

Academic & Student Support Services  
Academic Registrar  
Simon Wright LLB  
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*Simon Wright LLB*



**Sent by email to jane.downes@uhi.ac.uk**

**05 April 2016**

Dear Professor Downes,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015**

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MA in Archaeology / European Neolithic (British, European & Mediterranean Prehistory, History & Theory of Archaeology, Materials Science).

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

**Issue(s) Highlighted:**

1. your comments on the place of "ST500 PGrad Skills in Archaeology & Conservation" as a Core Module in the programme;
2. your detailed observations on the nature of feedback provided to students;
3. your observation that internal moderation was not evident for a named module;
4. your suggestion that a wider range of assessment types could be employed and request that tutors remain vigilant to the risk of students focussing similar topics across assessments for different modules.

**The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:**

1. HST500 postgraduate skills module aims to provide Master's students with a broad range of skills applicable to their professional development within and without academia. It covers: data presentation and interpretation, communicating to different audiences, research ethics, and careers and employability skills. These are key skills that should be drawn upon where appropriate in all the modules students take when pursuing their Master's degrees, and especially their dissertations. These skills are also essential in preparing students for the future beyond Master's level whether they decide to further study in academia or seek professional employment within the heritage sector or other sectors.

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2. New Postgraduate Feedback Forms have been introduced. All feedback now include a 'feedforward' element, which explicitly addresses how students might improve in their future assessment.

The tick-boxes on feedback forms are used as an adjunct to more extensive written feedback. These tick-boxes are used to identify areas of strength, competency, and deficiencies. If any element of work is marked as 'Deficient', then some explanation of this judgment must be provided in the comments space.

3. New School wide moderation forms are being developed for 2015/6. These will record all moderation process undertaken.
4. The School has confirmed that assessment types vary across modules and that the possibility for students to consistently focus on similar elements across a number of modules will be monitored by the Postgraduate co-ordinator.

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

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your particular commendation of the support you received from the programme leader and of the opportunity for students to undertake in depth study of a personally selected topic afforded by modules HST450/451.

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

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar