



**EXTERNAL ADVISOR (INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION PROGRAMME)
ANNUAL REPORT FORM**

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Advisor:		
Name of External Advisor:	Gavin Dodsworth		
Home Institution / Employer of External Advisor:	University of Manchester		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	International Foundation Programme		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018 - 2019	Date of Report:	12 August 2019

For completion by External Advisor in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

1. Summary of Activity

Please provide details of activities/visits undertaken:

For this academic year it was decided by the External Advisor and the Quality and Accreditation Officer that one visit would be sufficient as it was agreed that remote communication and discussion was an option if so required.

A summary of this visit (with some reference to email exchange and discussion) is therefore listed below:

8 March 2019

- Discussion with Director on a range of topics including:
 - a) The successes of the BALEAP Accreditation report and progress concerning the developmental points.
 - b) The challenges and opportunities for IFP programmes overall – discussion ranged from external perception and QA (positive) and private providers (challenge).
 - c) The challenges for all University English Language Centres in enabling IFP, IS and PS programmes to excel over a 12 month academic year.
- Discussion with IFP Senior Manager (Academic Year) and Course Co-ordinator about ‘assessments’

This was an interesting, wide-ranging and informed discussion.

Since my first visit in 2016, I have been consistently impressed with the thought process behind Cardiff's IFP assessments and the rigour surrounding the design, mapping and rationale. Indeed, I commented in 2016 - 2017 that:

The aims, objectives, delivery (material), assessment procedures, report writing (and hence the feedback loop) of the programme is exemplary.

I have not seen anything over subsequent years that has challenged this view.

However, it is also fair to say that during previous visits, we'd discussed the amount of summative assessment – and how it was significant. A simplification of (my) thoughts over the years would be that whilst there was no reason to challenge the amount of summative assessment from a QA perspective, if roles were reversed, it wouldn't be an area I'd look to increase.

In that context I was pleased that some of this visit focussed on proposals to decrease the amount of summative in favour of formative assessment, partially as a response to student and staff feedback.

Overall I am in complete agreement with these moves with simplification and rationalisation being a strong argument if there is perceived holistic benefit.

More specifically, the internal IFP thinking was that it would allow more focus on skills and language input and more time for students to focus on the feedback. It was noted that this thinking echoed University guidance in looking at workload for the benefit of both staff and students.

As external advisor I agreed with this general University move and suggested that this was a sector-wide initiative that I'd recently seen both in Bristol and Manchester.

What I think is worth pointing out is that, as usual, the thought process in the Cardiff Centre and IFP team has been strong, and it wasn't just a question of deleting certain tasks or removing those that are potentially unpopular with students.

For example:

- a) Whilst the PDP (EL0001 / EL0011) is rarely popular with IFP students (across the sector...), it encapsulates a key set of skills for future study that they subsequently come to value - hence I think integration within the ISS portfolio assessment is an intelligent compromise. I also agree with the Semester 2 thoughts (EL0002) and how this can (and perhaps should) be focussed more in Semester 1.
- b) The moving of progress tasks 1 and 2 to Semester 2 (EL0010 / 0109) enables those students who have found the transition to UK study a little more challenging, longer to academically acclimatise. There is sometimes a discussion on the motivation of students on long IFP courses, but Cardiff's students are generally highly motivated and goal-oriented, hence

as external advisor, I doubt this will be an issue.

- c) The proposed removal of an exam ultimately seen to be assessing something that is being assessed elsewhere. Hence, the review and reduction of progress tasks in EL0010 / EO0109.

Overall, I think the changes have merit and are well thought out.

- A meeting with students on the programme. Deliberately open-ended, the discussion ranged between:

- a) Views on potential assessment changes (Happy with workload but reduction in summative would help future cohorts. Extremely positive about the quality of feedback and access to tutors).

Any concerns or questions that I tried to tease out vis-à-vis whether there was sufficient time to use (feed-forward) feedback weren't taken up as an issue with this group of students. Hence, whilst always difficult to extrapolate views from a group to a programme, I think potential changes are not an issue.

What did emerge was these students clearly knew other students in comparator universities on IFP programmes (Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham were referenced), and subjectively asserted that they thought their feedback and tutor responses were superior.

- b) Views on timetable (intensive, very much see the value of both 'sides' (academic and language) of the IFP, although potentially more academic input as the programme progresses.

A comment on this one – I actually take this is a 'plus'. My visit was in March, hence two-thirds of the way through the IFP academic year. By this stage I would hope and expect to see IFP students gaining confidence in their language / skills and looking forwards to their degrees – I think these comments were (good) examples of this.

- c) Classrooms. They liked being together with other IFP students in a geographical location for some of the week...but classrooms could be cold (a fair enough point).

- d) Integration with the University. There was no common response to this. Some felt 'very', some felt 'little'. My assumption from this particular group was that it depended on nationality, friendship groups and family as opposed to IFP structure / approach.

