2 The purpose of the report is to enable the educational establishment to judge whether the course is meeting its stated objectives and to make any necessary improvements, either immediately or by the next review as appropriate.

5.3 The external examiner(s) may require the educational establishment to refer a report to the regional PAB if there is concern about standards of assessment and performance, or if the assessments are being conducted in such a way which compromises the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of RICS.

5.4 If an examiner has matters of particular concern which when raised with the head of an education establishment are not properly taken account of, then such issues may be reported directly to the regional PAB. The Board reserves, at any time, the right to call for external examiner reports from the educational establishment or from the external examiner.

#### 6. The place of external examiners in validation and review

6.1 The appointment and function of external examiners on accredited courses, including courses accredited under partnership arrangements, are critical for maintaining standards during the period for which courses are accredited. External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing universities with informed comments on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral part of university quality assurance.

6.2 The main purposes of external examiners are to verify that standards are appropriate for the qualification awarded; to report on standards of student performance in the programmes which they are appointed to examine, and on the comparability of the standards against other higher education awards; and to verify that the processes for student assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.

6.3 External examining is a vital means of maintaining standards and providing information on outcomes for use in course review; it is, however, a separate process from internal review and it is important that there should be no confusion or role conflict between the two.

6.4 The external examiners' reports may have implications for the way in which the course is designed and delivered. It is for the educational establishment rather than the external examiners to consider what changes should be made as a result.

6.5 External examiners' annual reports must always form part of the documentation used in course review.

6.6 In the case of partnership courses, the external examiners' reports and the partner university's response must be submitted to the partnership for consideration.

6.7 An external examiner should be included in the partnership group. RICS is responsible for choosing the external examiner representative on the partnership group, taking account of the main disciplines represented on the group.

6.8 External examiners' reports and the university's response, identifying any necessary follow-up or corrective action, should be a standing item at partnership meetings.

6.9 When considering university course assessment and award regulations, external examiners should apply the general principles, set out in Section 4 of the RICS document on Policy and Guidance on University Partnerships, relating to the level of awards, the minimum number of study hours, minimum pass marks, assessment methods etc.

6.10 External examiners should take full account of the Code of Practice on external examining published by the Quality Assurance Agency in January 2000. This Code has been adopted by RICS as supplementary guidance for its external examiners concerning the role of external examiners; their nomination and appointment; the preparation of external examiners' reports; the carrying out of external examiners' tasks; external examiners' reports; and feedback to external examiners on their reports.

#### 7. Status of the regulations

7.1 RICS reserves the right to vary any or all of these regulations. Normally the regulations will be reviewed annually, and the regional PAB will notify educational establishments accordingly in order that any changes may be complied with in the following session. Compliance with these regulations will be a condition precedent to any approval or accreditation of a course by RICS.

# Appendix A

## External examiners – guidance on assessment

### External examiners

In all RICS accredited universities (whether under a partnership system or traditional system) the appointment and function of external examiners on accredited courses is seen as one of the most effective means of maintaining standards during the period for which courses are accredited.

External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing universities with informed comments on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and key part of university quality assurance. The main purposes of external examiners are to verify that standards are appropriate for the award which they have been appointed to examine, to assist universities in the comparison of academic standards across higher education awards, and to verify that processes for student assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted.

The regional PABs will continue to approve external examiner appointments made by universities.

There is a requirement for two RICS approved external examiners, one academic and one practitioner, (at least one of whom must be an RICS member) for all programmes with the following exceptions:

- where there are existing external examiners for a course now included in partnership but which had not been accredited before the course entered the partnership, subject to all new appointments following the normal procedure for RICS approval
- where a partner university is offering a number of programmes in a related discipline the requirement for two RICS approved external examiners remains, with those examiners, if appropriate, overlapping across a number of programmes, in particular the same examiners can be used for major/minor combinations as well as for the associated straight major
- for postgraduate programmes with cohorts below 10 students the number of RICS approved external examiners can be reduced to one.

### General principles

RICS suggests the general principles below when external examiners and partnerships review course assessment and award regulations. While (a.) to (d.) below are prescriptive, (e.) to (l.) are not prescriptive on universities or colleges in terms of their degree awarding powers. However, any significant departure from these guidelines should be supported by an appropriate rationale.

