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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:	Helen Wheatley		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Warwick		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BA in Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies / Journalism & Culture / Journalism & Communications / Media & Communications		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2019/20	Date of Report:	7/7/20

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

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

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 General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

As in my previous years at Cardiff, I saw a range of fantastic modules. JOMECS's real strength lies in how you are preparing students for work in the creative and cultural sector, both critically and practically (including the outstanding module *Employability* which I looked at for the second time this year). I saw sector-leading work in this area. I am also impressed by the multiple interesting ways in which students are invited to critically reflect upon current issues of the day. I saw less evidence of you engaging students with critical histories, with some notable exceptions (*War, Politics and Propaganda*, for example) but this may just be to do with the sample I was sent. I have been really impressed by the range of topics that students cover on their modules, and the fact that they are clearly invited to apply their learning to their own passions and interests. There were just a couple of modules where I saw significant crossover between curricula (e.g. *Public Relations and PR* and *Spin Unspun*, which need looking at side by side as there is repetition on the level of subjects being taught and reading being set).

As I noted in my report last year, *across the UK (and beyond, actually) the Students Union and others are calling for us to think about module design and the concept of decolonising the curriculum – I saw some excellent (Media Globalisation and Culture) and a number of pretty dire examples of curricula that addressed this issue. If this is not yet an issue at Cardiff, it's almost certainly coming; this might, therefore, be a moment to pre-emptively look at your whitest, most UK/US centric modules and see if there are small or large ways in which this can be addressed.* It seems all the more pressing now to address these issues and I am heartened to hear that JOMEC is actively engaged in critical thinking about how race (and its intersections with class, gender, religion, etc.) is discussed in its modules. I surveyed the required reading on eight modules. Of this eight, six modules had no BAME authors in their required reading, and the other two (*Media, Globalisation and Culture* and *Cultural and Creative Industries*) had a couple of pieces each that were written by non-white authors. The gender balance averaged at about 30% female authors, which is probably about standard across the sector. We all need to think very carefully about how we talk about race with our students and whose work we highlight and engage with in our modules and I signal it here again as an issue. In relation to diversity and inclusion issues, one module was directing students towards the publication *Spiked*, which regularly features anti-transgender journalism without any kind of warning that this is what students should expect from it; if I was a trans student in JOMEC, I might appreciate some signal of this issue.

I can confirm that the actions taken as a result of the variation of assessments in relation to industrial action and Covid-19 have been appropriate to protect the academic standards of the programme and have allowed students to achieve their programme level learning outcomes. Staff and students have clearly been working hard in the most difficult of contexts.

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

The quality of student work is generally very good. Cardiff students are well-read and eloquent, and I saw comfortably first-class work across the board. I looked at 4 or 5 first class dissertations, one 2:1 and one 2:2. All were impressive in different ways. The work that really stood out for me, and which I would have graded higher, was an audience study with families of people with autism on the representation of autism in contemporary television drama. I found the last paragraph of the introduction to this work moving in the way that it set out the pressing *need* for their study; this exemplifies the great work done by JOMEC students which thinks about academic writing as important and *purposeful*. Staff and students are really to be congratulated on this. Other dissertations were nicely self-aware and self-critical, showing a real maturity to the work, and all were able to articulate their methods in a convincing way, even at the lower end of the scale.

I am happy to confirm that module marks were generally an accurate reflection of the standards students achieved, and the award classification reflects their academic attainment on their degree programme. The application of the Safety Net Policy to ensure that students' award classification reflects their academic attainment on the degree programme, and that the degree classification is not affected by any potential dip in their academic performance in assessments undertaken during a period of disruption seemed to be applied fairly and appropriately, though the speed of the exam board made it very difficult to fully grasp the maths at play in this process! The academic standards of the degrees appeared to meet the requirements of the

national qualifications' framework and the degrees awarded by the University seemed valid and reliable and are of an equivalent standard to degrees awarded in previous years. The degree outcomes of each programme under consideration were in line with the sector and meet any professional, statutory, regulatory body requirements. Where issues were identified, the Examining Board was clear in its deliberations and actions to safeguard academic standards.

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

As in previous years, I saw modules that are examined via a wide range of assessment methods. This is a real strength for the school, and I cannot imagine JOMEC students growing weary of being asked to write the same old kind of essay as they can be in other institutions. This has raised some issues though:

(1) It seems that only the more standard forms of writing are made available for externals and moderators – how are marks for things like practical projects, seminar participation, reading quizzes, presentations, etc. being moderated and assessed for fairness?

(2) Assessment criteria: the current assessment criteria, developed for standard essays, simply does not work for all of your brilliant, varied modes of assessment. It is not flexible enough to make sense for students producing a set of blogs, or short analyses, or portfolios, or presentations, or policy briefs. The module *Employability: Knowledge, Skills and Experience* gives others a model of what needs to be done. Each element of that module has a separate set of assessment criteria. I can see that this has taken a lot of work, but it shows exactly what adaptation is necessary for each different/non-traditional form of assessment and will show to students the problems of this being lacking elsewhere.

While I was generally in agreement with the marks I saw (with a few exceptions in both directions), the feedback that students are getting is inconsistent and in some cases is worryingly brief (just one or two sentences, as opposed to 6 or 7 paragraphs in other modules). This relates to both terms' marking, not just that which was done during lockdown. In one module, the scant commentary on the essays was full of mistakes and grammatical errors, and whilst this marking was almost certainly done by a module tutor, rather than a full time member of staff, I would urge some further 'quality control' in marking, as well as a discussion more broadly across the school about expectations for feedback. In my view, one or two sentences is simply not enough for the students to learn from their mistakes (all along the marking spectrum). This very brief feedback also does a disservice to the staff in the school who produce detailed, constructive commentary, separating their comments out under multiple headings, really allowing the students to learn from and improve on their work. If a piece of work has a formative purpose (i.e. an essay plan leading to an essay later in the module) it is even more vital that the student gets fuller feedback on it, but this should also be standard practice across the board. Electronic marking seems to be gradually leading to less and less detailed responses on students' work.

4. Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable) (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

This is addressed elsewhere in this report re: diversifying the curriculum and providing more detailed commentary on assessments.

6. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

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

We are all in an extremely challenging situation with regards to delivering plans for teaching next year. However, it strikes me that the innovative teaching methods and the digital forms of assessment that JOMEC has developed are particularly well-adaptable for some form of blended/online learning.

As I noted last year, JOMEC students are really good at asking critical questions about contemporary issues, from internet governance to political communication and spin, to the global media market place: this is what sets apart your teaching and your students. We have never needed critical thinkers who can respond to the issues of the day more than we do now. I feel absolutely confident that Cardiff students will be given the opportunity to think through the seismic societal changes we are currently witnessing.

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

My sincere thanks to the JOMEC staff for generous ways they have engaged with me through the external examining process with help and guidance through this unusual examination period. This will be my last year as examiner for Cardiff and I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to get to know the Faculty and to learn about its work. I wish the School all the very best for what will inevitably be a very challenging year ahead.

9. Issues for Response

1. Adaptation of assessment criteria for non-traditional forms of assessment.
2. School-wide discussion of expectations on student feedback, structure and minimum requirements, and quality control of this
3. At curriculum level, issues of diversity and inclusion
4. How moderation/external examining will take place in relation to *all* forms of assessment.