



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Dyfrig Hughes		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Bangor University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	Postgraduate Diploma / MSc in Therapeutics		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	10/8/2015

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

Now in its twentieth year, the Postgraduate Diploma in Therapeutics is delivered entirely online via Learning Central, with no final examination. The 2-year part time (PgDip) course aims to equip candidates with a sound understanding of the management of common medical conditions and develop skills in evidence-based medicine. This is achieved through mostly problem-orientated learning, based on reading material and clinical exercises. Students' attendance of a study weekend is optional at the beginning of the course. Assessment is now entirely by continual appraisal of regular written work. The programme is structured into 6 modules, covering the main therapeutic categories and a foundation module. Course coverage is entirely appropriate for the general needs of students, and the method of learning allows for students to develop critical assessment skills in the application of evidence-based therapeutics to their own areas of practice. The method of course delivery is consistent across each module. Learning outcomes are stated explicitly, and are appropriate for a course of this nature, aimed at health professionals. For each module, there is a comprehensive description of how the module will be delivered, which skills will be developed and how the module will be assessed.

2. Academic Standards

Among the 2014/15 cohort of students completing their first year of the PgDip course, average marks for each of the three completed modules were high. Set against the standard of the course work requirements (MCQ and written assignments), these

indicate a high standard of attainment. As in previous years, there is a proportion of students who have withdrawn from the course, or interrupted their study. While high achievers reflect well on the quality of teaching and learning methods available to students enrolled on the course, it is more likely that withdrawal is a result of the challenges facing distance learners than any specific issue that concerned the course. I judge that overall, academic standards are comparable to, and indeed may surpass, those expected of a UK higher education institution.

3. The Assessment Process

The move from final examination to course assignments has transformed this into a truly distance learning course. The marking and grading schemes are transparent. Quality and consistency of assessing written assignments is ensured through a system of duplicate marking. Marking was consistent with the scheme and aligned with the learning outcomes. The mixture of MCQs and written assignments (which may take the form of an essay-type question, several short-answer questions or a piece of portfolio work) ensures that assignments are varied in nature, not overly burdensome on students, and are suitably balanced, thus ensuring student achievement can be assessed rigorously against a range of assessment methods. These are conducted in accordance with Cardiff University's policies and regulations.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Comments from previous years related mainly to the rates of distinctions awarded. As the 2014/15 cohort was the first year of two based on the new format, final grades have yet to be awarded. One student from previous intake was awarded a distinction at MSc. I reviewed the dissertation, and it was indeed to a very high standard. For future years, I would suggest the external examiner has sight of a sample of completed assignments at the end of each module.

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

Not applicable.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

The change in the method of assignment will no doubt be a more attractive option for distance-learners, while maintaining the high standard achieved in previous years.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

Not applicable

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?	Y		
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?	Y		
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?	Y		
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y (by teleconference)		
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?			N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

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