- a. An accredited undergraduate award will normally be at the highest level commonly available in that country for a first degree. Its content should be at least 3 600 study hours. The standard for determining the highest level of qualification 'commonly available' for a first degree is the highest qualification which at least one third of all graduates in the country concerned gain. So, for example, in the case of Scotland the qualification must be an Honours degree.
- b. The minimum requirement for an accredited postgraduate qualification is 1 800 study hours except that an HEI can give up to 600 study hours exemption from this requirement to suitable individuals. Exemptions are at the discretion of the HEI but should be given only for cognate learning achieved by an individual on a previous HEI course (i.e. the HEI determines cognisity).
- c. At least 1 000 study hours for any accredited course should be at least the highest undergraduate level – this means, for example, that a UK graduate diploma can be RICS approved (as can UK masters degrees and post graduate diplomas).

d. The following principles should be followed to give effect to a. b. and c.

- in the UK, where credits are applied, 100 study hours is 10 credits
- in European universities which use Euro credits 100 study hours is 5 Euro credits
- if a university does not use UK credits or the European Credit Transfer system then the number of hours claimed should be based on the actual number of study hours. However a university cannot claim more than 50 study hours per week in respect of full time courses, or more than 30 study hours in respect of part time or distance learning courses, where students are in full time employment.

e. Accredited awards should provide for a minimum aggregated pass mark of 40% within any module with an overall minimum of 35% in any element of assessment. This is the minimum global standard; in some countries a higher standard will apply, subject to RICS approval in each case.

f. Assessment should include a balance of assessment methods and should normally include at least 50% of material at penultimate and final years (full time equivalence) assessed by examination excluding dissertations or similarly assessed independent study units.

g. Examination covers a wide range of assessment including formal closed written papers, open book examinations, multiple choice, phase tests, computer based exercises, vivas and other forms provided the individual student is assessed at the time or point of assessment without recourse to another person, or resources other than permitted materials and completed within a specified period of time during which the student is under invigilation or supervision.

h. At the final stage of a programme the contribution of a group mark towards a unit or module should not be greater than 25% of the individual's mark for that unit or module.

i. Compensation and condonement should only apply where a candidate shows strength in other subjects ie; achieving marks/grades well above pass level in other subjects.

j. External examiners should be consulted over and approve in principle, all forms of assessment of an award (see Regulations on the Appointment of External Examiners paragraph 2.2).

k. External examiners should be consulted over any change to the strategy and method of assessment.

l. Award regulations should define plagiarism, collusion and other forms of cheating (RICS would not expect students found proven of intentional cheating to proceed without penalty).



## Appendix B: External examiner application form *(Please fill in separate Word template attached to this regulation)*

**For RICS use only**

This proposal has been approved by the CESB (Continental European Standards Board) of RICS.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

TO BE FILLED IN BY THE UNIVERSITY:

*Please complete and return both sides of the form to RICS Europe, Kristin Bammel kbammel@rics.org or ricseuropeeducation@rics.org, phone +49 (0) 89 45 47 19 20. Please fill in your data online.*

<b>Name of academic institution:</b>				
<b>Course title/final award:</b>				
<b>Mode of attendance :</b>	Duration:			
<b>Proposed external examiner:</b>				
<b>Proposed period of tenure :</b>	From (month)	(yr)	To (month)	(yr)

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifications:**  
(Academic and professional) \_\_\_\_\_

**Job title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work address:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Name of examiner being replaced/new examiner:</b>				
<b>Previous period of approval:</b>	From (month)	(yr)	To (month)	(yr)

**Authorisation to be completed by the university/college academic registrar's department**

Date: Sign \_\_\_\_\_ ature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Position: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signed on behalf of the University/College Academic Board as being in accordance with the International Partnership and Accreditation Board Regulations on the Appointment of External Examiners December 2002)

**Please note:** The maximum term of an external examiner appointment is 5 years and must be followed by a minimum 5 year break. Universities are responsible to find a replacement before an appointment ends.



TO BE FILLED IN BY THE APPLYING EXTERNAL EXAMINER:

Please attach your current **English CV** to this application.

