



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Peter Liddel		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	The University of Manchester		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA Ancient History, and joint/composite undergraduate programmes		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014-15	Date of Report:	23 rd June 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

The programme structures are largely unchanged from previous years, but the appointment of a new permanent colleague has, happily, enabled the expansion of the portfolio of modules offered by Ancient History at Cardiff.

The programme that is offered to Ancient History students (single and joint honours) at Cardiff is impressive, and offers an excellent grounding in Greek and Roman history, while offering students the chance to take specialist modules which correspond to the expertise of colleagues in the department. There's an emphasis on engagement with the ancient sources at every point in the programme, and this is a real point of excellence. Cardiff students show real strength in combining material and literary evidence, and this is a tribute to the excellence of the courses on offer at Cardiff.

The BA Ancient History programme succeeds in its stated aim of (at <http://coursefinder.cf.ac.uk/undergraduate/course/detail/V110.html>) of offering a balance between modules on historical periods and thematic social and cultural aspects. Overall, the courses on offer allow the students the opportunity to engage with both mainstream and specialist areas of ancient history. There's a good balance of Greek and Roman, social, political, cultural, military, Hellenistic and Late Antique. The existence of 10-credit units allows students a wide range of choice and a close view of a specialist topic. It is clear that students benefit from the wide area of specialisms that exist within the department.

The combined degree programmes (BA Ancient History and Archaeology/Mediaeval History/History/Religious Studies/Philosophy) offer students the opportunity to develop expertise in both ancient history and another subject, and the programme structures appear to me to be well-designed and coherent.

I am satisfied that students demonstrate achievement of the QAA benchmark statement

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Classics.pdf>). Students clearly demonstrate engagement with a wide range of methodological problems, in particular those concerning the interpretation of material evidence: students engage with field-work in both core and optional units and they are trained in the interpretation of literary evidence. The modules offered cover a wide range of political, military, social and cultural approaches. On some modules students get the opportunity to think about theoretical approaches. Other courses offer the students excellent opportunities for fieldwork expeditions and workshop-type activities. Students on independent study modules are given excellent support and their progress is monitored and supported at every point. Cardiff students often show their strength when combining and comparing literary and material evidence, and they are given ample opportunities to do this at all levels.

2. Academic Standards

Academic standards are on the whole excellent, and on a par with those which are achieved in my own institution.

A large part of the reason for this excellent standard is the care that colleagues in Ancient History at Cardiff take in teaching and supervising their students: this is something that is particularly clear in the detailed guidance that is produced in the shape of handbooks and the support and supervision that is given to students on independent study modules. Accordingly, the vast majority of topics studied by students taking such modules were well-conceived, though, inevitably, there were students who attempted topics that were too broad to be treated effectively in such an exercise.

3. The Assessment Process

The processes are transparent, and regulations and procedures are carefully followed. Exam papers are produced with care, and go through a careful process of scrutiny; marking is careful, and the moderation that was undertaken was done so effectively, ensuring balance. Markers, to their credit, use a good range of marks, including those in the 70s, which is an important way of ensuring that students receive the classification that they deserve overall. Moderation (e.g. for the Hellenistic Kings) course helpfully distinguished between students clustering around the borderlines of classifications; it was also used to ensure that marks were fair in the light of the relative difficulty of elements of assessment.

The department makes use of a good range of forms of assessment. There was a very good range of assessment methods: class tests, coursework essays, literary commentaries/criticisms, exams, which encourage students to combine in-depth factual knowledge of events and phenomena while developing skills of sifting, analysis of ancient material, and forming arguments. Students learn a great deal

from the excellent and detailed feedback that they receive on formatively- and summatively-assessed coursework.

One oddity of the current system, which arose in discussion with the Assessment Officer about the Gender and Sexuality module (in which, of the two candidates on 69 overall, one had a moderated 76 for coursework. but an unmoderated 62 for the exam, and another had a moderated 72 for the exam, but an unmoderated 65 for coursework) is that moderators of course units are not supposed to look across to other module components in determining what scripts they moderate. My feeling is that ideally there would be some kind of mark review process which could be applied in cases where a student has ended up on the borderline for an entire module: perhaps in such cases you might feel able to ask the external to look at the collated work?

