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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).

	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:	2019/20	Date of Report:	20 Nov 2020

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

**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 remains 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. If any variation of assessments happened in relation to industrial action and Covid-19 (I was not aware of any), they appear to be appropriate to protect the academic standards of the programme and have allowed students to achieve their programme level learning outcomes.

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

This MA remains 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) and assess them fairly. The staff appear to have coped well with the extra challenges of COVID-19.

*Please include consideration of the following:*

- *module marks are an accurate reflection of the standards they achieved, and the award classification reflects their academic attainment on their degree programme.*
- *if scaling has been recommended by the pre-Examining Board, there is appropriate justification for the recommendation based on the scaling guidance and the proposed scaling methodology to be applied to the marks is appropriate*
- *the application of the Safety Net Policy to ensure that students' award classification reflects their academic attainment on the degree programme, and that the degree classification is not affected by any potential dip in their academic performance in assessments undertaken during a period of disruption.*
- *Highlighting where the Safety Net Policy could not be applied/or only in part due to specific PSRB requirements and the outcomes of the discussion and decisions made.*
- *the academic standards of degrees meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications' framework.*
- *the degrees awarded by the University are valid and reliable and are of an equivalent standard to degrees awarded in previous years.*
- *confirmation that the degree outcomes of each programme under consideration are in line with the sector and meet any professional, statutory, regulatory body requirements.*
- *where issues have been identified, the main Examining Board have been clear in their deliberations and actions to safeguard the academic standards.*

**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, thoughtfully and tests module learning outcomes well. 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. Any variations put in place for the UCU strike and for COVID-19 have not negatively affected the assessment process.

*Please include consideration of the following:*

- *assessment variations used are appropriate, and where possible continue to test the module learning outcomes*
- *students continued to be provided with the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes as a result of the variations*

- *assessments continued to be conducted with care and due diligence to ensure that students were not academically disadvantaged as a result of the variations.*

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

*Where possible please complete this section following the dissertation examining board determining the final award.*

An interesting range of dissertation topics were presented, reflecting the diverse range of debates on representation, audiences, production and regulation within the MA Digital Media and Society. The methods used are diverse and relevant, and their solid application are a testimony to quality of the research methods modules taken. The assessment of the dissertations, both from first and second markers, is careful and systematic, and feedback given is highly detailed, both in terms of a marking rubric and overall comments. I am very satisfied that all due care and attention has been given to the examination of the dissertation.

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

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

This was my second year examining this MA. Excellent standards have been maintained, even in the face of industrial action and the pandemic.

*Please note that due to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, Schools may have had limited time to enact changes.*

**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)

All modules remain of an excellent standard, commensurate with published subject benchmarks for this field, and offering students high quality, tailored feedback. The maintenance of such high standards in light of the COVID-19 pandemic is commendable, and the team should be congratulated. Whatever practices they put in place as emergency measures appear to have worked well, and I hope that staff have been given due recognition for the extra preparation work that online delivery normally entails.

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. The mode of delivery seems to work well. Its assessment is relevant and thorough. Feedback is both thorough and helpful for the student to progress further.

**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. The mode of delivery seems to work well. Its assessment is relevant and thorough, with a group project and 4 individual assignments. Ensuring that students get to grips with all the main methods. Feedback is both thorough and helpful for the student to progress further.

**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. Feedback is both thorough and helpful for the student to progress further.

**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 blog) is relevant and interesting. The blog – a mixture of both the academic and creative – is a good idea and there were some very good executions of this in the students' work. Feedback is both thorough and helpful for the student to progress further.

**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 well. Students produced a variety of interesting work. Feedback is both thorough and helpful for the student to progress further.

**Optional Modules:**

**MCT568/Digital Economy, Digital Labour**

This module examines the political economy of digital technologies, and key developments in capitalism and the nature of work in a digital era. It is assessed by a group presentation and an essay. I only had sight of the essay but can confirm that It produced interesting work, and the feedback was both thorough and helpful.

**MCT593/Datafied Society**

This module critically engages with contemporary data issues through the lenses of political economy, surveillance, power, social justice, governance, and activism. It is assessed by a research report and a research essay. It produced interesting work, and the feedback was both thorough and helpful.

*Due to the need to for continued adaptations during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, we would be grateful if you could please include consideration of the following:*

- *advice and guidance on where adaptations can be made to support a blend of high-quality on-campus and online learning for 2020/21 to support Schools with curriculum developments to address ongoing requirements to socially distance due to Covid-19.*

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

n.a.

**9. Issues for Response**

There are no issues.

To assist with a timely and detailed response top your report, we would be grateful if you could briefly summarise any issues referred to above that you would like to be specifically addressed in our institutional response.

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