<b>Proposed external examiner:</b>	
------------------------------------	--

<b>Previous experience:</b>	
(As internal an/or external examiner and/or relevant previous experience)	

<b>Current experience:</b>	
(Other external examiner commitments with periods of tenure)	

<b>Any other experience:</b>	
(In academic, industrial or professional roles)	

<b>Rational for variance from guidelines:</b>	
(As internal an/or external examiner and/or relevant previous experience)	

<b>Name of current co-examiner:</b>				
<b>Period of approval:</b>				
	From (mth)	(yr)	To (mth)	(yr)

**To be signed by the proposed external examiner:**

In line with Regulation 4, please confirm that you have not been associated with this institution or course in any of the unacceptable activities listed.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Glossary

## Terms used by RICS in policy documents      Meaning in RICS policy documents

<b>Accreditation</b>	The process of appraisal, inspection and monitoring whereby RICS ensures that specific <i>degree courses</i> meet its standards; holders of accredited degrees are deemed to satisfy the academic requirements for RICS membership.
<b>Approval</b>	Usually means <i>accreditation</i> .
<b>Cognate</b>	A <i>course or degree</i> (or diploma), which is not accredited by RICS, but which is in a subject, which RICS does accredit.
<b>Cohort</b>	The student year group on a <i>degree course</i> . For example, on a full time course, the “2002 cohort” includes students who start the first year (level 1) of the course in 2002 and those who enter the course at level 2 in 2003 and level 3 in 2004. See also <i>intake</i> .
<b>Condonement</b>	Disregarding a poor performance in an examination or other assessment.
<b>Contact hours</b>	The number of hours in which the student is in contact with teaching staff during lectures, tutorials, lab sessions etc
<b>Course</b>	A full programme of study leading to an award or formal qualification. Commonly referred to as “program” in North America.
<b>Credit</b>	A method, quite commonly used in the UK, and more widely in North America, for counting academic progression, facilitating student transfers between <i>courses</i> and institutions, and for exempting students from parts of courses. In the UK, where credits are applied, 1 credit = 10 study hours. In European universities which use EuroCredits 1 EuroCredit=20 study hours.
<b>Degree</b>	An academic award at undergraduate or <i>postgraduate</i> level.
<b>EPAB</b>	European Partnership and Accreditation Board. The RICS committee responsible for accrediting university <i>courses</i> in Europe, including the UK.
<b>Exemption</b>	Where students are free from the need to complete the normal requirements of a degree because of their prior qualifications and attainment.
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer System. Under this system 1 Eurocredit=20 study hours
<b>External examiner</b>	A form of external quality assurance, to ensure the integrity of <i>degree</i> awards, involving the independent review of students’ marks by an academic from another university. RICS generally requires 2 external examiners for each <i>accredited course</i> , an academic and a practitioner, one of whom should be a member of RICS.

<b>Faculty</b>	A specialist membership grouping of RICS. Members of RICS can join up to 4 Faculties, one of which should be the Faculty covering the particular APC/ATC route through which they qualified.
<b>First degree</b>	An academic qualification awarded for successfully completing a course at an HEI, usually lasting at least three years on the basis of full-time study. In the UK, RICS accredited first degrees are now all honours degrees. RICS accredited first degrees should involve at least 3600 study hours. See also <i>graduate</i> and <i>postgraduate</i> .
<b>GNVQ</b>	General National Vocational Qualification. A vocational pre-university qualification available in the UK before 2002
<b>Graduate</b>	A graduate is a person who has successfully completed a <i>first degree</i> course; equivalent to an alumnus in North America. Not the same as a ‘Graduate student’ in North American terms: in RICS documents this level of student is referred to as ‘Postgraduate student’. Similarly, in RICS documents a ‘graduate course’ in North American terms is referred to as a ‘postgraduate course’
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution.
<b>HESA</b>	Higher Education Statistics Agency. A UK public body responsible for statistics relating to UK universities, including data on student admissions and employment destinations.
<b>HNC/HND</b>	Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma. Vocational qualifications available at colleges and HEI’s in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Included within the RICS tariff for admission to UK partnership accredited courses. See also NC/ND
<b>Honours degree</b>	The definition of an Honours degree varies from country to country. In RICS documents, unless otherwise specified, an honours degree is the highest level of undergraduate degree commonly available. Level ‘H’ in the higher education qualification framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Honours degrees form the largest group of higher education qualification. Typical courses last for three years (if taken full time) and lead to a Bachelors degree having a title such as Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons) or Bachelor of Science (BSc Hons). Also at this level are short course and professional ‘conversion’ courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline, leading to Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas. <b>Note: practice varies between countries; eg in New Zealand Masters degrees can be honours.</b>
<b>HonsRICS</b>	Honorary member of RICS.
<b>Intake</b>	A group of students who start a <i>course</i> (or a <i>level</i> on a <i>course</i> ) at the same time. See also <i>cohort</i>

## Glossary

<b>IPAB</b>	International Partnership and Accreditation Board. The RICS committee responsible for deciding threshold standards.
<b>Level</b>	Generally refers to the level of study on a <i>degree course</i> , eg on a full time <i>honours degree course</i> , level one is the level of study expected in the first year. Note that in the case of part-time <i>degrees</i> , the year of study does not usually correspond with the level of study, eg students starting the third year of study on a part-time <i>degree</i> will usually be entering level 2. May also refer to the hierarchy of qualifications awarded by universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, comprising 5 levels. In ascending order they are: C. Certificate I. Intermediate H. Honours M. Masters D. Doctoral
<b>Masters</b>	<i>Postgraduate degree</i> awarded after completion of taught <i>courses</i> , programmes of research, or a mixture of both. Longer research based programmes often lead to the degree of MPhil. Most masters <i>courses</i> last at least one year if taken full time, and are taken by students with an honours degree or equivalent. Some <i>accredited Masters degrees</i> are awarded after extended undergraduate courses lasting, typically, one year longer than the honours degree course. Also at Masters level are advanced short courses, often forming part of CPD programmes, leading to Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas.  RICS accredited courses at Masters level should involve at least 1800 student workload hours.  Masters, or M Level, is the fourth level in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland higher education qualifications framework.
<b>Module</b>	Part of a <i>degree course</i> ; in North America, usually referred to as a “course”.
<b>MRICS</b>	Professional member of RICS.
<b>NC/ND</b>	National Certificate or National Diploma. Vocational Qualifications available at colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Included within RICS’ tariff for admission to partnership accredited courses in the UK. See also <i>HNC/HND</i> .
<b>NVQ 4</b>	National Vocational Qualification level 4. Work based vocational qualifications available in the UK.
<b>Postgraduate</b>	A higher, or second, <i>degree</i> or diploma <i>course</i> , usually requiring a good <i>honours degree</i> as an entry condition; students on such courses. In North America usually referred to as a “Graduate course” or “Graduate student”. Can also refer to training or experience which occurs after taking a first degree.

<b>Probationary member</b>	Probationary member of RICS.
<b>QAA</b>	Quality Assurance Agency. A UK public body responsible for overseeing academic standards in UK universities. See also <i>TQA</i> .
<b>RAE</b>	Research Assessment Exercise. Systems, in operation in the UK and in Hong Kong, for evaluating the standard of research undertaken by university departments.
<b>RICS Foundation</b>	The research arm of RICS.
<b>RICS Junior Organisation</b>	Younger members of RICS.
<b>Sandwich course</b>	A <i>degree course</i> in which periods of academic study are integrated with industrial/professional placement(s). The student’s performance on the placement counts towards the degree assessment. Different from a part time degree, where periods in employment do not count towards the degree. In North America known as a Co-op program.
<b>Staff</b>	Teaching or academic staff; in North America known as “(Teaching) Faculty”.
<b>Study hours (or student workload hours)</b>	The total number of hours of study assumed for completion of a unit of a <i>course</i> or for a complete <i>degree course</i> . Hours of study are notional, and in practice the actual hours of study taken to complete the unit of study will vary. Includes lectures, seminars and other contact time as well as private study, revision etc.
<b>TechRICS</b>	Technical member of RICS.
<b>TQA</b>	Teaching Quality Assessment. A system operated by QAA for measuring academic quality in UK university departments.
<b>UCAS</b>	Universities and Colleges Admission Service. The organisation which processes admissions applications to UK colleges and universities.
<b>Validation</b>	The process of internal academic review whereby universities ensure that existing and proposed courses meet their own standards and objectives. RICS is not involved in course validation.