



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Andrea Major		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Leeds		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA History/History and Welsh History, MA History		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2013-14	Date of Report:	02/07/14

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 programme structure of both the BA and MA history programmes are robust and entirely appropriate to the stated learning outcomes and relevant QAA benchmarks. There is a clear provision of methodological, historiographical and research training provided at all levels, and the EHD and Approaches to History modules at Level 2 provide a firm foundation for the dissertation at Level 3. There is also an exciting range of chronologically and geographically diverse option modules available. The year long, 30 credit modules provide the opportunity for students to really get to grips with, and reflect on the themes, events and issues covered, as well as for staff to engage with their students over an extended period. The programme overall thus seems to be in very good health, and some exciting new appointments, recently made or on the horizon, can only strengthen this.

2. Academic Standards

Academic standards were very good and the quality of work produced by students high. The standard of work was in line with that of comparable institutions with which I have experience, as was the spread of degree classifications. There was some excellent work produced for both the EHDs and dissertations - with many of the latter demonstrating both impressive intellectual ability and careful research design.

3. The Assessment Process

A range of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods are used, in line with the discipline specific benchmarks and stated learning outcomes of the programme. Great care was evident in the marking and moderation process, and the result was grading that was both internally consistent and in line with the stated

criteria (which have been clearly and helpfully articulated in accessible terms). Feedback was extremely helpful, and was distinguished by the nurturing and supportive tone and careful and constructive criticism offered on pieces of work at all levels of achievement. Feedback was also clearly aligned to the marking criteria and to the grade. The growing willingness to use the full range of marks available is in line with trends at other institutions and it is good to see outstanding work being rewarded by upper first class marks. The only slight caveat to that is that in light of the increasing use of the upper echelons of the marking scale, staff here, as elsewhere, must be careful to avoid undue grade inflation and to maintain the boundary between very good 2:1 and first class work. The running of the final exam board was excellent and the University's policies and regulations implemented rigorously and fairly. The University wide system of discounting one module in the case of extenuating circumstances seemed to me to be a somewhat blunt tool with which to mitigate a diverse range of student problems and experiences, ranging in severity and duration, however the Board's implementation of it was exemplary, and great care had clearly been taken at the earlier special circumstances board.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

This is my first year as external examiner.

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

A good range of introductory and informational material was made available to me, and staff were responsive to questions about the process and policies. I was unable to attend the induction workshop for new externals, but appreciate the fact that such a session is provided.

Communication with and from the administrative staff was generally very good, and I appreciated the prior warning about exam dates and the impending arrival of blue bags. It would be helpful, however, if a brief email could be sent as each bag is dispatched, with the posting date and a brief summary of its contents, as I was unsure how many bags to expect, when to expect them and exactly what they would contain. On this occasion one bag was significantly delayed in the post, but this was not immediately apparent as I did not know when to expect its arrival. The turnaround time between the dispatch of the last bag of work and the exam board was also very tight, and while I fully appreciate the strain staff are under at this time of year, there was no contingency built in for postal delays or other problems.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Given the relatively small size of the department compared to some of its peers, the range and ambition of the modules on offer to students is superb, and students are in the enviable position of choosing from among a range of very exciting and diverse modules. I was particularly pleased to see the expansion in Asian History with the appointment of a lecturer in Japanese history (to augment existing strength in South Asian and Chinese history) and the plans for an Asian History survey course at Level 1. These are exciting developments. I was also impressed by the quality of feedback, and the careful recording of discussions between marker and moderator when grades were amended.

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?	X		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			X
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	X		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	X		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	X		
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?	X		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	X		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	X		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	X		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	X		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	X		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	X		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	X		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	X		
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?	X		
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?	X		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	X		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	X		

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