



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Robert Gillett		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Queen Mary University of London		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA in German		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	16.7.15

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 in German at Cardiff is extremely impressive. It is particularly gratifying to see the subject covered in all its breadth, from medieval poetry to Business German. All the literary genres were covered, and consideration was also given both to the GDR and to Austria. Students were also given the opportunity to write about film. And some excellent work was done in the field of German history.

### 2. Academic Standards

The academic standards at Cardiff are broadly comparable with those I have seen elsewhere. I saw some truly excellent work, which was properly rewarded with gratifyingly high marks.

### 3. The Assessment Process

With the exception of one unfortunate incident, which was handled with exemplary care and fairness, the conduct of the examinations could not be faulted. I saw ample evidence of conscientious double marking, and great care was taken to ensure both rigour and fairness. However, I think it would help me to assess the overall practice if, rather than seeing coursework only where

there is a significant discrepancy between the coursework mark and the exam mark, I could be given access to all, or most of, the work which contributes towards an assessment.

The (new?) practice of having the same division of coursework and exam in each course seems to me to be wrong in principle and in practice.

For reasons which are not quite clear to me, I was not given a great deal of advance information about the conduct of the examination boards. (For example, I am still not sure whether I was supposed to attend the joint board.) Perhaps because of this, I was left with the impression that here things were somewhat in flux. The information provided at the final board appeared to be unreliable, which is a serious fault. There was also missing information, and too many opportunities for information to go astray. The Chair of the board needs to be given more time to prepare the meeting, and he needs to be given better access to more information earlier. Moreover, the information that was provided was often split between two screens, which made it harder for the examiners to do their job. Some students seemed to have been allocated to the wrong board for classification, which does not create a good impression. As at my own institution, the tightening of regulations means that there is virtually no discretion left for the board to exercise. My own view is that this is deeply regrettable and in one concrete instance it meant that a student who in my institution would have been raised to a higher class was left in the lower one. The way Cardiff handles extenuating circumstances is the opposite of what happens at my institution, so I shall be watching this carefully in coming years.

#### **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

N/A

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

I was unfortunately unable to attend the induction sessions (and I suspect that this may be true of many externals). I was not well briefed by the central university administration, but this may simply be because one e-mail went astray.

#### **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

I would like to reiterate here my high praise for the breadth and depth of the offerings in Cardiff. It is rare and rather wonderful to see a curriculum which is so wide-ranging in terms of historical time, geographical area, literary genre and discipline. Equally, the award of high marks for excellent work is something which I would like explicitly to endorse, though I think it is not yet

**applied universally and the criteria are not always absolutely clear. I was also extremely impressed by the alacrity with which the department reacted to my comments and followed up my suggestions.**

**With regard to possible improvements, I would like to offer four suggestions**

- Given the introduction of emphatic marking, it is sufficient is the external examiner sees a representative selection of first class work, not all of it.
- Great care should be taken in the application of marking schemes. In all cases, such schemes should include a relatively wide margin of discretion to avoid anomalous outcomes
- It is very important that in marking language work, all mistakes are clearly identified as such, since there is or ought to be a direct correlation between the number of errors and the marks awarded.
- I would like to see more argumentative questions, in literature papers especially, to give students more opportunity to question received wisdom.

#### **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)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Yes, but some of it was out of date.		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		No	It was my first year
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Yes		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Yes		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Yes		
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
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?	Yes		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Yes		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Yes		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Yes		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?		No	
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?			I don't know
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?		No	
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Yes		

		<b>Yes (Y)</b>	<b>No (N)</b>	<b>N/A (N/A)</b>
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	<b>Yes</b>		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			<b>N/A</b>
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	<b>Yes, just</b>		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	<b>Yes</b>		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?		<b>No</b>	
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?	Yes		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		<b>No</b>	
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			<b>N/A</b>

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto: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