The classification of students at the borderlines is certainly less generous than it is at my own institution (The University of Manchester). Whereas at Cardiff, students in the X8-X9 range require at least 120 credits at the higher level in years 2 and 3 to gain the upper classification, students at Manchester require 80 credits in year 3 to be rewarded in the same way. Moreover, students who score X8-X9 and gain 60 credits at the upper classification in year 3 will go to a 'mark review' process, whereby their work at levels 2 and 3 will be scrutinized by a member of the exam board to assess whether or not it could be fairly placed in the upper classification. The effect of the Manchester system is to reward exit velocity more effectively than the Cardiff system does; accordingly, there were several borderline students at Cardiff this year who graduated with 2.2s and 2.1s who would have received a higher degree at Manchester.

Discussion of the work of one particular candidate highlighted a problem in the grade conversion conventions used by Cardiff in the classification of students who had taken courses overseas: it is clear both that the 'exchange rates' will need to be carefully re-assessed. Moreover, measures need to be put into place to ensure that students are able to take components of their degrees only in institutions whose assessment requires comparable levels of critical analysis and engagement as one would expect in a humanities degree in the UK.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Once again, there are clear improvements: HS 3345 and HS3346 Greek Historical Texts and PGrad equivalents and HS 3343/4 Latin Historical Texts and PGrad equivalents are now taught with 2 hours of class per week rather than 1 hour. Such investment in language courses is vital to the development of Cardiff as a centre for Undergraduate excellence and Postgraduate research in ancient history.

The department's development of its detailed criteria for the marking of language exams is an excellent development and will ensure that assessment of work is carried out in a transparent and fair way. I hope that in due course the department will feel equipped to offer language courses which test a wide range of language skills, including understanding of morphology and syntax.

Language provision (Greek and Latin) continues to be an area of growth at Cardiff, and I would encourage the School to do its best to consolidate and strengthen it further.

The appointment of an expert in Greek history and literature has enabled the provision of an excellent new course-unit, *Myth and History*: both the appointment and the course-unit are a clear indication of the consolidation of ancient history at Cardiff and the broadening of options available to students. In that course, students engaged with a wide range of sources (both iconographical and literary) and made use of different approaches. It is clear that this is a very rich course, and that a significant number of students have engaged at a high level with its possibilities. There was also a noticeable impact on the topics students chose for independent study modules: the impression I got is that, on the Greek front, students chose a wider range of literary topics and many of them handled the texts adeptly,

The appointment, for the second semester, of a second external examiner in Roman History was another clear improvement: the reduction in the number of units and papers I was responsible for enabled me to look in more depth and detail at the assessment of Greek history, the area in which I am a specialist. This year, dissertations and independent studies were allocated to externals according to subject specialism: this is probably the best way of dividing the work.

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

n/a

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Notable practice include the excellent research-based materials provided for students, such as that provided for *Pots and Poems* and *Athens in the Age of Demosthenes and Lykourgos*. Many course-units offered deep and detailed feedback which plays potentially an important part of students' learning process: *Myth and History in Greek Culture* offered particularly detailed feedback.

Moderation was carried out very carefully and in a transparent way, with particular attention to the course convened by a new colleague. Double-blind marking of the dissertation meant that there were times when there was a difference between the two internally-proposed marks; on such occasions, the two markers were able to produce a reasoned explanation of how an agreed mark was come to. This careful process ensured that students received a fair mark.

I was pleased to see that those Independent Studies which offered non-academic approaches to subjects usually made room for some kind of scholarly commentary: this seems a good way of encouraging imaginative approaches to this module while ensuring scholarly engagement.

The design and ongoing fine-tuning of marking descriptors for language modules is helping to ensure that marking of such courses is fair and transparent.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

Since my appointment in 2011 as External Examiner, I have seen a number of improvements in Ancient History provision at Cardiff. These include the appointment of a new permanent colleague, the development of language provision, and the introduction of new course-units. This is all excellent. There is still, however, some

room for further improvement in coverage as well as investment in consolidating current areas of expertise: further expansion of the department will ensure that Cardiff undergraduates receive the type of training in language and treatment of literary texts, tools which will give them the opportunity to successfully move into postgraduate study and research.

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?			
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		
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?	Y		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	Y		

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