



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Ruth Cruickshank		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	<b>SINGLE AND JOINT HONOURS IN FRENCH/BSCECON IN EUROPEAN STUDIES; LLB IN LAW &amp; FRENCH (FRENCH LANGUAGE AND NON-FRENCH LANGUAGE OPTIONS)</b>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2013-14	Date of Report:	10/7/14

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 BA programmes in French at Cardiff clearly meet QAA Benchmark standards for Modern Language and Area Studies as well as their own learning aims and outcomes. They are at once coherent and appropriately reflect current trends in French studies as well as student interests, and draw on colleagues' research. Impressively, programmes span literature, film, thought, cultural history and politics (and in some courses integrates all four). Expertise across the School is also judiciously maximized, but not at the expense of an appropriate French and Francophone focus.

### 2. Academic Standards

The second- and final-year French options I examined attest to how French programmes at Cardiff continues to provide a stimulating range of appropriately challenging options which are based on high quality research and offer students across the board the opportunity to broaden their critical horizons and hone their skills. They also provide the most able students genuine opportunities for intellectual engagement and growth. I also saw samples of the 2.1 and first class range of language papers, which revealed the expertise and rigour of teaching and the appropriateness of the assessments, for which candidates were fully prepared. The broad sample of oral examinations were equally expressive of high standards.

Attainment meets QAA Benchmark standards and is comparable with other Russell Group institutions. High standards are achieved in both language and content courses, and third class results are pleasingly rare. Colleagues can be ongoingly encouraged to use the full range of marks, especially in content modules.

### **3. The Assessment Process**

The percentage balance of coursework and examination is good (though the new system meant that I did not see assessed coursework where courses were assessed both by examination and assignments). Marking and moderation were painstaking and fair.

Colleagues are to be highly commended for dealing admirably with the challenges of new January/February examination period, and despite the extremely telescoped timescale for marking and the recording of marks, for painstaking and fair marking and moderation.

The new reporting system introduced for exam board classification features helpful year-on-year comparisons, but it was unfortunate not to be able to view candidates' full profiles, contributing to a certain sense of academic disempowerment as a result of the new system and its reduction of potential for deliberation. The Head of School agreed that steps would be made to make full profiles available in subsequent years. The processes for discounting, and for the consideration of Protected Characteristics and Extenuating Circumstances appear to be positive introductions.

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

Following my comments for the last session, a more rigorous peer scrutiny process for exam papers has been introduced. There were still some inconsistencies and unclearly phrased questions, so I have suggested that it would be beneficial for the section to introduce a meeting of all colleagues where all papers are scrutinised prior to sending them to the Externals. The very helpful moderation forms used in the summer session should also be used consistently for all January/February examinations/assessments. I am concerned that the introduction of a January/February session for final year students will retard their exit velocity, and I urge colleagues to make year-on-year comparisons and petition for change if this occurs.

Whilst the newly introduced system appears to reduce margins for error it also appears to depersonalize the process, risking the disengagement of colleagues. I have recommended that full profiles be available for departmental boards in subsequent years to prevent against this. The new year-on-year reporting format will no doubt prove helpful for tracking any ongoing disparity between results in the Advanced Translation and French for Professional Purposes final-year language modules.

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

N/A

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

The Handbook and course kits supplied by the School were once again comprehensive and extremely useful, amply equipping me to fulfil my responsibilities. I was also delighted to receive a clear schedule of exam dates, dates of likely dispatch of papers and deadlines for entering of marks, as well as frequent updates. Moderation forms are being used much more consistently, and the preparation of materials for Boards was exemplary. As I have already mentioned, colleagues in general and the Chair of the Board and the French Examinations Representative are to be congratulated for adapting to the newly introduced system, and its two sessions. The conduct of both Boards I attended was exemplary, and hastened by the new system. It is excellent that my suggestions – the provision of full profiles for departmental Boards henceforth and the change of the award of 'Oral Proficiency' to a term with more perceived value such as 'Distinction in Oral French/Spanish etc' – were met with immediate moves to action them.

## **7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

I have enjoyed working with colleagues in Cardiff and have been impressed by the evident quality of teaching and marking in French, and by their receptiveness to suggestions for improving examination procedures, particularly in terms of transparent moderation processes. I hope that improvements will continue to be made to the processes for scrutiny and conformity of presentation of examination papers and assessed assignment questions.

During the period of my appointment I have liaised with three different Examinations Representatives in French, and a similar turnover of Chairs and feel that the continuity afforded by longer appointments would benefit the overall process and colleagues, who face a steep learning curve but do not benefit from applying that learning in subsequent years. I have concerns about the new system, particularly in terms of the introduction of the January/February and exhort the University to monitor that this does not negatively affect exit velocity. I also recommend that colleagues continue to make use of the full range of marks, and within the parameters of the new system pay particular attention to the necessity of awarding borderline marks.

## 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?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y – shar ed with other exter nal		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
<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?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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?	Y		
<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?	Y		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	Y		

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