



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof. Doug LEE		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Nottingham		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA in Ancient History/BA in Ancient History and another subject		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	13 July 2015

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 Ancient History programme structure is sound, with particular strengths arising from the way in which many modules relate to the research specialisms of staff and from the good range of choice which students are offered in both Greek and Roman history. Also noteworthy is the way in which coverage of Roman history extends into Late Antiquity and even offers students the opportunity to study the ‘after-life’ of the ancient world in the context of Middle Byzantine history – a rarity in UK Classics and Ancient History departments. In all the option modules which I saw this session, students were having to engage directly with a wide range of ancient evidence, both textual and material, to enhance their abilities in evaluating it, and to relate it to relevant modern debates.

Appropriate emphasis and support is given to the core independent study modules in each year (see further below, Section 6), which are so important in helping undergraduates become independent learners.

The department has also been seeking to increase the opportunities for students to learn the classical languages, and this is an important development which deserves the University’s support. Not only does knowledge of Greek and/or Latin enhance understanding of the ancient world and so provide an important additional dimension to the undergraduate degree, but it is also crucial if the University wishes to increase the number of home-grown research students, for whom knowledge of the classical languages is vital.

2. Academic Standards

I am satisfied that the academic standards applied in the determination of undergraduate Ancient History degrees at Cardiff are consistent with relevant benchmark statements and with the standards applied at comparable UK institutions of which I have experience.

3. The Assessment Process

As a Roman specialist, I looked at all Roman history option modules (from the Spring Semester, when my appointment began), as well as dissertations and Second Year Independent Studies on Roman topics, while my fellow external looked at all Greek history materials (hence the 'No' under 8.3 in the checklist below).

The assessment process ran very smoothly. I received draft exam papers in good time in the spring, as also dissertation and Independent Second Year Studies, followed by exam scripts, in June. I was impressed by the systems in place for ensuring students receive feedback on both coursework and exams, and I found the feedback itself also excellent – constructive and detailed. This is obviously helpful to students, but also allowed me, as external, to understand how grades had been arrived at. Where there were divergences between first marker and moderator, their resolution was usually explained clearly. The various exam boards which I attended during my time in Cardiff were conducted very well, with time allowed for external feedback on each module, and appropriate consideration of each student's results and any relevant extenuating circumstances.

I was given the opportunity to comment on a revised scheme for the assessment of translations in language modules, which I think is consistent with schemes used in UK Classics departments.

An area which did give cause for concern at a number of points was the conversion of results from overseas institutions. One issue was the application of the 'block year abroad' rule to students' results where the overall average of overseas modules was used to determine the class of all those modules in a way which was at odds with the operation of the preponderance rule used to determine degree classes. The other issue was the use of conversion tables which were, apparently, still at draft stage, and which appeared to be out of kilter with comparanda from other UK institutions. Fortunately, no student was disadvantaged on this occasion, but these are issues which require urgent attention by the University.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Since this was my first session as an external examiner at Cardiff, my comments in this section draw on the report by my fellow examiner, Dr Peter Liddel, from 2013/14 (when he was sole external).

It seems there were some hiccups with the introduction of the Turnitin submission system in 2013/14, but if so, they appear to have been sorted out for this session, based on my experience with the system.

Last year, my colleague recommended the setting of resit papers at the same time as first-sits, so that they could be scrutinised together – a suggestion which the department has clearly acted upon. This is a sensible move, since it makes it easier to avoid unnecessary overlap between the two papers and it also avoids any hold-ups with external approval over the summer.

SIMS continued to generate some administrative problems, and I would urge the University to ensure adequate resources are devoted to resolving outstanding issues, which can consume staff time unnecessarily.

I would endorse the comments of my colleague from last year that the current regulations for determining overall degree outcomes make it more difficult for some borderline students to achieve the higher class, judging by how they would have fared under rules at my own institution. If, as it seems, Cardiff's regulations have been revised in recent years, then it is important the impact of these revisions continues to be monitored.

My colleague's recommendation of the appointment of a second external examiner has obviously been acted upon and is, in my view, fully justified by the volume of student material which requires external scrutiny.

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

As a new external examiner, I was offered the opportunity to attend an induction day at the University in late April. However, since this coincided with a day on which I had significant teaching commitments at my own institution, I was unable to attend. Nonetheless, documentation provided by the University, together with guidance from the department's assessment officer, helped familiarise me with the most important features of Cardiff's procedures.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

I was particularly impressed by the level of support which staff offer to students on independent study modules, with the opportunity for six meetings as part of the Independent Second Year Study, and for ten meetings for the final year Dissertation. The inclusion of an assessed presentation at an intermediate point in both modules is another strength, with respect to both the development of students' verbal communication skills and their gaining interim feedback on the progress of their project.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

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?	Y		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	Y		

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