



Academic & Student Support Services  
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr  
Registry  
Y Gofrestrfa  
Academic Registrar Cofrestrdydd Academaidd  
Simon Wright LLB(Hons)

**Cardiff University**

McKenzie House  
30-36 Newport Road  
Cardiff CF24 0DE  
Wales UK

Tel please see below  
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4130  
www.cardiff.ac.uk

**Prifysgol Caerdydd**

TJ McKenzie  
30-36 Heol Casnewydd  
Caerdydd CF24 0DE  
Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig

Ffôn gweler isod  
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4130  
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

Sent by email to [jennifer.birks@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:jennifer.birks@nottingham.ac.uk)

**16 March 2020**

Dear Dr Birks,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19**

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for MA Journalism, Media and Communication.

Your report has been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

**The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. Feedback is generally detailed, specific and constructive at all grades, a standard which is impressive to maintain with such a large cohort.
3. For dissertations it is particularly striking that students have clearly benefited from the rigorous methods training, as well as the use of mini-research project assignments in some content modules.
4. Extra time taken by some module leaders to support students with formative assessment and unscheduled class tests on the reading, which help to support students' learning and incentivise engagement, getting them into good habits early on.
5. In the larger classes in particular, staff have worked hard to incorporate interactivity within lectures and to use workshop formats where practicable and most suitable.



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6. The in-class evaluations of specific aspects of the module, in addition to the generic online evaluation, are an excellent way to inform development of teaching practice in a reflective and evidence-based way.

**Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:**

1. **Academic Standards:** Direct students struggling with language difficulties to university language support services.

[Please provide a School response:

**The School provides and promotes the use of in house bespoke English Language support for students.**

**The School endeavours to ensure the students are aware of the university-wide language provision e.g. academic writing courses *early on the academic year*;**

**The School will consider formative assignment during the first semester, which target academic writing skills, essay writing skills, etc.;**]

2. **Assessment Process:** More consistent approach to word-counts for assessment – either as a range, percentage leeway or maximum.

[Please provide a School response

**The MA JMC programme director will communicate this information to the module leaders and ensure that there is a consistent approach to word-counts for assessment for 2020-2021 and it is reflected in the module handbooks]**

3. **Assessment Process:** Students would likely appreciate having assessment deadlines staggered where possible.

[Please provide a School response:

**The deadlines are set by the module leaders and some of them might fall quite close to each other due the nature of the learning cycle and term structure. However, a greater coordination will be ensured in future, possibly, with the help of the programme support administrator]**

4. **Assessment Process:** Evidence of moderation not made available.

[Please provide a School response:

**The school is currently formalising the moderation procedure (e.g. now the moderators and second markers are allocated in advance in accordance with their workload) and the moderation record should be made available in future]**

5. **Assessment Process:** Revise practice of adjusting individual marks when moderating samples.

[Please provide a School response:

**Thank you for raising this point, it will be discussed at the next programme directors' meeting and conveyed to the head of school]**

6. **Year-on-Year comments:** There are still one or two modules that give rather less detail in the module handbooks than others, but generally there is good consistency in content despite variation in presentation.

[Please provide a School response:

**The programme director (MA JMC) will communicate this observation to the module leaders to ensure a more consistent approach]**

7. **Preparation for the role:** Provide more information about the structure of the degree, such as credit weighting and which modules are 'required' and which therefore may be 'condoned'.

[Please provide a School response]:

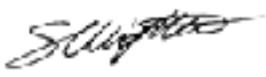
**Information in relation to the programme structure will be presented to External Examiners ahead of the Examining Boards and as part of the Results Schedules, information in relation to Academic Regulations are shared with External Examiners on appointment.**

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme.

In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Wright', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar