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Sent by email to e.price@swansea.ac.uk

31 August 2016

Dear Dr Price,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for Ystafell Newyddion 1 a 2.

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.

We would like to thank Dr Elain Price for her thorough examination of Welsh language modules Yr Ystafell Newyddion 1 and Yr Ystafell Newyddion 2. As the Welsh medium provision at JOMEC remains in its infancy it is extremely useful to have an external perspective from someone who delivers Welsh language provision at another institution.

As Dr Price notes and indeed welcomes in her report, we are developing the provision further and an encouraging number of students are enrolled on the modules or opting to study Welsh and Journalism as a joint honours degree.

The close links we maintain with the industry is recognised and praised, along with the 'Welsh feel of the topics discussed' and the 'challenging and contemporary' essay questions posed. The examiner also likes the additions to the news tasks in Yr Ystafell Newyddion 2 such as devising a Twitter hashtag and considerations such as consent. Dr Price states 'I am positive that the students had worthwhile experiences

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on these modules' and feedback from students is overwhelmingly and universally positive.

It is important to note that, in its short existence, the Welsh language provision has been subject to several changes in personnel. The Programme Director, Sian Morgan Lloyd, was appointed in Autumn 2015 and led Yr Ystafell Newyddion 2. Sian Powell became the module leader for Ystafell Newyddion 1 in the absence of Sian Morgan Lloyd's predecessor. This module is the subject of some criticism from the external examiner and while we will naturally seek to address the concerns raised, Sian Morgan Lloyd will lead both modules in the next academic year.

Issues Highlighted

Programme Structure:

Dr Price recognises the progress students make by studying both Yr Ystafell Newyddion modules. This is our intention and we have structured the modules and the assessed tasks accordingly. However, the examiner feels there could be more variety to ensure students learn a range of different skills. We accept this recommendation and will ensure greater variety in the next academic year. Web journalism is, however, a component of both modules and indeed contemporary journalism. As opposed to changing the assessed article task altogether we propose a clearer focus on writing for a specific audience in each piece of work. Recognising and understanding audiences is an intended learning outcome of both modules and the article writing allows students to demonstrate their developing understanding of this whilst practising relevant, current journalistic skills. Both modules look at print, radio and television and students become familiar with and knowledgeable in all mediums.

The Assessment Process:

It is pleasing to see the examiner's complimentary comments on the range of our assessments, with particular praise for the essay topics – an area we have significantly improved upon since the last report. We will endeavour to ensure even greater variety in relation to one creative task, as outlined above.

Dr Price feels there were weaknesses in correcting language errors made by students. She recognises our effort to refer to grammatical and syntax related errors in the general feedback paragraphs but would welcome corrections on the text itself. In order to help students learn and improve we welcome Dr Price's suggestion, and will seek to address this through Grademark and the tools it provides. There is, however, a fine line between correcting linguistic errors and eroding or destroying confidence - and this is particularly pertinent to the Welsh language. One of the core aims of the provision is to develop young people's confidence to use the language and to write in Welsh. This will ensure more Welsh language content (particularly online) from a diverse and varied group who will go on to populate the workforce and use the skills and confidence we have helped them gain in meaningful and relevant ways.

We agree with Dr Price, therefore, that it is important to draw attention to mistakes in a more precise fashion but not to penalise students further. We also provide face to face feedback and consistently discuss areas for improvement, including improving students' knowledge and application of Welsh grammar. Welsh A level is not a requirement to study the joint honours degree and we anticipate varied linguistic abilities and confidence on this degree pathway.

The examiner draws attention to the need for clearer criteria and definition of how final assessment marks are calculated. We agree and will address this as a priority during the next academic year.

We are pleased to see the examiner saw more evidence of second marking this year and will adopt her recommendation for a clearer system in the form of a specific document created to meet this requirement.

Year on Year Comments:

It is reassuring to see some previous concerns have completely disappeared and we feel, considering the staffing changes and the appointment of someone new to academia, there is much to applaud in the delivery of the Yr Ystafell Newyddion modules.

The next academic year will see the introduction of two new Welsh language modules as the provision continues to improve and evolve. We are delighted with the feedback we have recently received from the industry, where Ystafell Newyddion graduates are now working.

We are confident that sufficient feedback is provided to students on their assessed work but understand the external examiner has answered 'No' on the checklist due to her concerns on language specific feedback. We have spoken a number of times about this and agreed on improvement strategies that will be implemented next year.

We hope that this response is satisfactory and would like to thank Dr Elain Price once again for her continued support of this developing programme.

Actions agreed for Academic Year 2016-17

- Ensure variety across the Yr Ystafell Newyddion modules and assessments;
- Produce clear marking criteria;
- Provide more precise feedback on language and grammar;
- Create a specific document to evidence second marking.

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

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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