



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Klaus Kessler		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Aston University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MSc Neuroimaging: Methods and Applications		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2013/2014	Date of Report:	30/07/2014

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 structure and content of the programme is in excellent relation to its stated aims, learning outcomes and programme specification.

2. Academic Standards

After careful consideration and deliberation before and during the Examiners Board Meeting it is evident that the programme overall is maintaining excellent academic standards that are in full accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications. The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable to the standards I have personally observed in other UK higher education institutions as well as in other European countries (e.g. Germany).

3. The Assessment Process

Overall the assessment process is appropriately designed and applied, measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

First of all the difference between this and last year's cohort of students was quite striking, with this year's students revealing a rather bimodal distribution of performance (very good students vs. students who struggled). Given this change in student quality the Examiners Board felt that any new changes to the course content should be administered with great care.

Based on last year's Examiners Board Meeting changes have been implemented to modules 502, 511, and the statistics module (formerly 010,011 now 017). In 2012/13 the MCQ component of Module 502 seemed to have been easier than that of the other modules and there was general agreement at the 2012/13 Board meeting that the module would include additional content and exam questions for 2013/14. This has been successfully implemented and students in 2013/14 performed at a similar level in 502 as in other modules.

The reverse had been true for 511, where the general level of the MCQ component had been below that of the other modules in 2012/13. In response the content and questions were modified to counter-act this trend for 2013/14, however, the module still revealed the lowest average marks (also in the essay part of the exam) and the highest number of fails (4). Future measures were discussed at the EBM (see below).

Finally, issues with the statistics modules (010, 011) in 2012/13 were addressed by changing the resit questions for 2013/14. In the second semester also a change in presentation mode (powerpoint instead of overheads) and lecture recording (using Panopto) were introduced, which was reflected in more positive student feedback, however, the number of fails (and fails on resits) was alarmingly high – also compared to PGR students (5 out of 7 fails in semester 2 were Msc). While taking into consideration that this year's student cohort were not performing at the same level as the 2012/13 cohort, it was still important to consider possible countermeasures for the future to help underperforming students achieve a satisfactory level of performance (see below).

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

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Overall I commend the Organisers and Cardiff University on an excellent Msc course that combines a great student experience with excellent standards.

I pointed out the potential problem with this year's student cohort in Section 4 and based on this observation the EBM discussed future measures to address potential issues with modules 511 and 017. While more severe intake selection was discussed as an option that could raise the overall performance level, the main focus of deliberation centred on measures that would help a majority of students achieve satisfactory performance. Based on the understanding that this year's cohort may have been an outlier, there was general agreement that too drastic changes to the course could result in unwanted jo-jo effects, hence, interventions that focussed on direct student support rather than course content changes, were prioritised instead.

In my understanding the main suggestion was to consider introducing additional tutorial groups in relation to modules 511, 017 and also 503 (where 3 students failed in 2013/14), which could focus on struggling students, enabling them to catch up with their peers. These groups could be run with the help of PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, thus, also promoting exchange and development within the CUBRIC community. Clear guidance for how to run these groups would have to be provided by the conveners and organisers (to the PhD student and postdoctoral helpers), which would also impact positively on the reading groups for modules 504

and 509 that were perceived by the Msc students as somewhat unstructured. 2014/15 will be a test year for the impact of such tutorial groups and discussion of more drastic changes to the course modules will only resume if unsuccessful.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

N/A

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?		N	
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?			N/A
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?			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