

Academic & Student Support Services
Academic Registrar
Simon Wright LLB
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr
Cofrestrydd Academaidd
Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to s.c.bain@swansea.ac.uk

08 March 2016

Dear Dr Bain,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the PG Diploma/MSc in Diabetes.

Your Report has been considered by the School 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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. your observations of an increased number of students applying for an interruption of study and of possible links to changes in the "administrative platform on the number of students from D2L to Learning Central";
2. your concerns about the "new synoptic reassessments";
3. your comments on the impact of fee increases.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The School of Medicine has confirmed that Learning Central (Blackboard) is the University's official online learning environment and part of a growing range of integrated educational tools that are part of the 'education portfolio' initiative. The high number of "interruption of studies" was partially due to a failure to enrol some students in a timely enough manner (onto what was a new system for this particular course) such that continuation of study was in some cases problematic or not possible. Enrolment has been more streamlined this year and the School now has a Learning Technology Unit in place to support programmes in matters such as these.

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2. The School has noted your comments on the new synoptic reassessments. Their introduction was in response to a change to overall University Academic Regulations concerning re-assessment to ensure equity in re-assessment practices and enable re-sits to occur within the academic year/stage rather than making students wait to repeat modules that would then impact on progression rules. The School has indicated that “Where a student is required to re-sit an assessment such as group discussion, inevitably this cannot be done in the absence of a group so instead of them having to wait for the next time the module runs, a synoptic assessment is used. Whilst the point is taken that a student may perceive there is an opportunity to disengage from such aspects and take the synoptic assessment as a resit instead, the penalty to the student is that their mark is capped at 50%. Also, in the new reassessment rules the number of credits that can be re-sat is also limited. Nonetheless, it may be worth the programme academic team reviewing the nature and robustness of the synoptic assessment to reassure themselves that it is (and is seen to be) equivalent to the standard assessments in terms of workload.”
3. The School has indicated that “The University have also introduced standard minimum fees across all programmes. This is mandated from above so not something this or other programmes are in a position to vary but is, we understand, intended to streamline financial administration and more realistically reflect the costs of delivery.”

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your particular commendation of the “clear commitment of the tutors”.

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

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar