



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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|   |                                      |                 |            |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
|   | For completion by External Examiner: |                 |            |
| Name of External Examiner:                          | Professor Clare Holdsworth           |                 |            |
| Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:   | Keele University                     |                 |            |
| Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report: | MSc Social Science Research Methods  |                 |            |
| Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:      | 2012-13                              | Date of Report: | 15/11/2013 |

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

### 1. Programme Structure

The programme provides excellent grounding in social science methods and students are introduced to a wide variety of techniques and taught these to an advanced level. There is more scope for synergy between different modules, but this has been addressed in recent review and re-structure for this coming academic year. Programmes that seek to include all social science disciplines will always be faced with the difficulty of getting the balance right between discipline-specific methods and approaches and presenting a consistent overview of methods. There are some issues of both overlap and inconsistencies in the different models, but these are to be expected. For example different quantitative models use different statistical software and teach different methods, but these are driven by subject specific requirements.

### 2. Academic Standards

The level of engagement with the modules is impressive and students demonstrate clear understanding of different techniques and ability to use complex methods. In the dissertations there are some excellent uses of advanced methods. Students also demonstrate a very good understanding of the epistemological underpinnings of different approaches. If there is one weakness in standards it is that students do not always match their understanding of methods with that of theory. The dissertations that I looked at had relatively little theoretical engagement (apart from discussions of epistemology).

### **3. The Assessment Process**

Assessments are in the form of assignments and essays which is appropriate for the modules learning outcomes. I was impressed with how students engaged with these assignments and students are clearly working very hard.

Overall the quality of feedback is very good, and in some cases exemplary. There are differences in approaches which to some extent reflect the differences in assignments, though there is scope for some standardisation. For example in most cases feedback is provided on a separate form though for other modules it is embedded in the actual assessment. For the later I would be concerned if students do not get to see this detailed feedback.

I do have some concerns about second marking, which I understand are being dealt with in the revised schedule. In some modules there were no comments from second markers, but my main concern was that in some cases marks were changed following second marking, but students whose work was not second marked were not reconsidered. If marks are going to be changed then this has to apply to the whole submission, and not a sample of assessments.

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

This is my first year. My comments accord with the previous External Examiner.

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

It would have been nice to be introduced to the teaching team, I had to arrive just in time for the Examiners meeting, and had no idea who most of the people at the meeting were and who taught which module.

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

The depth of understanding and complexity of the methods taught. Students completing this MSc will have an excellent grounding for careers in social science research both within and outside of academia.

Detailed feedback on assignments. In some cases this feedback was directed to lessons students could carry forward for subsequent work and the formative aspect of this feedback would be very useful for students.

### **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<br>(Y) | No<br>(N) | N/A<br>(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?  | y          |           |              |
| <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>               |   |            |           |              |

|  |   | Yes<br>(Y) | No<br>(N) | N/A<br>(N/A) |
|--|---|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 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          |           |              |
| <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?   |            |           | n/a          |
| 8.21   | If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?  |            |           |              |
| 8.22   | Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?   |            |           |              |

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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Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,  
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE