



Academic & Student Support Services
Academic Registrar Simon Wright LLB
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr
Cofrestrwydd Academaidd Simon Wright LLB

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE

Tel *Ffôn* | +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE

Sent by email to vanessa.may@manchester.ac.uk

18 September 2017

Dear Dr May,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2016–2017

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the Social Sciences and Sociology modules on undergraduate programmes.

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. Need for clarity on the nature of formative feedback provided to students.
2. Suggested earlier issue of guidance to External Examiners on the use of Learning Central to provide access to assessment materials.
3. Quality and style of feedback to students is variable across modules.
4. Potential enhanced use of the 'rubric' function of Grademark,
5. Reiterated comments on the need for feedback on student essays to both commend positive aspects, identify things to improve in future (feed forward) and give an indication of performance on key assessment criteria.
6. Comments and suggestions on the marking of examination scripts.
7. Suggestion that External Examiners be provided with a template setting out their role and a schedule of when tasks are expected of them.

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE
Tel *Ffôn* | +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Tel *Ffôn* | +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

8. Your indication in the Annual Report checklist that exam scripts were not always marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of a given mark.

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

1. The School has noted your comments. The new School module handbook template now informs students of how they should expect to receive feedback (formative and summative) throughout the module. The UG2020 curriculum reforms will require all modules to include formative work (and feedback).
2. The School produces a timetable for external examiners. For 2017-2018, the School will send reminders throughout the academic year to external examiners about what they are expected or encouraged to review as and when necessary. This should help external examiners manage the process better, including their access to Learning Central.
3. Markers who have been identified as providing limited feedback have been given additional support and guidance on the School's expectations on feedback to students.
4. The School is part of a trial to look at the use of 'rubric' in Grademark for this coming year. However, the School acknowledges that some staff have concerns about how overly prescriptive this can be. Nevertheless, the suggestion of using 'rubric' will be considered at one of the School's teaching and learning away-days this year, at which module convenors who currently use the 'rubric' function will share their experiences of it.
5. The School has noted your comments. The School Undergraduate Marking Information Sheet is regularly updated and circulated to all staff at the beginning of each academic year (and then throughout the year if there any updates). For example, this includes a section of guidance on marking coursework that includes the following on 'feed forward' feedback. Following your comments, the School will also suggest that markers consider including headings in their feedback to distinguish between things to commend and things to improve.
6. SOCSI currently has a policy of providing cohort-level feedback on examinations, we do not require markers to make comments on individual exam scripts. However, markers are encouraged to keep notes on each exam script to help them provide individual feedback to students if they request it.
7. The overall role of the external examiner is determined by the University and is included in University documentation issued at appointment and annually thereafter. The School produces a timetable for external examiners and for 2017-2018 will send reminders throughout the academic year to external

examiners about what they are expected or encouraged to look as and when necessary.

8. See also 6. above. The School is currently developing bespoke marking criteria for each module/assessment (rather than applying a generic School-wide set of criteria). This should make it much clearer why an assessment item has been given a particular mark – both for external examiners and for students. The School always welcomes discussions with external examiners on assessments where they would question a given mark – and it at these meetings with module convenors that their warrant for a given mark can be discussed.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. impressive range of optional modules;
3. all modules required students to apply sociological thinking to 'real world' issues of their own choice;
4. the retention of ethnography within the curriculum;
5. use made of the full mark range;
6. rigorous and meaningful moderation process;
7. good quality of feedback on coursework in Ethnography and Everyday Life; Digital Society; and Science, Risk and Resistance.
8. your detailed report of good practice noted in seven identified modules;
9. meaningful opportunities to meet module convenors to reflect on good teaching practice;
10. Examining Boards are run in a rigorous and student-centred way.

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