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Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Nicky Garsten		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Greenwich		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	MA in International Public Relations and Global Communications Management		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2019-2020	Date of Report:	7 th July 2020

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the dissertation stage Examining Board in the case of postgraduate Master's programmes).

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to: externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

There is a clear focus in the curriculum design on global and digital communications. This focus is relevant to the PR industry and supports students' employability.

The vocational focus of the PR degree is a strength. Students have expose to guest speakers from the industry; they research and plan PR strategies and campaigns; and an even implement a campaign for a client. They also learn about a variety of different research methods.

There are many assignments where students can draw of their understanding of different countries.

Please include consideration of the following:

- *confirmation that the actions taken as a result of the variation of assessments in relation to industrial action and Covid-19 have been appropriate to protect the academic standards of the programme and have allowed students to achieve their programme level learning outcomes*

- 2. Academic Standards** (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

The academic standards in the quality of work sampled meet national standards of other HEIs and of the CIPR's curricular guidelines.

- 3. The Assessment Process** (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The assessments are varied. The assignments include group presentations, individual reports and essays, different types of professional communications and a dissertation.

The variety of assessments related to research (content analysis or focus group; and digital surveys). So too is having an assignment where students implement a digital campaign for a client.

The feedback back is clear and constructive.

- 4. Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)** (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

N/A

Where possible please complete this section following the dissertation examining board determining the final award.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

Please note that due to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, Schools may have had limited time to enact changes.

- 6. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

7. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

The programme director is to be commended for the retention of so many students during a very difficult period of COVID 19, the strikes and some staff illness.

There are some interesting guest speakers on the programme. This provides students with an opportunity not only to learn from leading practitioners in the industry but also to develop their own professional networks. Having a crisis simulation workshop is good practice. This gives students an opportunity to learn about a strategic area of communications.

Having an assignment, in the Digital Communications Management module (MCT531) where students have a real client and where students actually have to implement a campaign is very good practice. This experiential learning is well designed. The provision of clients for the students must represent a substantive time commitment for the lecturing team. I would suggest that the suggested headings for the brief about the brand audit, could extend to the client organisation's communication strategy and also its stakeholders. In addition, the management of the client relationship and consulting skills could be further considered in the module's content.

Two of the research modules (Research Methods) and Digital Research Methods allow students to learn about different research methods in an applied way. The particularly strong focus on digital research is a strong aspect of the programme. In the Digital Research Methods larger numbers of participants in surveys could be encouraged. The tailoring of research methods to public relations is a great opportunity for the students. It is good to see specialist research literature for students on the reading lists; more literature specifically about content analysis and the limitations of quantitative research (e.g. Silverman) could be helpful for the students. Students could consider more:

- research ethics (where primary research has been conducted) with particular reference to consent and participant information)
- how hypotheses need to be embedded in previous scholarship
- that there is no need for both research questions and hypotheses

Overall, the students' dissertations in the sample, showed a very good understanding of research methods taught in the Research Methods module. The module is therefore an asset. Areas that might be considered more in the research methods module could be relevant software for students to use for their analysis. There is a useful focus on content analysis in the Research Methods module, which is very important for media studies. Perhaps there could be more consideration too of critical discourse analysis?

There were a fascinating range of dissertation topics. These drew on students' cultural knowledge and their industry sector interests. The module leader provided a very clear dissertation briefing slide deck. She successfully encouraged students, in the sample, to refine the scope of their dissertation research well. At the highest

level, there was original research that had potential for publication. Given the international cohort, the standard of writing in English, was high. There was a very good knowledge of PR that was demonstrated. The supervisory team clearly made very good use of their allocated meeting times with students. The marking was overall fair. The examiners' feedback was clear, constructive and detailed. Areas where, in general students, could improve is in their abstract writing and in having fewer research objectives.

In many of the modules, the students who are successfully recruited from around the world, applied their knowledge of PR to communications in their home countries. This made for fascinating reading. These perspectives are a great strength of the programme. Given the international focus of the programme, I would also suggest that opportunities be further explored in relevant parts of the programme for students to apply their learning to two national markets.

Overall, the programme team and its director is to be commended on successful results in an academic year that has had unprecedented challenges. The dissertations, which are a culmination of the students' studies' showed how much the students had learned on the programme.

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

9. Issues for Response

To assist with a timely and detailed response to your report, we would be grateful if you could briefly summarise any issues referred to above that you would like to be specifically addressed in our institutional response.

1. Students may find it helpful if there are marking grids in all module handbooks.