

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - MSc in Science, Media and Communication**

Dear Dr Wilkinson,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of Social Sciences 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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School. The following responses have been provided by the Programme Coordinator for the MSc in Science, Media and Communication on behalf of the School.

*"I am very happy to note that the external examiner has not raised any major issues of concern and that her assessment of the MSc programme is very positive overall, including commendation of assessment feedback given to students and of our offer of museums plus journalism training to students. I am pleased to note her comment that the programme team have been very open to suggestions made over the last two years, and I believe this reflects the good relationship that has been built up with the external. I note her suggestions about further reviewing the equity of the assessment task for Presenting Science, and I intend as a result to meet with Techniquet and the module convenor in the near future in order to discuss how this might be addressed."*

#### **1. [4] your indication that you would appreciate more time in advance of the Examining Board to examine materials**

*"We appreciate the comments made by Dr Wilkinson and can advise that the marking schedule for Post Graduate Taught Programmes has been tightened up and we have insisted on a 4-week turnaround for feedback and marks from markers and have a set date each semester for the return of feedback and marks to students thereby speeding up the process and ensuring that sampling for External Examiners can be actioned more quickly. We will invite External Examiners to choose whether they wish to receive samples of coursework either as a complete batch or module by module as they become available."*

#### **2. [6] your observation of decreasing numbers on some modules and suggested consideration of "how to better support recruitment";**

*"I note Dr. Wilkinson's observation about the low numbers of students recruited to the programme in the current academic year, although I would point out that this is an anomaly. Nevertheless, I am aware of the need to ensure that numbers are maintained at more buoyant levels. To this end I have taken a number of steps to improve the marketing of the programme this year:*

- a. updating the website and brochure to include more information about the programme content, student experience and alumni's career destinations, and working with colleagues in JOMECE to improve the programme's online visibility by including video and enhanced multimedia*
- b. revising the communication sent to overseas applicants to ensure that they are better informed about the science-communication focus of the programme - it not being a generic journalism qualification*

- c. made contact with Science Made Simple, a local science communication company, and with the Physics and BioSci departments in Cardiff University, who have agreed to collaborate with us in further promoting the programme
- d. Initiated meetings with the Marketing Officer in SOCSI and the programme administrator in order to better target brochures and marketing at UK science departments

*I am confident that by pursuing this marketing policy energetically in the coming months we will be able to achieve a higher intake in future years."*

3. **[6] your indication that "a short paragraph or two from module leaders on any issues with modules/cohorts etc, as well as updated module guides might be useful when sending through assessment materials for review".**

*"Overall, I am very pleased to be able to continue working with Dr. Wilkinson in further improving and enhancing the programme, and in particular will take up her suggestion for module leaders to provide a short paragraph for her on any issues arising with specific modules."*

**Your comments [at 4 and 8.17] regarding your attendance at Examining Boards have been noted. I can confirm that the University's continuing preference is for External Examiners to attend all meetings of the Examining Board wherever possible.**

#### Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

- a. **[1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;**
- b. **[6] your support for opportunities afforded to students "to spend time in local museums and centres.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Mrs Jill Bedford  
Director of Registry and Academic Services