



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

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE

Tel *Ffôn* I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE

Sent by email to g.meikle@westminster.ac.uk

30 November 2016

Dear Professor Meikle,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MA in Digital Media and Society.

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.

Issues Highlighted

1. Comments on course structure, its division into core and optional modules and detailed observations on the optional module Social Media and Politics, which includes issues central to contemporary developments in digital media and society.
2. Required readings for some modules that do not feature widely in student essays and related comments.
3. Scope for the course to broaden the range of assessment types to include more digital assessments.
4. Encouragement for a more consistent approach to ethical considerations in research in student work.

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE
Tel *Ffôn* I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Tel *Ffôn* I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

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

1. The School has noted your comments on the course structure and the division into core and optional modules and your suggestion that the module on social media, rather than 'Politics of Global Communication', should be assigned as core module. This makes a lot of sense, on the one hand, as it would focus more explicitly on core areas of digital media. On the other hand, one of the key characteristics of this course is its grounding in the broader field of media and communication studies and relevant research methods, and this is how it was designed and adopted by the Programme Approval Committee. Issues of social media use, digital business, etc., are discussed across the other core modules, particularly the module 'Understanding Digital Media'. Your suggestion of a stronger focus on digital issues – while logical and relevant – would involve a more fundamental redesign and re-positioning of the course. The School is discussing this proposal and will try to find a solution that reconciles these different perspectives.
2. Your observation of a disconnect between assignments and reading lists, which may mean a lack of engagement by students with the required readings, has been noted by the School. In this course, readings are typically discussed in class, whereas students are asked to explore further readings for their assignments. However, the School has noted your suggestions on how to improve engagement with the readings and will consider incorporating this in the assessment criteria.
3. The School is grateful for your suggestions regarding an expansion of assessment types to a broader range of digital assessments, and is aware that assignments have been, so far, essay-heavy. This year (2016-17) the assessments are changing in the two dedicated digital media core modules. One of the essays in 'Understanding Digital Media' will be a 'Blog-essay' that focuses on a more exploratory blog style, and one of the assignments in 'Citizen Journalism and Digital Publics' will be a practical project in data journalism. More can be done in this area, as you rightly suggest, but the School hopes that these changes will be a first step towards a more interesting range of assessments.
4. Based on your review of the dissertations from 2014/15, you suggested a more consistent approach to ethical considerations in research. While the School may not have increased our attention to this aspect for the 2015/16 dissertations, it is definitely doing this in the current academic year 2016/17. The dissertation workshop in early November included a special lecture about ethical issues, and the School will make sure to highlight this more consistently throughout the dissertation process.

Your comments on the required submission of assessments in both hard and electronic copy have been noted. The University is moving forward in this area and

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

plans to implement electronic-only submission of coursework across all Schools by no later than September 2018.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. clear links between course material and the research expertise of the teaching team;
3. impressive range of topics with very contemporary optional modules and up-to-date and well-chosen reading lists;
4. particular commendation of the two research modules offering breadth and depth of analysis, a wide range of expertise, and a challenging sequence of assessment tasks that should comprehensively equip the students for their dissertations;
5. good range of research interests exhibited in dissertations proposals with detailed and constructive feedback provided to students.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 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.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar