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Sent by email to kfowler-watt@bournemouth.ac.uk

30 October 2020

Dear Dr Fowler-Watt,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2019/20

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for the MA International Journalism.

You have indicated in your report that meetings with the School have been scheduled therefore, the issues you raise should not require a more immediate response however, the School has been asked to address the following comments raised in your report:

- **English Language:** The previous external examiner has commented on standards for language and for a predominantly international cohort. I would urge maintaining focus on simplicity and clarity in written work and storytelling as key for journalistic practice. That focus will be even more important with potential pressures on recruitment/IELTS in the next cycle.
- **Reflections on practice:** Great to see this encouraged in reflective writing and embedded within assessment, but many of the submissions were descriptive or 'off the top of the head' reflections rather than framed by theory on reflective practice. I wonder whether this is due to a lack of explicit delivery which could also be written into the module handbooks/teaching schedules/reading lists/ILOs?
- **Theory/practice blend:** This is particularly emphasised in IGA 1 & 2. This year I believe that 2 students have selected the academic dissertation and 78 have opted for practice-based projects for the master's phase. I am thoughtful about the conflation of research methods for academic writing and research for journalism practice. Once I have seen the Dissertations this year, I would be interested to discuss with the team further how this plays out in practice – and particularly for those students not at the top end -- where there might be confusion between academic research methods and journalism practice (e.g. semi-structured interviews are very different to interviews for journalistic



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storytelling, but a number of students used the terminology interchangeably). I also wonder about ethics, risk assessment etc.

- Storytelling: If the modules/delivery mentioned (above) were reviewed, this might create space to teach more on multimedia storytelling and to innovate further – including keeping a beady eye on the externally facing website and digital storytelling, and also:
- Ethical and legal context: Cognisant of the challenges of teaching law to an international cohort, there might be an argument for teaching ethics/legal context in a clearly signposted way ahead of the production of major projects. Again, one for review and further discussion once I have seen the final projects. The fake news essay goes some way here and engages the student in thinking about verification etc.
- Options, visiting speakers and civic engagement: all areas of strength. Would be great to see as many master classes and visiting speakers (as evident in FNR) as possible, but I am sure there is much more going on in wider JOMEC setting that MAIJ students can also engage with. In the Editor's Chair and Communicating Causes, Emerging Journalism all engage with real-world impactful projects and some best practice in terms of innovation and transferable skills here, such as leadership, teamwork, peer-to-peer learning, industry engagement.
- Global context, voice, inclusive journalism: The course could engage with these themes in even more depth (see note on reflective practice) – particularly as an international journalism course with an international mix of students - but might need to clear some space to do so.

I am confident that the Programme Team will endeavour to address the issues identified in your report and your comments will help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments, including:

1. Your positive comments regarding the programme structure, academic standards, and assessment process.
2. There is stretch and modules compare favourably in terms of level, learning outcomes and assessment. The students are worked hard on this course, and they complete the programme with a strong set of academic and practical skills.
3. The programme is in line with comparative courses at UK HEIs and benchmarking for L7 journalism PGT provision. The moderation is clear and thoughtfully presented. Students are given guidance in feedback on areas for improvement.
4. The students' achievements and profiles were also comparable. The students are challenged and stretched on this course and the quality of the work produced is impressive. It is doubly impressive in the Covid-19 context
5. I would like to commend the course team and academic support staff on the impressive achievement of getting a large international cohort of PG students through the first two semesters of their studies in a year that has been beset by industrial action and global pandemic. Most progressed and any re-sits were manageable. This is not an easy feat and your students are lucky to have such a committed team supporting them and working to sustain a sense of community in a virtual space.

6. Peer-to-peer learning evident in group work and cohort-building. This is impressive in a large international student cohort and a testament to the team and the design of units. The response to the move to online and the Covid-19 context shows agility and real care for students – both as learners and as human beings. This is to be commended.
7. The delivery of transferable skills and ‘intangibles’ in the suite of options, notably In the Editor’s Chair and Communicating Causes, Emerging Journalism –‘real world’ assessment and experience, engagement with industry and the wider community. Also, away days for dissertation proposal preparation, which run across the PGT programmes in JOMECE.

In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University’s [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar