



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 Professor Mark Woolford

26 November 2018

Dear Professor Woolford,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2017/18

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for the BDS (Hons) (Final BDS).

Your report has been considered by the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

Issues highlighted in your report:

1. Assessment process: Students with learning challenges are compromised by some questions that still require far too much reading in preparation and then these questions are awarded marks as for much shorter and easier to assimilate questions.
2. Assessment process: Although set questions are given in the oral element of the clinical examination, they are not heavily used and so each student can have a different assessment. This is not ideal practice. It is recommended that more use is made of the set questions.
3. Assessment process: Comment has been made on previous occasions to the need for three written papers of similar content and style. The papers do not seem to discriminate between candidates and it is a lot of work for

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- no great outcome of assessment. Perhaps one paper would suffice? This should be considered once more by the teaching team.
4. Allocation of marks: There is still challenge in understanding the allocation of marks to part questions. The question bank is not yet large enough to mitigate new questions each year, but more quality control is needed to ensure fair and valid allocation of marks across and between questions.
 5. Allocation of marks: without marking on the script it is impossible to see how marks are allocated and also to give accurate feedback to students.
 6. Recurring comments: Recurring things have not changed, such as large radiographs (pans) being too small and small radiographs being excessively enlarged. Standardisation is important across all formats of this examination.
 7. Assessment process: It is to be seriously questioned as to the value of candidate summarizing a case which involves reading out the first page of the patient information pack. This wastes time and is valueless in the assessment.
 8. Allocation of marks: The marking scheme for the oral examinations skews up marks, making it very difficult to fail.
 9. Allocation of marks/Assessment process: Examiners need to agree on the level being assessed. Some seem to assess almost to specialist level, laudable, but the level has to be that of a safe beginner, as defined by the GDC.
 10. Assessment process: There is significant variation in the approach of External Examiners in oral examinations, some appear quite aggressive in their questioning, whereas others speak together as a pair confusing the candidate as to who to listen to. Some allow candidates to go on and on, others interject frequently.

Response provided by the School:

1. Reasonable adjustments are made to students who declare that they have learning difficulties, including allocating additional time. However as part of ongoing discussions to review the format of the Finals Questions, the point you raise will be considered.
2. The use of set questions will be reviewed within the Internal Examiner training sessions to ensure that the guidelines are followed more rigorously with future cohorts.
3. As you have kindly recognised, we are currently reviewing the format of our written summative papers and the Final BDS paper will be the last summative paper for review within our new programme. We will keep our External Examiners informed of future changes and will take your comments on board, whilst ensuring we are confident that we are covering the expected learning outcomes as expected by our stakeholders.

- 4&5. The allocation of marks is recorded on a separate sheet to ensure that during double marking the second examiner is not influenced by the first examiners marks. The agreed allocated mark is available to students when given feedback. The School will ensure that these sheets are available for External Examiners to scrutinise in future. With regard to the fair allocation of marks, ongoing staff development will continue, especially with the new question formats.
6. The School accept your comments and will endeavour to review radiograph formats for the forthcoming academic year across the different disciplines.
7. The purpose of giving students a short time to introduce their case was to permit some time to relax into the examination environment and was not intended to be part of the assessment. As part of our post-examination evaluation, your point will be reviewed prior to the next diet.
8. Your point regarding the marking scheme will be reviewed alongside consideration of the format of the oral examination as above.
- 9&10. Thank you for your helpful comments in relation to the manner in which some of our Internal Examiners questioned students. The School is pleased that the post evaluation carried out with students indicated that they perceived the examination was fair, but we recognise that more staff training is required to ensure that the assessment experience is fair and equitable.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. The extensive psychometric analysis of the results is to be commended. This is fairly new and an understanding of the data and how it is best used is still being determined.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and 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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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