



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.

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|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | For completion by External Examiner: | | |
| Name of External Examiner: | Sukumar Natarajan | | |
| Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner: | University of Bath | | |
| Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report | MArch Dissertations | | |
| Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report: | 2017-18 | Date of Report: | 26-03-2018 |

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

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).

Section 1: Annual Report Checklist

If you respond 'No' to any of the questions below, please can you provide more detailed comments in Section 2 below.

| | Yes (Y) | No (N) | N/A (N/A) |
|---|---------|--------|-----------|
| Programme/Course Information | | | |
| Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments? | X | | |
| Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme? | | X | |
| Draft Examination Question Papers | | | |
| Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award? | | | X |
| Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate? | | | X |
| Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | | | X |
| Marking Examination Scripts | | | |
| Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent? | | | X |

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| Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? | | | X |
| Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? | | | X |
| Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners? | | | X |
| In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment? | | | X |
| Coursework and Practical Assessments | | | |
| Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate? | | | X |
| Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments? | | | X |
| Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate? | | | X |
| Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work? | | | X |
| Clinical Examinations (if applicable) | | | |
| Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments? | | | X |
| Sampling of Work | | | |
| Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work? | X | | |
| Examining Board Meeting | | | |
| Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting? | X | | |
| Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction? | X | | |
| 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? | X | | |
| Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable) | | | |
| Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees? | | X | |
| If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees? | | X | |
| Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules? | | X | |
| Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable) | | | |
| Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent? | X | | |
| Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)? | X | | |
| Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners? | X | | |
| Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board? | X | | |

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| If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures? | X | | |
| Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied? | X | | |
| Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate? | X | | |

Section 2: Detailed comments on the programme/modules

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

This is an excellent programme that is well delivered. Students have access to a good pool of supervision talent and expertise. It was clear that students had access to some research methods material. However, this could be formalised more, given the rigour of the assessment process (see below), to prepare students even better. This could include lectures on how to structure dissertations, methods of enquiry, assessment processes etc. Student participation in these activities through, for example, seminar groups, would enhance the overall experience.

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

I was provided with a good sample of dissertations that had variety in topics, methods of enquiry and grades achieved. The latter included two failures (<40%) and three distinction level (>80%) submissions. This allows me to comment with confidence on the standards achieved by the students. It is clear that the work presented is commensurate with the level of examination and on par with other highly-ranked programmes at comparable institutions.

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

The assessment process is highly rigorous for this level of study, with each work being marked by the supervisor and an independent internal. The unique tradition of an oral viva by external examiners, adds further rigour probably not matched at other institutions.

Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (sample received, the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners, how the schemes for marking and classification were applied).

Although there was in general good agreement between markers, there were a few instances of wide disparities in the original mark. The introduction of a moderation panel this year allowed these to be resolved with final marks that, in my opinion, matched the output of the students. However, it is clear that, where disparities occurred in the original mark, these were primarily due to differences in marker expectations for work at this level, possibly driven by differences in disciplinary background. This would suggest expectations are managed for markers through

clearer guidelines on what students are expected to be able to achieve in the time available and for the programme level.

At the same time that markers' expectations are managed, I'd also suggest a calibrated definition of the term 'research' is provided to students. This should cover the different types of enquiry-led research that can be conducted (e.g. historical, technical, theoretical) and the corresponding methods (e.g. case studies, surveys, simulations, experiments).

Year-on-Year Comments

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

This is my first year as examiner and since the other examiners are likely to have a better view of what has changed, I will defer my comments to next year. I will however state that the addition of a moderation panel following comments from previous years is, in my view, a good idea, and should be continued. I am aware that the other examiners will want to suggest minor amendments to the process to make it more effective.

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

The preparation both prior to the visit to the school and on the viva days themselves, was flawless. I received all the material in time, and all my queries were responded to rapidly. The team at WSA should be commended for their outstanding effort in organising this process.

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

All noted in sections above.

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

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