



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* | +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

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

Sent by email to Dr Sukumar Natarajan

23 January 2019

Dear Dr Natarajan,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2017/18

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for MArch Dissertations.

Your report has been considered by the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

Issues highlighted in your report:

1. **Programme Structure:** Formalised student support for dissertations. Student participation in these activities through, for example, seminar groups, would enhance the overall experience.
2. **Examination of Master's Dissertations:** Moderation: It's suggested that expectations are managed for markers through clearer guidelines on what students are expected to be able to achieve in the time available and for the programme level.
3. **Examination of Master's Dissertations:** It is suggested that a calibrated definition of the term 'research' is provided to students. This should cover the different types of enquiry-led research that can be conducted (e.g. historical, technical, theoretical) and the corresponding methods (e.g. case studies, surveys, simulations, experiments).

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

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

Response provided by the School:

1. This year, as part of the Research Preparation module, three seminars will be organised during the February Short Course. These three seminars, associated with the three research groups at WSA, will each include 3 presentations of recent conference papers by staff, followed by a discussion of these papers: their place in a larger research projects, the methodologies of the research in question, the paper's argument etc.
2. This year, for both Research Preparation and Dissertation modules, a supervision guidebook has been created and distributed. The guidebook includes mark descriptors as well as 'indicators' that can aid in marking and discussing marks. An appropriate version of these descriptors will also be made available to students.
3. It is expected that the question of 'research', and particularly of diverse forms of research, will be addressed within the research group seminars in February. In September, the module leader gave a lecture on academic research, highlighting differences from journalism, op-ed etc., identifying and explaining key criteria of assessing and evaluating academic research.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. This is an excellent programme that is well delivered. Students have access to a good pool of supervision talent and expertise. It was clear that students had access to some research methods material.
3. The assessment process is highly rigorous for this level of study, with each work being marked by the supervisor and an independent internal. The unique tradition of an oral viva by external examiners, adds further rigour probably not matched at other institutions.
4. The addition of a moderation panel following comments from previous years is a good idea, and should be continued.
5. The preparation both prior to the visit to the school and on the viva days themselves, was flawless. All the material was received in time, and all queries were responded to rapidly. The team at WSA should be commended for their outstanding effort in organising this process.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and 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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar