



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Catherine O’Sullivan		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Dept Civil and Environmental Engineering, Imperial College London		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	MSc Civil Engineering <i>MSc Structural Engineering; Civil Engineering; Civil and Water Engineering; Civil and Geoenvironmental Engineering</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-2017	Date of Report:	16-June-2017

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught stage** Examining Board in the case of **postgraduate Master’s programmes**).

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The structure is appropriated. There is a balance of traditional civil engineering modules and new modules such as nanomechanics.

In my discussion with the student body some constructive comments were made. Comments about specific modules were conveyed by me in the exam board meeting. I note that they are generally satisfied with the degree. They found the lecturers to be helpful and responsive.

In some modules there are guest lecturers from industry and they would like to see this extended as they find this industrial perspective useful.

The students would like the opportunity for some group work and design. To compare with another UK HEI, from what I am aware, most of the MSc courses in

civil engineering at Imperial do include group work, not all include a design project. There were group work elements in the MSc degree I undertook in the US.

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

From what I can see the academic standard is appropriate. I looked at the exam scripts across a range of abilities and have no concern with the grades allocated to these students.

I am surprised and not supportive of the current system whereby students cannot start their dissertations until they are notified of the outcome of the examination board meeting. This creates a strange situation. Students already know their dissertation topic and have made a plan as to how to carry out the research as part of their case study. I met with some students and it seems that some students adhere to this and some don't. It seems unfair as diligent and motivated students will naturally be inclined to just get on with some aspect of the work; however for students who have a laboratory-based project they cannot do this. Furthermore the student cohort is international and they will be spending money on living expenses while hanging around for this result.

I have not seen something like this in other institutions where I have worked or acted as an external examiner. Elsewhere MSc students are expected and allowed to get on with their project work independently of the outcome from the examinations.

Students pay for the degree, including the experience of doing a dissertation and benefiting from the associated supervision. Surely they are entitled to that experience whether or not they pass the taught component.

It seems to me that neither staff nor students are comfortable with the current situation.

3. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

There are compulsory questions on most papers this good practice to ensure students engage with all of the course material. The standard is reasonably uniform and I have no concerns on this. There is clear evidence of double marking and an appropriate level of cross checking from what I can see.

There was an irregularity with one of the examinations that was beyond the responsibility of the dept. In my opinion, the department dealt with this appropriately and were particularly open with the students and engaged them in deciding upon the process of rectifying this error. In the end the remediation action was not needed as the issue rectified itself, however I assume the examination processes in the university will be reviewed in light of this irregularity.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

All of the information provided was appropriate and any queries I had were promptly responded to. It would be useful to be provided with module averages, max and min marks when looking at scripts.

It would be useful to have access to the case study reports in advance as I think this can be accommodated easily.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

I am pleased to hear that soon all modules will have compulsory only questions.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

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)
Programme/Course Information				
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?	y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
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		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
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		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	y		
Examining Board Meeting				

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		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			na
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			na
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			na
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			na
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			na
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			na
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			na
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			na
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			na
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			na
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			
	na			

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM
MASTER'S DEGREE (DISSERTATION) STAGE**



This Report Form supplements the External Examiner Report form submitted by the External Examiner in respect of Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas (i.e. the Taught Stage of the Master's programme). This form and other External Examiner documentation is available electronically at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/index.html>

SECTION A *To be completed by the School*

School: ENGINEERING
Name of External Examiner: Dr C O'Sullivan
Programme of Study examined: MSc Civil Engineering / MSc Civil and Geoenvironmental Engineering / MSc Civil and Water Engineering / MSc Structural Engineering
Academic Year/Session to which the Report applies: 2016-17
Number of Students in the current cohort: 52 at dissertation stage
Number of Dissertations seen by the External Examiner: 10
Number of Dissertations seen by any Co-External Examiner(s): N/ A

SECTION B *To be completed by the External Examiner*

Please respond to the following questions by ticking the appropriate box. Please make appropriate comments particularly if your answer is 'No' to any question. Wherever possible please submit the form in word-processed format. An electronic version of this form is available at www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/index.html

Dissertations for Master's Programmes		Yes	No
1	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	y	
2	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided overleaf, summary details on sample in Section A above)?	y	
3	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?	y	

Freedom of Information Act The University is a public authority and therefore subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The University may therefore be required to publish the whole or parts of any reports and correspondence submitted by its External Examiners. The University also reserves the right to choose to publish the whole or parts of any reports submitted by its External Examiners.

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MASTER'S DEGREE (DISSERTATION) STAGE**



4 Comments Please use an additional sheet if required.

There was a difference in length of the description provided to justify the marks awarded, however sometimes the more concise descriptions were clearer. The guidance on marks allocation is detailed and clear.

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**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM
MASTER'S DEGREE (DISSERTATION) STAGE**



Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board		Yes	No
5	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?	y	
6	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	y	
7	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?	y	
8	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?	y	
<p>9 Comments Please use an additional sheet if required.</p> <p>I attended the board via a video conference (Skype). I am satisfied with the meeting and the outcomes. Boarderline cases were given adequeate consideration. The meeting was very efficient. The spread of marks for the dissertations was relatively broad, which is appropriate.</p>			
<p>Signed: <u>Catherine O'Sullivan</u> Date: <u>6th Dec 2017</u></p>			

Please return this completed Form to the nominated School contact prior to, or at, the Examining Board.

Please note that External Examiner reports are circulated widely in order that any necessary action can be taken. An Institutional Response to any recommendations contained in your report will be forwarded to you.

SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a taught Master's Programme of Study, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

[# Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme of Study, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) should be seen collectively by the External Examiners]

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