Review Article

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External examiners, supervisors and academicians for the international postgraduate (MSc and PhD) programmes [Uluslararası mezuniyet sonrası (Yüksek lisans ve Doktora) programları için dış denetleyiciler, danışmanlar ve akademisyenler]

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Abstract: Several International Universities are appoint -ing International Academicians as External Examiners, Lecturers and Supervisors for all programs including undergraduate (BA’s and BSc) and Post-graduate (MSc and PhD) degree programs. University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in Harare and University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy are appointing external examiners for their undergraduate and post-graduate programs. In this manuscript, I would like to give you some information about both universities as one of their external examiners and supervisors.

Keywords: External examiner; Supervisor; Master; PhD; International postgraduate programs.

University of Zimbabwe – External Examiners

The University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in Harare, is the oldest and top ranked university in Zimbabwe. It was founded through a special relationship with the University of London and it opened its doors to its first students in 1952. The university has 10 faculties (Agriculture, Arts, Commerce, Education, Engineering, Law, Science, Social Studies, Veterinary Sciences and College of Health Sciences) offering a wide variety of degree programs in many specialized research centers and institutes. The university is accredited through the National Council for Higher Education, under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. English is the language of teaching.

University of Zimbabwe – College of Health Sciences

The College of Health Sciences, commonly known as the Medical School, was initially established in 1963, under the auspices of the University of Birmingham, UK. The College of Health Sciences has undergone significant growth and expansion. It is the leading training institution for health
professionals in Zimbabwe. It currently offers degree programs in Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Rehabilitation, Radiology and Health Education and Health Promotion. The College is home to 21 teaching departments, one School and one Institute of Continuing Health Education offering a wide variety of educational, research and career options within the context of health care. The Institute of Continuing Health Education in the College caters for the special postgraduate training and continuing health education needs for all the health professionals.

The College of Health Sciences is committed to the training of Health Care Delivery personnel to meet the health needs of the people of Zimbabwe. Training is geared towards primary health care with emphasis on a preventive rather than curative approach.

As an institute of higher learning, the College takes academic excellence as the hallmark of its existence. To that extent, the College encourages the promotion and enhancement of science through relevant research.

**Vision statement**

- To be a reference and international leader for teaching, training, research in Africa and beyond in evidence-based training, innovative student learning and health care delivery.

**Mission statement**

- To provide an environment for evidence based, high quality, community oriented and community driven training and learning of health professionals. To be a clinical and research center of excellence and source of high-quality health consultancy services.

**Postgraduate programs**

- The University of Zimbabwe offers postgraduate honors degrees; master’s degrees and doctoral degrees.
- Postgraduate honors programs, also known as special honors programs incorporate coursework, examinations and a compulsory project module.
- Master’s degrees by coursework and project designated as MSc are 1–2 years duration. They incorporate coursework and project modules (Table 1).
- Master’s degrees by research thesis are designated M.Phil. which requires a minimum of 2 years study.
- The doctoral program, D.Phil., is by research thesis. Students who are carrying out an M.Phil. study, but have not yet submitted their thesis, may apply to their faculty to upgrade their study to the D.Phil. program.

**Purposes and functions of External Examiners**

- The General Academic Regulations of the University provide appointment of External Examiners to moderate all formal examinations for all programs including undergraduate (BA’s and BSc) and postgraduate degree (MSc and PhD) programs.
- The University normally appoints External Examiners for a 3-year cycle during which the External Examiners moderate examination papers every year, but visit the institution every other year to participate in the examination process.
- Appointment of External Examiners is made by the Senate on the recommendations of the Departmental Boards based on the high academic standing and CV.

**Selection, appointment and period of service of External Examiners**

- Nominations from Departmental Boards should be accompanied by an outline of the proposed External Examiner’s credentials. Nominations should be made only after the Chairperson of Department has secured the agreement of the proposed External Examiner.
- Only persons of sufficient seniority and experience to be able to command authority and offer the expertise required should be appointed.
- An External Examiner should not normally be appointed from a department or University or institution where a member of the inviting department is serving as an examiner.
- Normally, there shall only be one visiting External Examiner for a Department.
- External Examiners from outside the country will be invited to visit the Departments during the sessional examinations every other year during their period of appointment.

**The functions of External Examiners**

- to ensure that the assessment system is fair and fairly operated in classification of students in line with international practice;
The main duties of an external examiner

- to evaluate all forms of assessment which contribute to the students’ degree results;
- to evaluate, and to ensure fairness and consistency in the assessment process;
- to moderate assessed work at module and program level;
- to comment on draft examination papers and assessment tasks as appropriate;
- to report on the structure, content, academic standards and teaching of programs;
- to comment on any alleged cases of assessment irregularities.

Review of question papers

- The External Examiner shall be asked to review the draft questions to check if they are appropriate for the examinations for which they are prepared.
– The External Examiner may propose amendments to any examination questions and return his comments to the Chairperson of Department under strict confidential cover through a courier within 2 weeks of having received the draft questions.
– The department concerned shall make proposed amendments in the question papers before they are printed, packaged and sealed.

Report from External Examiners

– Each External Examiner is requested to provide a confidential written report at the end of his examining duties to the Vice Chancellor via e-mail and not to the Chairpersons of Departments or anyone else.
– External Examiners are encouraged to make any comments they wish, including observations on teaching, course structure and course content, as well as the examinations themselves.

Travel and accommodation arrangements

The Examinations Office will make all travel and accommodation bookings for External Examiners. The visits should not exceed a maximum of 4 days.

My Experience as an External Examiner at the University of Zimbabwe

The University of Zimbabwe (UZ) [1] Senate approved and appointed me as the External Examiner for the Post-Graduate programs upon the proposal of the Department of Chemical Pathology, College of Health Sciences on October 17th, 2017 for the MSc and on October 31, 2018 for the PhD students. According to the term of reference, the first year, I reviewed the exam questions of the MSc students and in 2018, I attended the Departmental Panel of the Examiners’ meeting held on November 20th, 2018 for the dissertation of four MSc students. In addition, I reviewed the thesis of a PhD student and submitted my written report prepared according to the regulations. During my visit to the University of Zimbabwe, I participated at several events and delivered my talks on the related topics. One of them was the launch of a campaign on CANCER NUTRIETICS organized by the Zimbabwe Association of Clinical Biochemistry (ZACB) with the honorable presence of Zimbabwe Minister of Health. The campaign received a great interest by the media including interviews with me and the ZACB President for several Newspapers and a TV program named “Good Morning Zimbabwe”. In addition, I delivered a guest lecture on “Liquid Profiling” at the Zimbabwe University [2].

University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE), Italy

The University of Modena dates back to 1175, making it one of the oldest and best universities in Italy and the world. With over 20,000 students, including 1200 international students and 3500 postgraduates, it is large enough to offer all the facilities one would expect from a major university, but small enough to retain a personal and friendly learning environment [3].

UNIMORE is in the heart of one of Europe’s wealthiest and most dynamic regions, which is world-renowned for its production of mechanical parts, engines, sports cars (e.g. Ferrari and Maserati) as well as for its agro-food sector, ceramic tiles and manufacturing industries. The University benefits from a longstanding relationship with the area’s firms and corporations, which provide private support for university research and a unique opportunity for job-oriented training programs before graduation.

With 14 Departments, it offers a wide range of degree programs and developed specific areas of excellence: Advanced Mechanics and Automotive Design, Smart ICT, Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine, Nano- and Emerging Materials and Systems for Sustainable Technologies, Genomic and Molecular Medicine, Environments, Food and Health and Models and Methods for Economic Analysis [4].

PhD programs at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Post-graduate PhD programs [5] at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia provide advanced research and professional skills to highly qualified students (Table 2). International academicians for the programs are appointed annually based on an evaluation for a high academic standing.

Many of the programs are jointly coordinated with national and international partners and all doctoral programs offer the opportunity to spend time abroad for research and internships.

Admission is based on an examination.

All doctoral programs at University of Modena and Reggio Emilia begin on November 1st and last 3 years, and not fewer than 50% of the students enrolled in the programs receive full scholarships.
The International Doctorate School in Clinical and Experimental Medicine (CEM) is organized by the Department of Biomedical, Metabolic and Neurological Sciences in collaboration with other Departments of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and is under the direction of Prof. Giuseppe Biagini (Figure 1).

The educational program and research opportunities are directed towards the acquisition of skills required for basic and clinical research at Universities, public or private Research Institutes, and Hospitals.

A Faculty of internationally recognized professors including me is responsible for the educational activities and takes part into the organization of the doctoral program entitled “Clinical and Experimental Medicine (CEM)”.

### References

5. Doctoral research programs – PhD programs. [https://www.unimore.it/didattica/dottorati.html](https://www.unimore.it/didattica/dottorati.html).

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### Clinical and Experimental Medicine (CEM)

The International Doctorate School in Clinical and Experimental Medicine (CEM) is organized by the Department of Biomedical, Metabolic and Neurological Sciences in collaboration with other Departments of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and is under the direction of Prof. Giuseppe Biagini (Figure 1).

**Table 2:** PhD programmes – XXXIV cycle – 2018/2019.