



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Helena Buffery		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University College Cork		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Spanish and Catalan		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015/2016	Date of Report:	27 June 2016

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 in Spanish continues to provide students with the opportunity to develop high-level language skills and introduces them to aspects of Spanish and Latin American culture, although the range of subject-specific options is now much more limited than in previous years. There are clear and convincing signs of progression across the degree programme in both Spanish and Catalan, and the standards of teaching and assessment enable students to develop strong skills in essay writing, historical synthesis and cultural analysis, particularly evident under examination conditions. However, the concerns I expressed in previous years about the reduction in coverage of the programme are now acute, with only three specialist options on offer in second and final year. This has resulted in unacceptably large class sizes for some options in second year, in particular Ab Initio Catalan Language (with over 40 students) and Landmarks in Film.

2. Academic Standards

The academic standards of the programme are in line with other Hispanic Studies programmes in the UK and Ireland, except in relation to the range of options on offer. There is particularly good blend of examination and course work, and marking procedures continue to be clear and robust. There continues to be strong evidence of progression in language modules from first to second semester of second and final year, and there was some really exceptional work submitted for the module on Women's Voices in Contemporary Spain, indicating a surprisingly sophisticated level of engagement by undergraduate students.

3. The Assessment Process

The assessment process is generally clear and robust, with strong evidence of consistent practice in marking and moderation across the department. All module marks are moderated; examination papers and dissertations are second marked. The examination boards ran very smoothly, and I was provided with sufficient paperwork at all stages to perform my role to a satisfactory level. As external examiner I was given access to a good range of exam scripts, all dissertations, and all examination papers, oral recordings and coursework in the Catalan language and culture modules. However, even though I was assured that I would be provided with access to a sample of assessed work, this proved impossible due to the extreme pressure on staff this year. It was particularly surprising that the departmental exams officer this year was a temporary, fixed term language teacher. She performed her duties appropriately; however, this is the first time I have come across a situation in which such a high level of responsibility had been given to such a relatively inexperienced member of staff.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Most of my recommendations from last year have been taken on board, and I felt that in many ways the assessment process ran more smoothly this year. However, even though I was assured that my concerns about the potential reduction in coverage of the programme would be addressed, I have found that the range of option courses offered by the department have been reduced even further, resulting in unsustainable class sizes due to the parallel increase in student numbers in Spanish. The unsustainable staff/student ratio in Spanish also appears to have impacted on administration of the assessment process, with a fixed term language teacher having been given the role and responsibility of Exams Officer. This is not in line with best practice in other universities and, in my view, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

There continues to be strong evidence of innovative practice on the language learning modules, in particular the use of tandem learning in the second year Catalan and Culture module. I was also very impressed by the quality of engagement on Women's Voices in Contemporary Spain.

7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

I am very happy with many aspects of the undergraduate taught programme and module assessment for Spanish and Catalan. I was able to scrutinise a broad sample from all assessed modules at second to final year level, including Year

Abroad essays, all language scripts, Single Honours dissertations, Joint Honours extended essays, four specialist cultural options (2 in each year), the two Catalan language and culture modules, and a cross-school module on Innovations in European Literature. In general, I saw a good spread and topics and approaches and can confirm that there is clear evidence of progression across the four years of the programme. Compared to previous years, the assessment process is now suitably fair and robust, with evidence of consistent marking and moderation practice across the discipline.

My major concern, as indicated above, is the progressive narrowing of the curriculum over the years of my appointment. When I first arrived in Cardiff, there was a strong range of core and optional modules in Hispanic Studies, spanning different historical periods, approaches and cultural contexts. Nowadays, students are only able to choose between 3 specialist options at each level, leading to unacceptably high numbers in some options due to the unprecedented increase in numbers of students taking Spanish. I was, for instance, particularly surprised to see a group of 41 students in the ab initio Catalan language and culture course in second year. The norm in other institutions would be to provide the necessary resources to divide such a large group into two or three. The current staff/ student ratio is in my view unsustainable and will inevitably result in future problems. It would be a shame to see the strong evidence of excellent practice in teaching and assessment in Spanish undermined by the kind of pressures that have resulted in the appointment of an inexperienced member of staff being appointed to the role of exams officer.

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	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				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?		N	
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
9.19	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)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			NA
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			NA
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			NA
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			NA
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			NA
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			NA
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			NA
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			NA
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			NA

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

ExternalExaminers@cf.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

SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

- # Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.