Roles of External Examiners at LKCMedicine

LKCMedicine MBBS External Examiners are experts in medical education from outside of NTU and Imperial who ensure that the standard of the programme is consistent with the standard of MBBS degrees awarded at other Singaporean and UK universities. One of the external examiners – the joint external examiner – is also an external examiner for the Imperial MBBS; this post is appointed specifically to ensure the NTU-Imperial MBBS is of an equivalent standard to the Imperial MBBS. External Examiners review the totality of the degree, in respect of both curriculum and assessment.

All UK universities are required by the UK Quality Assurance Agency to make use of external examiners. The QAA’s Quality Code states that “external examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining UK threshold academic standards within autonomous higher education institutions. External examining is therefore an integral and essential part of institutional quality assurance.”\(^1\) Imperial makes use of External Examiners for all its awards, and this requirement extends to all jointly awarded programmes, including the LKCMedicine MBBS.

External Examiners produce a report at the end of each academic year, commenting on the curriculum and assessments of the year or Phase of the programme for which they are appointed. External Examiners’ reports comment on the academic standards of the programme, the strengths and areas for improvement of the programme in terms of curriculum content and delivery, the standard of assessments, and the academic achievements of the students in the year under review.

It is normal for External Examiners’ reports to highlight potential changes that might be made to programme curricula or assessments – in fact many External Examiners consider it their role to provide constructive criticism, and will always look to suggest amendments. At Imperial, the External Examiners’ reports that identify potential areas for improvement are considered more valuable than those which simply state that the programme meets expectations, as these provide structure to the programme annual review process.

This does not mean that all External Examiners’ suggestions must necessarily be followed. In certain cases, an External Examiner’s comments may prompt a review of a particular area of curriculum or assessment, but not necessarily lead to changes being made, if it is felt that the existing curriculum or assessment remains appropriate in its particular academic setting. However, External Examiners’ comments will always be carefully considered, and a decision not to act upon an External Examiner’s feedback will be justified and explained in the LKCMedicine’s formal response to External Examiners’ reports.