

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY External Examiner Annual Report Form



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

Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Gasnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig

Ffôn gweler isod
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4130

www.caerdydd.ac.uk

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

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Paul Newman		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Future plc		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	MA in Magazine Journalism		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2019/2020	Date of Report:	7 July 2020

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

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)

There have been no major changes to the programme since last year and there are no obvious gaps that require filling. However, it is worth noting the changes required due to COVID-19 and paying tribute to the way the teaching staff and students were able to pivot quickly and find ways to mitigate against the severe disruption to the second half of the academic year.

Updated June 2018

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

Unfortunately due to complications around COVID-19 it has not been possible to review anything like the volume of work achieved in previous years. But having said that, the work I did get to review was perhaps of the most consistently high standard seen during my tenure as an external examiner.

Having been a serial complainant about accuracy it was particularly pleasing to see that student work continues to improve in this regard. And the course magazines Herkind and Thrifty Eats definitely contained more in-depth work than was the case in previous years. In fact, they were probably the two strongest publications I have reviewed, with the design values in particular taking a leap forward. It was also satisfying to note that the focus of assignments touched on serious and important issues, such as poverty and human rights.

Finally, having highlighted the disappointing quality of the work placement reports in my previous report, I was pleased to see a much higher standard of CVs, covering letters and supporting assignments this year. The teaching staff and students are to be commended for this, especially considering the cruel role COVID-19 played in disrupting this aspect of the programme.

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

The big development in assessment this year has, of course, been the changes made to the second semester of the course as a result of COVID-19. I am fully supportive of what are a series of pragmatic adjustments that in no way devalue the education the students have received, despite what has been a deeply unsatisfying end to the academic year. The teaching staff and students are to be commended for their ability to pivot quickly and remain focused despite the challenges.

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

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

COVID-19 has prevented me visiting the university this year to assess new developments first hand and the disruption caused to the programme by the pandemic effectively renders this part of the report unnecessary.

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)

N/A

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

In my previous report I noted the importance of diversity and inclusion and it was encouraging to see that one of the course magazines – Herkind – was dedicated to LGBTQ-related matters. Identity remains one of the central issues of our times and I hope to see the way the course tackles this continue to evolve over time.

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

It has been a great privilege to serve as External Examiner with my alma mater, having studied on the precursor to this excellent course back in 1998-1999. My experiences have certainly been enhanced by being able to work closely with the same academic leaders throughout the course of my tenure – they remain as committed to the growth and development of their students as ever and work tirelessly to ensure the course remains relevant, produces highly skilled modern journalists and serves as an excellent finishing school for industry.

During my four years in the position I have attempted to offer constructive input with a view to reflecting the shifts underway in the professional world, whether they are driven by technology, as with ecommerce and podcasting, or cultural changes in the business of media. I been consistently impressed by the careful consideration given to my feedback and the speed at which the course has implemented suggested changes to either content or assessment.

Such has been the commitment to continually raising standards that it is hard to suggest obvious new areas for further development. And it is immensely pleasing to see such a high standard of work in my final year in post. However, we live in an extraordinary era, one where the rules of how we live and consume media are being written on an almost daily basis. The magazine industry has also been shaken to its core by COVID-19. And while it is uncertain what the publishing world will look like in 2021, it will almost certainly be more digital. I hope it will be more diverse too, because the media continues to struggle with attracting people from BAME backgrounds and both educators and publishers have a responsibility to address the structural problems holding back meaningful change.

My parting recommendation to the course is to consider rebranding as channel-agnostic i.e. remove the word Magazine and place the emphasis on digital-first journalism; journalism that also flows into print. This should not be to the detriment of learning the magazine discipline because the publishing projects help students develop vital skills, such as creativity and collaboration, and greatly enhance their aptitude for visual communication. However, the course has a reputation for its highly progressive approach to teaching both content creation and distribution, so it would be worrying if it came to be seen as an anachronism in a much more digital era.

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)
Programme/Course information				
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	
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
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
Examination scripts				
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?	Y		
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		
Coursework and practical assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y	Updated June 2018	

9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of course-work 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		
Clinical examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining board meeting				
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?	Y		
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		
Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	
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

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

externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

5

Updated June 2018

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE