



Academic & Student Support Services
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr
Registry
Y Gofrestrfa
Academic Registrar Cofrestrydd Academaidd
Simon Wright LLB(Hons)

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE
Wales UK
Tel please see below
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4130
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig
Ffôn gweler isod
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4130
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

Sent by email to Mr Paul Newman

07 April 2020

Dear Mr Newman,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19

I am writing further to the receipt of your reports for MA/PgDip in Magazine Journalism.

Your reports have been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. Comments from the previous report regarding areas tangential to the professional magazine experience but of increasing importance being acted upon.
3. The reliance on fellow students or teaching staff for case studies appeared to have been successfully eliminated.
4. The course magazines produced – Project Esc and Canvas and Glass – were the most polished I have seen and featured a better balance of short and long-form content than their equivalents from previous years.
5. At all times the feedback tutors provide to students continues to be of an exceptional standard.
6. Facilities and equipment which are essential to not only student productivity but also preparing students for the real world.
7. The course maintains extremely impressive links to industry and this can be seen in the programme of guest speakers and the range and quality of placements students are able to secure.



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8. The Features Project dissertations were particularly strong, with passion for the subject matters tackled clearly evident and a diverse range of sources employed.
9. As ever, it is a real pleasure to see how strong the connections is between the students and the teaching staff.

Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:

1. **Academic Standards:** *Disappointingly, the work placement reports were once again of a generally poor standard. Many covering letter and CV examples lacked focus and suffered from basic spelling and grammatical errors.*

Paul notes our own frustration with this. We have considered whether it is as a result of the CV and covering letter elements being formative rather than summative, however it would be hard to change this. We continue to stress and prioritise accuracy in all areas.

2. **The Assessment Process:** *We also live in an age of increasing cultural complexity and I would like the course to consider how guidelines for reporting and feature writing can be made to ensure content created by students is as inclusive and sensitive to an increasingly diverse audience as possible – without compromising on objectivity.*

We use the IPSO code to inform all our reporting and students are made aware of updates to regulations; recent examples include good practice reporting suicide, religion and reporting on gender.

We also have a specific feature exercise in Semester 1 that requires students to research and report a story on an aspect of poverty in Wales. This work follows on from a report by JOMEC academic colleagues in 2018 on 'reporting poverty in Wales', which identified a general lack of diverse sources in media. This feature exercise has been specifically created to try to give voice to marginalised groups and more diverse stories. It is worth noting, however, that the challenge of establishing trust with such sources is time and resource heavy, which is not always compatible with our short deadlines within a one-year course.

3. **Year-on-Year comments:** *The way the course is externally promoting itself. More effort could be put into bringing to life the course's connections to industry on the website – details of successful alumni, links to well-known media brands offering placements, testimonials from employers and so on.*

We agree more can be done in this area, and the School will be looking for opportunities to improve this with the University's communications and marketing team.

4. ***Master's Dissertations:*** *The Enterprise Project dissertations reviewed were of a generally poorer standard than equivalent work from previous years.*

Sadly this is true this year. A contributing factor to these specific pieces of work include little to no supervision with candidates who simply did not start the work early enough. Paul made some helpful suggestions around business plan elements and we would be delighted to take up this offer.

We are also revisiting the handbook for this module as we think the editorial aspects of the projects are also being overlooked. An updated version will be available in Paul's 2020 sample.

5. ***Master's Dissertations:*** *Some of the weaker pieces received higher marks than perhaps they warranted; the marking scheme did not penalise poor and inaccurate writing as heavily as it probably should.*

We were able to discuss this with Paul and adjusted down some marks at the lower end. The marking rubric does not penalise inaccuracy heavily as the expansive marking criteria also takes into account many other factors involved in this 10,000-word project.

As part of our review of the handbook for 2020 we will also revisit and review the learning outcomes and marking criteria.

Once again, we would like to thank Paul for his detailed and thorough review of all of the practical magazine work from this cohort. We really appreciate his eye and ability to measure us against bang up-to-date media practice. His observations are always constructive and useful.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme.

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 the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar