

# Undergraduate External Examining

## Past, Present, and is there a Future?

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### Past

The external examiner system can be traced back to 1822 with the foundation of the University of Durham. Its purpose was to ensure the standards at Durham were consistent with those at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge.

### Currently used in

Brunei, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, *Ireland*, Malawi, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa.



### Present

Quality and Qualifications Ireland identifies the purpose of external examining as “a specific learner quality assurance mechanism employed by providers that supports public confidence in academic qualifications.” (QQI, 2013;31)

It has become under scrutiny in the UK as to its “fitness for purpose” (Bloxham and Price, 2015).

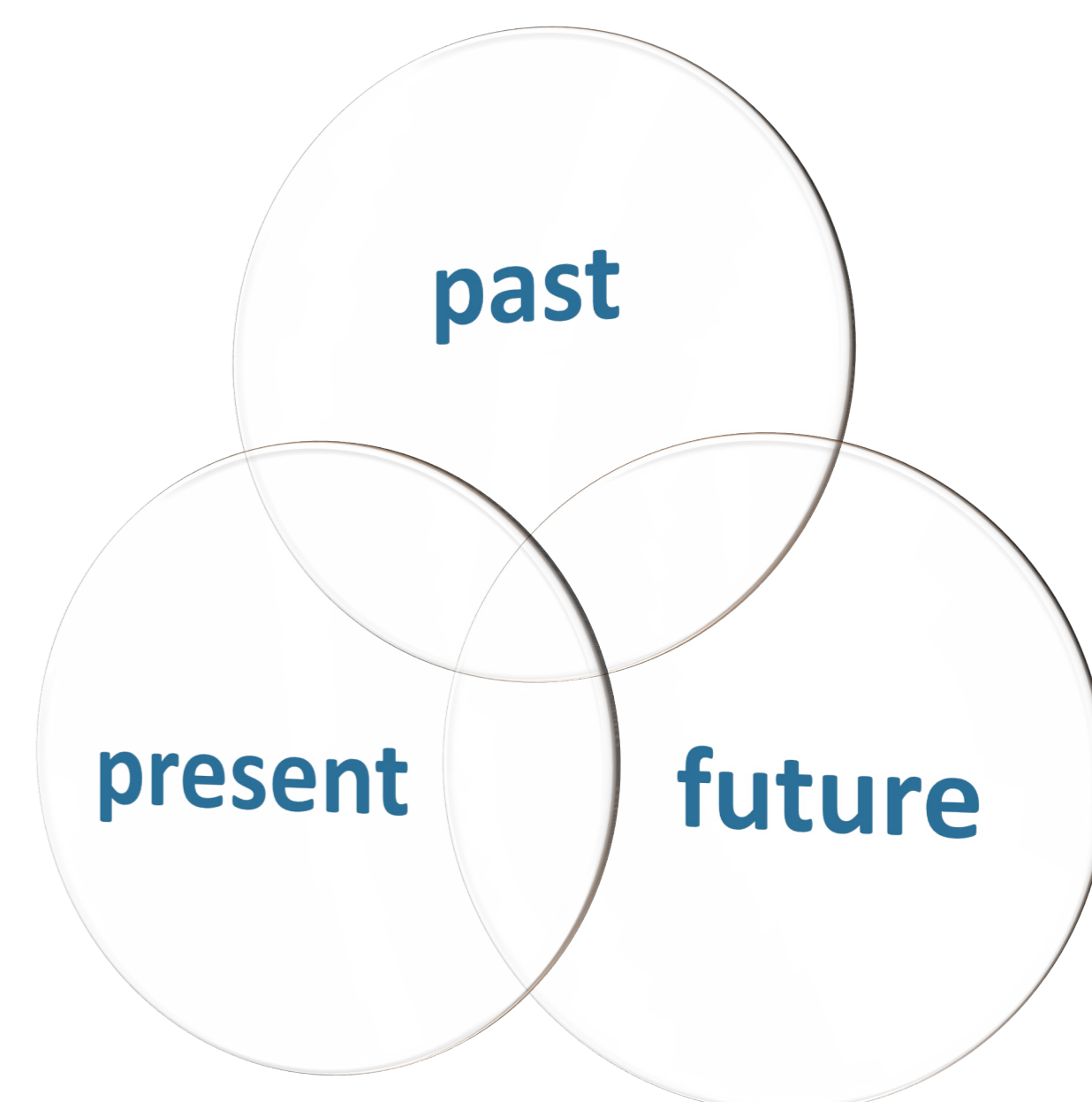


Many degree programmes have become more ‘practice’ focused; as external examiners are drawn from practice and academic backgrounds, the assessment literacy of external examiners has been questioned. (Medland, 2015).

- How can this be resolved?
- Should programmes be examined by an individual examiner with general expertise in the area, or by a team of examiners with specific expertise in specific modules?
- How might that happen?

Bloxham et al (2015) query if external peer reviews do, in fact, verify standards. This may link to a concern about grade inflation.

- Is there a standard process?
- External Examiner as ‘referee’?
- Are there common discipline community standards?



### The Future

What are the implications for the old favourites of

- Validity, Reliability, Authenticity

Conversations around practice

*Professional Dilemmas*

- Critical friend? Advisor or arbiter?

*External Examining as a Social Processes*

- Is there a place for social moderation and a community of practice?
- Assessing standards as a community consensus?

Might a proposed CPD programme address the concerns relating to assessment literacy and the verification of standards to bring about increased public confidence?

- What might that CDP include?
- National? Accredited? Mandatory?



### My Research

- What is happening in Ireland
- National and international lessons
- Points of agreement and contention
- Implications for policy and practice
- Let’s start a conversation!

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