

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - MTh in Chaplaincy Studies

Dear Dr Baker,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of History, Archaeology and Religion 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. The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

“The indication that the External Examiner “would like to see more encouragement, at Master’s level, of direct engagement with the primary texts of key thinkers” and related comments.

Engagement with primary texts is clearly an important part of Master’s study. To ensure students have access to these materials, we have begun a survey of the holdings of such texts at St Michael’s College, and have increased the range and number of texts available. The new lecturer for module RTT202 on Ethical Principles has been made aware of these pertinent observations. At the same time, the emphasis within the programme as a whole is Practical Theology, and the focus should remain on Reflective Practice, not the abstract evaluation of ideas and theories.

The view that “One area of academic performance that does need considerable improvement is attention to accuracy and consistency of spelling, punctuation and referencing protocols” and related comments.

This comment has already been passed on to new and continuing students in Study Skills and general course meetings.

We also note the reminder that there should be more affirmation of the reasons why second markers are in agreement with the first marker, and will ensure a more positive response to this task. A timetable that shares the second marking work among a wider range of tutors has already been drawn up and distributed.

In the context of a “shift to a more streamlined and easier to understand proforma for student feedback”, the External Examiner’s further observations and suggestions to “ensure consistency” in this area.

We acknowledge that not all of the tutors used the new SHARE feedback form during 2013–14. Tutors have been reminded of the new forms to be used.”

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School’s provision including:

- a. [1, and 2] your positive indications regarding the programme structure and academic standards;
- b. [4] your commendation of the “high levels of professionalism and dedication by all concerned with the programme: academic staff; administrative staff and students;

c. [6] your commendation of the “originality and contribution to knowledge and professional development by this programme at dissertation level”.

The School has responded in the following terms.

“We particularly thank the External Examiner for the affirmation of these aspects of the programme. During the 2012–13 year we started a project that changes the order in which modules are delivered, such as different cohorts of students are brought into combination in new ways. The process of training for the dissertation also starts much earlier than was previously the case. We have been pleased the student feedback, though initially wary, has been extremely positive, and reinforces the comments made here.”

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