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Sent by email to s.findlow@keele.ac.uk

16 December 2016

Dear Dr Findlow,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the Doctor of Education (EdD) (taught element).

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.

Issues Highlighted

1. Observations on, and suggested review of, the Level of some module Intended Learning Outcomes.
2. Continued persistent weaknesses in student work in the transition to doctoral level study.
3. Examples of less consistent marking and the suggestion that clearer criterion referencing (criteria matching the published Intended Learning Outcomes) could help.
4. Implementation of the suggestion of in-text notation of draft assessed work made by the External Examiner in 2014/15.
5. Feedback provided on Quantitative Research Methods and how it helps students apply the skills learned to larger pieces of policy or practice-related critical work.

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6. Implementation of the suggestion of re-framing essay titles as questions to help students to engaging critically made by the External Examiner in 2014/15.

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

1. The School has confirmed that your comments have been noted and that the appropriate Module Convenors will be addressing them. The Module Convenor for SIR030 Social Contexts of Education has indicated that, going forward, a clearer distinction will be made with regard to the application of theory to areas of study, and that the ILOs in this module will be moderated against those in other programmes.
2. The School has confirmed that your comments relate to module SIR030 Social Contexts of Education and that the introduction to the module, the workshops and feedback on drafts are intended to help develop areas of focus that support criticality. Students also receive developmental feedback and guidance regarding their written presentation, including syntax. Examples of 'good' Professional Doctorate work are shown to students as part of the introductory programme module (SIR026 Changing Modes of Professionalism) and by the conveners of other modules as deemed appropriate by them.
3. Your comments have been noted and will inform future assessment of student work for the SIR030 Social Contexts of Education module.
4. The Programme's approach to in-text notations will be reviewed upon the adoption of GradeMark for the Professional Doctorate programmes from October 2017.
5. The Module Convenor has indicated that students are explicitly encouraged to work on policy dimensions as well as asking each one of them to debate the implications of their findings and analyses for policy practices in addition to academic research/theoretical debates.
6. Whilst it is the Programme's practice to promote original thinking by students, including in relation to their assignment topics, your observations have been noted by the School and forwarded to module conveners for their consideration.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. Your reiterated support for the practice of students submitting drafts, which improve the final standard of work produced and encourage students to think of writing as a fluid process;

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3. Well presented course materials and documentation.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

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