- A discussion about genre with the IFP Senior Manager (Academic Year) and Course Co-ordinator(s)

This discussion was a follow-up to the BALEAP report and to a session that we'd previously held on how we interpreted genre within an EAP and HE environment.

I think some of my role as external advisor was to again put the BALEAP report in context:

- a) It was an extremely strong IFP and as explained in previous reports, I suspect sector-leading in some ways, hence the suggestions on genre are extremely useful vis-à-vis possible future direction in material and syllabus but are in no way a suggestion that current practice needs 'remedying'.
- b) Genre input can come in different ways – assessment text types, input, choices in the academic word list. I also suggested that the IFP and In-sessional need to link together and that there is logical progress from one to the other with the in-sessional lending itself to a very 'genre' influenced approach.
- c) To ultimately not be 'scared' by the term. It is fundamentally working backwards from the text types and production required in various academic areas in Higher Education and an incorporation of the various discourses into curriculum and syllabi. It has been my suggestion that this is being done perhaps more than the developers realized and perhaps it is a question of more explicitly referencing and noting.

Within that context, I note the changes to the IFP (and EfUS) teaching handbooks and syllabus design principles with particular explicit referencing to input being genre-informed.

- A discussion of the report with the Director and the Quality and Accreditation Officer

This discussion started with a follow-on from the previous conversation with the above members of the Centre, their thoughts and my responses (see above).

The where, how, when and who of genre-informed practice is not, I feel, the determiner of syllabus and practice, but a factor. As long as that is borne in mind, I felt the post BALEAP discussions and potential evolution was beneficial to all.

- Meeting with Director

Hopefully a useful conversation – for both of us. Topics returned to included:

- a) The assessment agenda – post discussion with those implementing the course.
- b) How and when to implement any points raised in the BALEAP report. As usual with my time visiting Cardiff, it's a question of a small amount of minor points in a long-list of positives. In that context, we discussed the assiduous implementation of an action plan and again my emphasis that I would recommend against anything being changed because of the report that undermined the current excellence.
- c) The University Pathway Alliance and overall QA / Accreditation frameworks. The former is another useful context for Cardiff and should reinforce the Centre (and University's) confidence that what is being followed is extremely strong in a sector-wide context.

- Debrief with the Director and Head of QA / Accreditation

Points raised throughout the day, thanks for the organization (as always), envy at the quality of students and clarification of whether this is the last year in post.

2. Programme Structure

Please see previous reports for comments on the strength of the programme structure.

Hence, as the de facto focus of this visit was proposed assessment changes, comments on programme structure are in this context

Pre-visit email exchange was useful to clarify the rationale behind the proposed changes. In summary the reasoning is

- a) A 'big picture' sense-check of 100 hours studying = 10 credits and making sure the IFP is still within this overall structure.
- b) A review of overall student (assessment) workload vis-à-vis sufficient time to effectively learn from input and feedback.
- c) A mapping exercise across modules (parity of expectations, word limits and percentage weighting).

I agree with the proposals and commend the team on the way that this has been gone about (staff / student feedback + bigger University / module mapping).

3. Academic Standards

Previous reports have given considerable praise in this area, and there is no reason to challenge this in 2018 – 2019. Again, the BALEAP report provided further evidence that this was and is an extremely strong, sector-leading IFP.

4. The Assessment Process

This was ultimately the area of focus for the visit.

As an external advisor this appears to be a very thorough internal review with significant input from ELC stakeholders.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

- I mentioned this in the last report but again, from my perspective, personnel changes in a Centre are always a challenge but the new appointees have fitted extremely well into a professional structure and all should be congratulated – a strength of IFP (Centre) processes over individuals.
- Pedagogically always strong, I was aware of slightly more emphasis on how to do something well but also efficiently for both students and staff.

- A minor point, but each year facilities in competing organizations improve and are developed. It is not a fault of the IFP per se, but whilst the main classrooms in Deri House are a good size, they are noticeably lacking in technology that increasingly (IFP) students will expect. I would suggest looking into this issue before it becomes an explicit recruitment factor.

6. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Advisors only)

N/A

7. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

- QA Process.
- Intelligent and thoughtful approach to a challenging area (assessment review).
- Continued proactive / thoughtful response to external accreditation report over a medium-term period including incorporation of suggestions into course design principles.
- Can-do attitude of Centre personnel that I met on the visit and had communication with pre-visit, with what appears a very proactive and open Centre approach to seeking feedback.
- Innovative approach to student engagement (whilst I did not see it, students running focus groups is a clever way of getting a potentially more true idea of student thoughts).

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Advisors only)

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
Marking Examination Scripts				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?			N/A
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?			N/A
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Sampling of Work				
9.15	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?			N/A
Examining Board Meeting				
9.16	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?			N/A
9.17	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			N/A
9.18	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular,			N/A

	Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
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?			

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

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:

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