



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and is available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	DR SALLY FINDLOW		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Keele University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report including any dissertation stage reports	EdD		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014-15	Date of Report:	2/1/15

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

### 1. Programme Structure

The programme structure appears to be sound, it has really good broad sociological reach, and I like the freedom students have to make limited choices between modules. Notwithstanding these really good features, there were some matters that I have raised for consideration:

At the Board we discussed the lack of pilot study, and progression panel, which in my experience helps students to make the sometime difficult transition between submitting assigned essays and independent research.

Programme aims seem perfectly sensible, and module aims were broadly reasonable, except for:

- SIR026, where the module aims did not seem to be Level 8 ones. I discussed this with the programme director and these have now been amended.
- SIR031, where we had a discussion at the board about how relevant it was to structure a whole module ostensibly about *current* practice around Bernstein.

The module aims for SIR023 are really good and provide a valuable addition to a largely qualitative research programme (though whether students actually need more time to address this different way of thinking is something the team might wish to consider).

I liked the practice of allowing students to develop their own essay titles. However, I wonder if it might be easier to 'help' students into engaging at the right level in debates if titles were

provided instead by the course team. I raised this matter with the programme director and am perfectly happy that the point has been taken up for further consideration.

I also wondered what the sanction is for falling foul of the 10% under or over word limit rule. One essay that I saw was clearly well over the limit, as noted in the feedback, but no sanction had been applied. In my view it is very important that the policy on this is transparent and applied across the board, as academic work is about writing to a particular brief that usually includes word limits.

## **2. Academic Standards**

The standards of work are consistent with those on other programmes in my experience. The most common areas of weakness in students' work seem to be disjointed writing, over-descriptiveness and paragraph structure (either too long with the result that points are obscured, or too short so not allowing space for points to be developed). In the work I saw there was also a tendency not to be overly careful about the selection of resources, or an apparent lack of understanding of the relative status of different sources – with the result (as the markers rightly pointed out) that some students were inclined to reference everything, while others under-referenced. As these assignments need on one level to be 'state of the art', critical reviews, what they need to do successfully is pin down prevailing definitions and debates in the field. Without these, it is hard to directly address the questions – and there were some disappointing conclusions.

These are fairly typical difficulties among students transitioning into doctoral level work, and both prior to and during the exam board I had a productive discussion with the team about how students might be helped on these counts.

## **3. The Assessment Process**

On the other hand, there are features of both the feedback structure and the actual feedback given that clearly really help students.

Marks in my view were entirely fair, given the marking structure available. However, as I noted in my May report, I feel that the use of the entire range of marks (as opposed to 'categories') does better justice to the work students have or have not actually put in. In two modules, as we discussed at the board, it was not entirely clear on the basis of the comments provided how the marks were arrived at. I feel confident that this will be addressed in future. In other ways though, the feedback struck a good balance between formative and summative functions, being helpful on the one hand and justifying the mark on the other, both commending and making suggestions for improvement. The best draft feedback was that which made concrete recommendations - for either further reading, or identifying gaps in coverage of issues or the practical application of those issues. This sets up a good basis for ongoing dialogue and real engagement – helping to de-mystify the business of academic writing. I particularly liked the way that the feedback to Module SIR031 began with an analytical summary of the assignment, which can help to underscore the message that academic writing needs to be doing something specific that is *capable* of analytical summary.

Just by way of reminder though (this issue was discussed and I am confident well-taken during the board itself), it is important that feedback is not littered with the same sorts of spelling and grammatical errors that markers are chiding the student for!

Finally, please do keep reminding students of the importance of page numbers!

#### **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

At the Board, we discussed the desirability of students being required to include Abstracts in all their written assignments. In my experience, this encourages them to pay due attention to the need to make an actual argument in their work –and is really good practice for continued academic work.

#### **5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)**

Course materials and documentation were spot-on, the exam board was conducted efficiently, and I was treated with considerateness and courtesy, all questions answered promptly. A really enjoyable experience. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the induction event itself.

#### **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

I really like the system of compulsory, formal 'draft' submission. This encourages good writing practice and is something I wish were more widely encouraged. Furthermore, given the variable extent of progress made between draft and final submission, which I pointed out in May, I was pleased to hear from the programme director that students have now been granted a longer time period between draft and final submission to allow for greater improvement based on formative feedback.

The tutors are clearly very committed and take great pains to provide helpful feedback.

#### **7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

## 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)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
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?		N	
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
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?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
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		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		<b>Yes (Y)</b>	<b>No (N)</b>	<b>N/A (N/A)</b>
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	<b>Y</b>		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	<b>Y</b>		
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?	<b>Y</b>		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			<b>N/A</b>

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk)

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