



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:	Professor Kevin Rafter		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Dublin City University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	MA Political Communication		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	20015/16	Date of Report:	12 July 2016

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

This is my first year as External Examiner for this MA Programme. I was on campus in the Bute Building in Cardiff on 5 July and 6 July. I had an opportunity to review a sample of student work across all six required modules and also a number of optional modules.

All relevant information was provided to assist my work as External Examiner including student assignments, module handouts and feedback sheets. Having access to this supporting documentation was very helpful.

I examined sample work from the following required modules:

1. MCT506 Introduction to Political Communication
2. MCT532 Politics of Global Communication
3. MCT533 Putting Research into Practice I
4. MCT534 Putting Research in Practice II
5. MCT535 Electoral Behaviour, Public Opinion and the Media
6. MCT503 Mediatized Conflict: The Politics of Conflict Reporting

Given this was my first year I spent the bulk of my time reading the supplied material from the required modules. I also reviewed material from the optional modules:

1. MCT540 Social Media and Politics
2. MCT503 Politics of Conflict Reporting

I undertook a less detailed review of assignment papers from other optional modules provided during my visit.

This a very well run MA programme, notable for the coherence of the structure underpinned by six relevant and original modules that cover the main debates and topics in the political communication discipline.

Students have a number of academic modules introducing them to core concepts and debates while also being exposed to commendable materials on research methods that is highly relevant for a postgraduate programme.

The range of optional modules is extensive - and while not all were reviewed on this occasion they are relevant to the core MA offering.

2. Academic Standards

The work reviewed was of a high standard. The work was engaging - the students addressed both theoretical and practical issues in their essays and reports. Many of the assignments reviewed were concerned with contemporary issues in the political sphere, both British and international. There was evidence of strong participation in group work.

MCT506 Introduction to Political Communication

I was impressed by the standard of student work and engagement with the set assignments. There was strong evidence of an understanding of key concepts and theories in the work reviewed. The essays in particular were framed against relevant academic literature. Students were able to demonstrate achievement of the stated learning outcomes. All assignment items were accompanied by useful feedback.

In a number of instances weaknesses with referencing systems and construction of bibliographies was evident (alphabetical order; material cited in text not listed in bibliography etc). However, this was not a general trait across all the reviewed modules which may suggest an improvement in student understanding of referencing as the academic year progressed.

The Media Kit assignment generated an interesting range of topics. It might be helpful given the nature of the work that use of appropriate visual elements is a mandatory requirement.

MCT 535 Electoral Behaviour

Marking was consistent and appropriate in the sample of work reviewed. Feedback comments were clear and helpful.

MCT533 Putting Research into Practice I

Excellent written feedback provided to students in comments in the body of essay assignment and also in summary remarks. Interesting range of topics selected for the Literature Review assignment (Political Satire, Citizen Journalists, Big Data etc). Strong evidence of student engagement.

The second assignment - 'Proposal for dissertation' - showed student grappling with the challenge of MA research; and this is a positive in the learning evident in the

written work. It might be helpful - especially for weaker students - if these proposals had to follow 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.

MCT532 Politics of Global Communication

Very good engagement with literature debates - for example, several essays offered insightful commentary on different approaches of Cassells and Dean. Some sloppiness in referencing in a number of essays (but see previous comment above).

One student submitted an essay on a topic not provided in the module list. This fact is mentioned in feedback provided to the student and a mark of 45% was awarded. I would question whether in this instance the student actually met the assignment requirements of the module.

Second assignment - Media Analysis Reports - displayed a very good range of topics and strong student engagement. Might be of assistance to students if they were asked to follow a standardize template for the reports with required headings such as Context/rationale; Research Question; Method; Funding; Analysis & Discussion. It would also assist in marking.

MCT534 Putting Research into Practice II

This module has five assessment points with a very high workload required from students. The papers reviewed showed very strong student engagement with the different assessments and clear evidence of the assignments delivering on the required module learning outcomes.

Several of the Digital Methods pieces were substantial in terms of student commentary online activity in different areas; the Focus Group reports were well written while strong student engagement was evident in the work reviewed on SSPS, Content Analysis and Discourse/Framing. Marking was consistent across all the work and feedback was both appropriate and constructive.

The high number of assessment points in this module is worth noting. Given the objectives of the module it is difficult to see fewer assessment points. But the greater level of work - both individual and group - would seem to require more effort of students on this module than others reviewed. This disparity does raise the question of credit equality across modules; and I only mention this based on a sample review but MCT534 would seem to be a higher credit than the 20 credits currently allocated.

MCT503 Politics of Conflict Reporting (optional)

Extensive range of essay titles

MCT540 Social Media and Politics (optional)

Rationale for marking provided; very good student feedback

Engaging set of essay titles

Good student engagement with key concepts etc

Marking fair and consistent

3. The Assessment Process

Across all modules the assignments were appropriate for the module content as outlined in the student handout.

The marking was consistent and appropriate across all modules.

Feedback to students was good, being positive and encouraging even for work receiving weaker marks.

Please see my comments in section 2 about assessment points in MCT534

4. Year-on-Year Comments

n/a

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

The assistance of both academic and administration staff was appreciated in making my work as External Examiner as efficient as possible.

Given the relatively small number of students on this MA programme I would have liked to have had access to all module assignments not just the sample provided.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

N/a

7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)

N/a

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

N/a

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		n	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		n	
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			n/a
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			n/a
Marking Examination Scripts				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y but see comment		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y but see comment		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	y		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			n/a
Sampling of Work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	y		
Examining Board Meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	y		
9.19	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)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			n/a
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			n/a
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			n/a
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			n/a
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			n/a
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			n/a
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			n/a
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			n/a
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			n/a
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			n/a

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.