

**INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - BSc in Economics / Business Economics / Economics with EU Language / Banking & Finance / Economics & Finance / Economics & Management Studies (macroeconomics)**

Dear Professor Driffill,

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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School.

**[2, 3, third and fourth paras, 4, third para] your "slight concern that the standard of work needed to obtain a first class or upper second class mark on a module or a degree programme overall may be slowly easing" and related comments including "a case for looking into the causes of widely varying distributions of marks across modules" and "In modules that cover quantitative material...questions should be designed with sections of graduated difficulty" and related observations.**

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

*"On the issue of the "slight concern that the standard of work needed to obtain a first or a upper second class mark on a module or a degree programme overall may be slowly easing" (section 2), we recognise that there might be a problem here. However, as the external examiner himself points out, this is part of a common phenomenon across many higher educational institutions. However, we do believe that, by taking account of some of the issues raised elsewhere in the examiner's report (see below) this matter can be addressed by taking appropriate action in relation thereto.*

*On the issue of high median marks of some modules (section 3), this is a problem which has been brought into sharper focus this year by the ability of the section to carry out a review of final year module marks prior to the meeting of the exam board. As the external examiner knows, the review meeting that took place did make recommendations in relation to adjusting the marks for all students on a couple of modules (in one case upwards, where the mean and median were very low, and downwards in another case – though this was as a result of internal moderation of the scripts). This was the first year in which it has been possible for us use the Arque software developed for reviewing module marks (as recommended by a previous external examiner) and it is intended that this software will continue to be used in the future, for both year 2 and year 3 modules, and that the result of the Arque analysis, in consultation with the external examiners, will be used to review module marks, and for adjustments to be carried out where considered appropriate. The external examiner draws specific attention to the problem of high marks on more mathematically-based modules, and his recommendations for the use of more appropriately designed questions form a useful basis for proceeding in the future. This is an issue which will be discussed and addressed by the relevant Teaching Teams in 2014-15.*

*On the issue of the high combined percentage of first and upper-second marks on the single honours Economics programme, the external examiners comments are noted and reflect a concern recognised within the Economics Section. It is believed*

*that, as the external examiner comments, by dealing with the issue of high medians in some modules, through more appropriately designed questions (see previous paragraph), this issue may resolve itself. The matter will be kept under review in 2014-15."*

### 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. [3] your commendation of the use of the full mark range.**

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.

Dr S L Williamson

for Dr C B Turner  
Academic Registrar