



## 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:	Dr Robert M Gillett		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Queen Mary University of London		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	BA German		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-17	Date of Report:	27.6.17

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

**All my remarks in this report should be read against the situation that, this year, one full-time member of staff had to relinquish his duties at short notice, while another was on research leave. The way the staff in the department coped under the circumstances says a great deal about the sort of department it is, and deserves very high praise. It is to be hoped that the new post will help the department develop in interesting new ways.**

As I said last year and the year before, the curriculum in Cardiff is extremely impressive. This year I was disappointed to see another slight restriction (single author courses were no longer visible in the material I saw), but the balance offered between major survey courses such as that on the GDR, courses giving access to critical periods in German cultural history, such as Sturm und Drang, seems to me to be exemplary. There was evidence of expertise across the four literary genres, as well as some extremely fine work in history. The nexus of history and literature is particularly well represented, and it is refreshing to see a curriculum which is not focussed exclusively on contemporary work. The fact that students also have a chance to take specialist courses in Business language and language for professional purposes is also to be highly commended. The fact that Cardiff has responded to student demand by offering courses taught in the target language likewise deserves high praise. And it seems to me that the range and quality of the dissertations springs directly from this broad and deep curriculum.

One thing I noted this year was that many students appeared to be opting to do school-wide modules at the expense of modules in German. I would like to warn explicitly and in the strongest terms against this kind of alleged 'efficiency gain', which has the effect of watering down the curriculum -- as well as reiterating my

concern about the move to an exclusive diet of 30-credit modules. (It may interest you to know that my own institution, which anyway currently offers a combination of 15 and 30 credit modules, in thinking of moving to a system in which courses are valued in multiples of 10.)

## **2. Academic Standards**

On the basis of the material I saw this year, the academic standards at Cardiff remain high, easily comparable with those known to me from my own institution and elsewhere and eminently compatible with the relevant bench-marks. And I can also report that my fears about grade inflation were not borne out by this year's results.

## **3. The Assessment Process**

Especially given the circumstances, the assessment process was, on the whole, excellent. I was given all the information I needed, and was given the opportunity to intervene at every stage. There was evidence of very careful and considered marking throughout, and the only evidence of the pressure which colleagues had been under were a few anomalous marks that had not been picked up in the second marking process. The meeting of the German board was handled very well indeed, giving time for discussion of important matters of principle. This year I was less happy with the languages board. I find it extraordinary that there were honours sheets put before us with information missing. I was slightly shocked by the number of external examiners who were not there. And I found it extraordinary that no senior member of the School was present. The new chair of the languages board was still learning the ropes, and occasionally there were difficulties of communication, but on the whole I was satisfied that the proceedings were both judicious and just. There was one matter, though, which I found extraordinary, potentially anomalous and in need of investigation. No fewer than 16 students had their final year language module in Spanish discounted on the grounds of extenuating circumstances, while one student was not able to graduate because he or she had failed this very examination. It seems to me that there is something wrong with a system that allows this.

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

This year I was again pleased to be able to see all the work in situ in Cardiff. I was also able to intervene in the case of one wrongly recorded mark and my request to have a look at coursework was granted. This last raised questions which I was not aware of last year about anomalies in marks between coursework and examinations in language, and about overlap between coursework essays and exams. These are both perennial problems, but it is important to keep an eye on them. One way to solve the former might be to viva the candidates concerned. Solving the latter is a matter of careful formulation of questions and vigilance.

This year was distinguished above all by some truly outstanding dissertations, on which all concerned are to be warmly congratulated. And I can only repeat that the department has done astonishingly well under difficult circumstances this year.

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

N/A

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

The careful procedure of vetting potential candidates for dissertations has clearly paid off handsomely this year, and is something I hope to be able to emulate in my own institution.

The question of the exam for ex-beginners remains.

And this year I noticed that translation into English was being marked by people who are not native speakers of that language. And while I realize that this is increasingly common, I think it does lead to difficulties, especially when seen in the context of the translation degree. I would therefore urge the department to consider appointing a native speaker of English to the new post in German.

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

N/A

**8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

N/A

**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)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
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?	Y		
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
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		
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
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?		<b>Not always</b>	
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		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
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?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				
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?			See com ment
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		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			I don't think so
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A
<b>Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)</b>				
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?			N/A
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N(A
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A

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

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