



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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| | 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: | 2014/2015 | Date of Report: | 02/07/2015 |

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 structure in Spanish provides students with the opportunity to develop high-level language skills and introduces them to a range of aspects of Spanish and Latin American culture, with a particular emphasis on history and cultural studies. There are clear and convincing signs of progression across the degree programme in language, 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, I am beginning to be concerned that the shift to 20+20 credit language modules has led to a reduction in coverage of other areas of Hispanic Studies, and this may have adverse effects on student performances in final year SH dissertations.

2. Academic Standards

The academic standards of the programme are in line with other Hispanic Studies programmes in the UK and Ireland. There is a particularly good blend of timed examination and course work, and marking procedures are clear and robust. There was strong evidence of student progression, particularly in language modules from first to second semester of second and final year. Also, in general students improve their marks and averages from second to final year, although in some cases the classification system in place meant that they were not rewarded for stronger performances in the final year. (In the MLANG board, there were a few cases of students with 60 credits or more in the first class range in final year who did not

achieve first class degrees overall because of weaker performances in their second year).

3. The Assessment Process

The assessment process is clear and robust. All module marks are moderated; examination papers and dissertations are second marked. Furthermore, I am happy to report that compared to last year, there was evidence of much more consistent practice regarding moderation, there were no significant inconsistencies over the award of first class marks, and borderlines had been carefully resolved in all cases. The examination boards ran very smoothly, although it would have been useful to see the paperwork (in particular minutes of previous meetings) before the boards. As external examiner I was given access to a good range of exam scripts, all dissertations, and all examination papers and coursework in the Catalan language and culture modules. However, even though I asked to see a sample of assessed coursework this year, and was told in the response to last year's report that this would be arranged, I arrived in Cardiff to find that it would not in fact be possible because the work had already been returned to students. I still feel that in order to get a full overview of learning, teaching and assessment at Cardiff, it would be useful to see examples of all forms of assessment.

The only changes I would like to see introduced for next year would be to ensure that module spreadsheets and statistics are made available to external examiners when they arrive, and also that paperwork relating to the final exam boards (including draft runs of marks) be seen by subject boards on the previous day in order to help to anticipate problems or potential errors. It struck me that the student profiles seemed to have been produced very late in the day, meaning that the MLANG examinations officer was having to check for any potential issues himself late on Tuesday.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

I would like to begin by thanking the Department of Hispanic Studies at Cardiff again for welcoming me back to undertake all my examining duties on site. I was pleased to note that the recommendations I made regarding treatment of borderline cases had been taken on board and resolved internally, and moderation practice was recorded clearly and consistently. Once again I was given access to a good range of exam scripts, but even though I had previously asked to see coursework in order to obtain a fuller picture of assessment methods, I was told this would not be possible after all in most cases. Nevertheless, from the samples I saw I am happy to confirm that academic standards remain high, even though there were not as many examples in final year this year of really excellent student performances. Whilst this is not uncommon, it would be a good idea to monitor the situation to see whether it has been produced by the various changes in course structure I have seen over the past three years, with the greater focus on language learning modules and cross-school courses leading to less depth of engagement with specialist training in Hispanic Studies. It was certainly clear to me this year that there were fewer optional modules relating to Hispanic culture, history and society available to students than in previous years, and I would not be surprised if this had an impact on student performance in the SH dissertations.

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

N/A

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

There was strong evidence of innovative practice on the language learning modules, in particular on the second year Business Spanish course. The quality of teaching and learning in individual language and non-language modules remains high.

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 (Y) | No (N) | N/A (N/A) |
|--|---|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Programme/Course Information | | | | |
| 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? | | N | |
| Draft Examination Question Papers | | | | |
| 8.3 | Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award? | Y | | |
| 8.4 | Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate? | Y | | |
| 8.5 | Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | Y | | |
| Marking Examination Scripts | | | | |
| 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? | Y | | |
| 8.7 | Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? | Y | | |
| 8.8 | Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? | Y | | |
| 8.9 | Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners? | Y | | |
| 8.10 | 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 | | | | |
| 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? | | N | |
| 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 | | |
| Clinical Examinations (if applicable) | | | | |
| 8.15 | Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments? | | | |
| Sampling of Work | | | | |
| 8.16 | Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work? | | | |
| Examining Board Meeting | | | | |

| | | Yes (Y) | No (N) | N/A (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 | | |
| Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable) | | | | |
| 8.20 | Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees? | Y | | |
| 8.21 | If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees? | Y | | |
| 8.22 | Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules? | Y | | |

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:

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