

EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Daragh O'Connell		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University College Cork, Ireland		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Italian, Modern Languages		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-2017	Date of Report:	30 June 2017

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught stage** Examining Board in the case of **postgraduate Master's programmes**).

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The Department of Italian successfully covers a wide range of balanced subject areas, allowing for teaching of different genres and periods, with a variety of theoretical approaches. This broad range of areas is extremely important and the standard of the modules is very high.

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

The programme's academic standards are being successfully maintained; as this was my fourth year I can report that all the academic thresholds are being met and are in line with the appropriate national and international benchmarks.

3. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The examination and awarding of marks, as in previous years, were all conducted in a fair, rigorous and transparent manner. Each module pack clearly outlined the guidelines for specific modules and the assessment procedures which followed clearly reflected this back. Everything was done in accordance with university policy. As with 2015-16, the opportunity afforded to the external examiner to come a day early to review scripts greatly enhanced and improved the procedure, and allowed me to glean a much clearer picture of the overall programme.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

The policy of allowing the external examiner to come a day before to review scripts greatly enhances the assessment process and is a definite improvement on previous procedures. I was happy to see it continued.

As with previous years, I was very impressed by the overall standard of the modules which the department successfully delivers across both language and culture modules. As Cardiff occupies a pivotal role for Italian Studies in Wales, I very much hope that this is allowed to continue. I am aware that there is about to be a great deal of curriculum redesign, and while I applaud initiatives for enhancement, I would warn only about the long-term effects that substantial changes can have on student recruitment and degree integrity. As the only Italian department in Wales offering a full degree programme I would encourage the department, the School and the University to maintain its provision for teaching medieval and renaissance modules alongside the modern ones. The work of all the staff in the department is excellent and the standards reached by students certainly attests to this.

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

Language: The department pays particular attention to the delivery of language modules of the highest order. I am very impressed with the standards attained by students. The second year ML8292 (Italian Language – Ex-Advanced) was particularly good, given that it asked students to also translate into Italian. However, more weight should have been given to that component of the exam, because of its complexity. Some institutions have dispensed with this mode of assessment because, invariably, students find it very difficult. Thankfully, this is not the case in Cardiff. As I wrote in my previous report, given the strategic position of Cardiff within Wales, it is vitally important that language modules in the department continue to uphold the highest standards. Ultimately, the department will be judged on the standard of its graduates, which right now is up with the highest in the UK and Ireland.

CULTURE: the department also places huge emphasis on culture modules (visual and literary) which cross the periodic divide. It is vital for the continuance of the integrity of the degree that the broad range of modules offered to students is maintained.

The marking throughout was fair and consistent; the full range of marks were applied, and this was especially pleasing to see with students whose work was clearly exceptional.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

The whole process was greatly improved with the cessation of sending scripts by post. The day to review them on site was invaluable and greatly enhanced my understanding of the structures and modes of assessment. I am always happy to encounter a department which provides students with modules that cover topics such as Dante, the Renaissance, right up to Fascism, Migration and Italian Women Writers and European cinema. The department needs to ensure as a matter of urgency that the variety and breadth of the curriculum is maintained for future years – this would include further staffing – to protect the integrity and uniqueness of the degree. The dissertation topics alone speak to the varied and immensely rich research interests and research led teaching practices of the department: 1) the evolution of the Gothic style of architecture; 2) depictions of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Art; 3) the representation of Italy as a frontline into Europe; 4) The Byzantine influence on Art, History and Culture; 5) Media Influence and integration; 6) the use of non-professional actors in neorealist cinema; 7) the student protests in 1968 and the formation of the Red Brigades; 8) Masculinity and Femininity in post-war Italian cinema.

The programme is robust overall and meets all the national and international criteria. Some modules, obviously, will need redesigning for the future (e.g. ML8396 – Italian for Professional Purposes, there is a suggestion there that elements of the assessment allow for students to learn by memory certain things).

Since taking up the position four I have been struck by the work of the students which in some cases was truly excellent (e.g. I read exceptional work this year from second year student studying Dante). This is due, in no small measure, to the dedication of the language teachers in particular who are obviously teaching with passion and rigour. I say this because this later translates itself into the culture modules. Students will not embrace culture properly until first they make serious inroads into language acquisition. I read some excellent work in the cinema options and that fluency with theory and its implications clearly stems from a student cohort which embrace they ethos and the standards of the department.

My recommendations are few (and also already stated): mostly, though, I would urge colleagues to hold on to the variety. Keep teaching Dante and the Medieval Ages. Keep teaching the Renaissance. Everything else suffers when these things are let go. Most importantly, however, is to need to maintain those high standards in teaching and curriculum development which are so visible in the students' work.

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		

8.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	Y		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	Y		
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE