



EXTERNAL EXAMINER 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 Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Alan John Brown		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Warwick (Institute for Employment Research)		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Skills and Workforce Development		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	October 2016 – June 2017	Date of Report:	22/06/2017

For completion by External Examiner 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. Programme Structure

The MSc Skills and Workforce Development comprises a suite of modules, plus a dissertation, which seek to develop knowledge and understanding of the relationship between skills and performance in the workplace together with the ability to apply what they have learned to policy and practice.

2. Academic Standards

The first cohort of students have continued to make good progress, with six having successfully completed the course, with the other two students due to finish in due course. The research methods module was a new experience for many students and some found it quite tricky in finding a dissertation topic which was realistic to complete in the allotted time. Students however received helpful feedback and support and in the event the first four students to complete their dissertations all passed with merit. The final standards reached by the first cohort of students is particularly impressive given that many found it challenging to perform at Master's level on the first module. Two years later all students were all operating at or above the required standard. The dissertations represented the culmination of their development, as students were able to apply to combine their professional experience with an understanding of policy, research and theory. All students developed a reflective approach across the lifetime of the course, and had made significant progress in the development of their skills of critical analysis.

The second cohort of students also continued to make good progress. Seventeen of the eighteen students have passed all three of their modules, and the eighteenth is currently on interruption of studies. Half the students performed strongly across

the three modules, averaging over 60%. They are in a good position to tackle the step up involved in the challenges from the research methods module and the subsequent dissertation. The remaining students will, if the first cohort is a guide, require considerable support next year. However, they have the experience of first cohort to draw on in knowing it is possible to meet the challenge. The student level of engagement remains high and they are all performing at or above the standard required for this level of study.

Overall, the standards achieved by the two cohorts are undoubtedly comparable to those achieved in other UK HEIs. The achievement of students is in line with the expectations when the programme was set up, which was that the students will be well placed to meet the challenges of adapting to a rapidly changing labour market in Singapore.

3. The Assessment Process

The modules were assessed following completion of coursework assignments. Module Descriptions indicated exactly how the modules were to be assessed and full details were provided at the start of each module. The assessors used categorical marking for assessing individual module components. Generic marking criteria are used across the programme SWD and adapted to specific module requirements and learning outcomes. The criteria consist of a general set of standards for different mark bands.

In determining the marks for each module component, common Generic Assessment Criteria are used by assessors, drawing upon the four attributes of Knowledge, Skills, Understanding and Presentation/Transferable Skills.

I looked through all the assignments for the summative assessments on the four modules and the dissertation. The variety of assessments enabled students to demonstrate their understanding of key trends, theories and think through the consequences of changes in the nature of work for future patterns of skill development. Overall the marking was consistent both within and across cohorts and the appropriate procedures were followed in a way that was fair to all candidates.

The feedback to students was clear and detailed, giving students an indication of why they achieved their marks and how they could improve. The degree of support from tutors was also high before final submission of assignments. The standard of answers for the second cohort was fairly consistent across all three modules whereas for the first cohort the standard was higher for the latter assignments than the earlier assignments. This difference presumably stems from the second cohort having a clearer idea of what was expected of them from the outset. Overall, all students demonstrated a clear understanding of the topics and were able to apply their understanding to the Singaporean labour market. It took some time and considerable support for students to craft their proposals for their dissertations to manageable proportions. However, in the event all candidates were able to execute their proposals and the resulting dissertations acted to draw together their learning and development from across the programme as a whole.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

The first cohort is just in the process of completing their programme. The course team have worked hard at providing all necessary support, as the transition to a more analytical social science research-based approach is a real challenge to many Singaporean students, especially those who were from science or engineering backgrounds. The second cohort have so far required almost as much support, although they have also had some support from some first cohort students. If the number of students in the third cohort is 15 – 20 then tutors will have to be drawn from beyond the core team, so induction into the demands on the course team will be important.

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

Not applicable.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

The assessment and moderation processes are coherent and work well in supporting learning and the first two cohorts have demonstrated that they are able to apply what they have learned to a range of contexts. The support offered to students by the course team is exemplary. The student level of engagement is high although some students tend to be passive and reactive rather than proactive. The overall teaching and learning experience is very positive for both students and staff.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

Not applicable.

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

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

Programme/Course Information

8.1 Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments? Y

8.2 Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme? N/A

Draft Examination Question Papers

8.3 Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award? N/A

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

8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
Marking Examination Scripts				N/A
8.6				
8.7				
8.8				

8.9				
8.10				
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15				
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, 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?	Y		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20				
8.21				
8.22				
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?	Y		
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?	Y		
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?	Y		
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	Y		
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?	Y		
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?	Y		
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

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Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.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