

Academic & Student Support Services
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Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to chris.baker@chester.ac.uk

08 March 2016

Dear Dr Baker,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MTh in Chaplaincy Studies.

Your Report has been considered by the School 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.

Issue Highlighted:

1. your observations on the induction, teaching and assessment of international students.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The issues raised about our support for our overseas students, especially those from Hong Kong, have already been raised with the collaborative partner. It is already the School's intention for them to provide study skills support in loc once their student numbers pick up again. As you recognise, this is not an issue restricted to this programme but applies to any situation where different expectations and understandings of the academic process are found.

There is also a suggestion that this might suggest that learning outcomes might be adjusted or altered, and that is a proposal the School rejects and challenges on two grounds. The first is that it risks lowering the academic standards for some students, which would potentially compromise the standing both of the university itself and the qualifications it grants. But secondly, the tutoring team believe it is an injustice to the standards achieved by our overseas students themselves. While one student has indeed needed to re-sit two modules (and has passed both at the second attempt), the two other overseas students have recently completed the MTh. One was awarded

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the qualification as a pass, but the other at a high merit just 0.17% away from a distinction. This should compare favourably to any qualification open to British and overseas students, and the achievements of the School's overseas students bear comparison to any British trained candidate. The School affirms the need to remain vigilant and to provide strong support for all of its students, but not to adjust the programme description itself in any way.

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your particular commendation of the our adoption of the new marking scheme and pro-formas, of the quality of feedback provided to students, of the professionalism of staff and students and of the exceptional standard provided (especially by dissertations) as insight for the practice of chaplaincy both in the UK and further afield.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

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.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar