

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from [ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk).

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof. Vian Bakir		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Bangor University		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	<b>MA Digital Media and Society</b>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018-19	Date of Report:	6 Dec 2019

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 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)

Overall, this MA degree is well conceived, with a good balance between research skills, core concepts in Digital Media, and several optional modules. There are varied methods of teaching and learning, all entirely appropriate to Masters level.

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

It is comparable to other MAs in this area and produces work of a good standard. All modules introduce students to relevant and up-to-date material (always a challenge in the fast moving digital world).

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

I am very satisfied that the assessment process is well conceived, and that assessment proceeds carefully and thoughtfully. Feedback provided is detailed and useful. The standard is commensurate with what I have seen and experienced at MA level more widely at national levels.

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

I saw 7 MA dissertations and feedback for each from 2 markers. A diverse range of topics were covered, from Internet celebrities on Weibo to right wing Twitter trolling in India. In depth feedback is given from 2 markers, using a detailed marking rubric. The student's work is thoroughly deconstructed. Marks range from the highest grades to 55%. Some really excellent work is demonstrated, to the extent that the markers can see the work being published. This is testament to the quality of the overall course and those who teach on it.

5. **Year-on-Year Comments**

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

This was my first year examining this MA. Reading the past examiner's glowing report, this course looks to be retaining its excellent level of provision and care.

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)

All fine.

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

Some assessments varied in style of feedback – some had overall comments (very helpful) and others did not. *I would recommend ensuring that all markers on all scripts leave an overall evaluative comment.*

Below are my comments on each module.

**Core Modules:**

**MCT533/Putting Research into Practice I**

This module is a good mix of traditional research approaches and digital approaches and tools. The students are given an excellent, structured entry into how to become researchers in their own right. It looks supportive and very useful. As is normal with such modules, it generated a diverse set of student assignments, and student work was of varying quality.

**MCT534/Putting Research into Practice 2**

This module drills down into common research methods in our area, allowing students to appreciate the nuances and challenges of different types of research method, be this quantitative or qualitative. I was impressed by the mode of delivery

(group work and workshop) as well as the assignment (design and develop mini research projects, and the balance between group and individual assessments). Together, these are a great way for getting students to really think methodologically, and be aware of the import of their choices made. As is normal with such modules, it generated a diverse set of student assignments, and student work was of varying quality.

### **MCT565/Debates and Concepts in Media and Communications**

The module introduces many of the key debates in the field of media and communications and discusses them in relation to contemporary media. It would be an important foundational module for those who haven't done Media/Cultural Studies before. Its assessment is relevant and thorough.

### **MCT544/Understanding Digital Media**

This module gives a rounded discussion of key approaches to studying digital media. Students are exposed to older and more up to date perspectives, necessary to get a handle on digital developments. The assessment (essay and creative blog) is relevant and interesting. The blog – a mixture of both the academic and creative – is a good idea. Possibly more formal guidance on what it means to be creative in that medium, plus how the creative element would be assessed, would be worth explaining for students (as many didn't seem to be doing anything very creative with their blog assignment).

### **MCT545/Citizen Journalism and Digital Publics**

This module discusses the key debates around citizen journalism, to provide a well-grounded knowledge base, tested by an essay. It also develops students' practical understanding of citizen journalism as applied to the hyper-local context, via a portfolio of work that provided strategies to plug news gaps, and implemented some of the data journalism skills taught. This mix of theory and practice within the same module works very well. Students produced a variety of very interesting work.

### **Optional Modules:**

#### **MCT541/Governing the Internet: digital freedoms and restrictions**

This module discusses the key debates around internet governance, covering a wide range of appropriate issues and is assessed by presentation and essay. Then presentation is a particularly good way of bringing a seemingly dry topic to life, and students clearly engaged with this well. Both assessments produced interesting student work.

#### **MCT562/Big Data, Society and Everyday Life**

This module critically examines big data through a number of appropriate frameworks (political economy, surveillance, power, social justice, governance, activism) and applies it to a range of contemporary practices. It is assessed by a group presentation (with 2-page summary and slides); and an essay (which can be on same topic as presentation). It produced work on a wide range of topics.

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

## 9. 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)
<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?		N	
<b>Commenting on draft examination question papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
<b>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?			N/A
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
9.10	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>				
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		
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?			
<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?		N	

9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			<b>N/A</b>
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?	<b>Y</b>		
<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?		<b>N</b>	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			<b>N/A</b>

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

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