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Sent by email to kevin.rafter@dcu.ie

01 August 2016

Dear Professor Rafter,

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 Political Communication.

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. Your suggestion that, in the Introduction to Political Communication module (the practical part of it), it might be helpful (given the nature of the assignment) that the use of appropriate visual elements is a mandatory requirement.
2. Your suggestion that, in the PRIP module, it might be helpful - especially for weaker students - if proposals had a mandatory format with a number of proscribed headings to the proposal report such as Research Question; Aims & Objectives; Literature Review Overview; Method; Timeline; Ethical and Practical Obstacles; Select Bibliography. You suggested something similar for the media report in the Politics of Global Communication module e.g. adding Context/rationale; Research Question; Method; Funding; Analysis & Discussion as clear headings.

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3. Your observation that, in the Politics of Global Communication module, observed that one student submitted an essay on a topic not provided in the module list.
4. Your observation that the assessments for the PRIP II module were more substantial than other 20 credit modules.
5. Your indication that, because of the relatively small number of students on this MA programme, you would have liked to have had access to all module assignments and not just the sample provided.

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

1. The School will look to communicate this to students in the future.
2. The School will discuss these suggestions with the respective module co-ordinators.
3. This was mentioned in feedback provided to the student and a mark of 45% was awarded. Although the student did not follow the essay topics, the School still believed that they had met the assignment requirements of the module.
4. The School agrees that there are more assessment points for this module compared to others, but the amount of time work for the student remains broadly the same as other module assessments. This is because some are group projects and the individual tasks are smaller projects (in terms of work length and amount of time required to complete the task outside of the classroom).
5. In future years the School will ensure you have full access, as requested.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your commendation of the range of optional modules available to students, of feedback provided to students and of the support you received from academic and administrative colleagues of the School.

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.

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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