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Sent by email to ethorsen@bournemouth.ac.uk

06 March 2017

Dear Dr Thorsen,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MA in Journalism, Media and Communications.

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.

Issues Highlighted

1. Length of feedback too long in some instances.
2. The nature of research questions in relation to sampling.
3. Sample sizes for research assignments.
4. Perceived double contribution of the literature review (for PRIP1 and the dissertation).
5. Submission of paper copies of assessments.

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

1. Whilst it is at the discretion of the module tutor and/or supervisor to provide lengthier feedback to students, as the School moves towards a paperless system, feedback will become more standardized in nature and length across modules.

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2. For Putting Research Into Practice 1, the research proposal will often be an initial outline of research questions and methodology that will be further shaped and focused with guidance from the supervisor. Although students receive guidance on the nature of research questions and methodology, the research proposal is included as an assignment to be formative in this respect. The media report for Politics of Global Communication has been given more focus in terms of the types of research questions and is now more prescriptive in keeping the sample size smaller so as to be more consistent with its 40% weighting.
3. See comment above. The School will consider whether there is a need to be even more prescriptive on sample sizes across all modules that include a research assignment with empirical analysis (specifying acceptable range for qualitative and quantitative analyses) in order to ensure greater consistency amongst students. However, learning how to sample is part of the process as well.
4. This seems to be an issue with wording that the School will attend to as the literature review tends to develop substantially from the PRIP 1 stage to the final submission of the dissertation. However, students are able to work from the review they submit and develop it (based also on mark and feedback from their supervisors).
5. The School is in the process of moving towards a paperless submission system and several modules have adopted this for 2016-17 with the expectation that this will become standard for 2017-18.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. the creative freedom granted to students by allowing them to pitch their own ideas for assignment topics;
3. the systematic approach to research equipping students with the requisite skills for their dissertation and research work beyond their degree.

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

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

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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