



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof. Andrew ROTHWELL		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Swansea University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MA in Translation Studies		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2013-14	Date of Report:	28 June 2014

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

Since the structural suggestions I made last year about Part 1 were thoroughly implemented in the course of the current session (see 4, below), I have little comment to make under this rubric. The MA continues to be distinctive in its ability to accommodate students with a very wide range of languages, and discussions with the teaching team have made it clear that they are fully aware of the challenges, particularly to maintenance of consistent quality and standards, that this design philosophy poses.

2. Academic Standards

Once again, the standards set in work I have seen this year have been high, and fully in line with those of comparable programmes with which I have been involved as external examiner. Student achievement has again been of a consistently high level, with some really outstanding work at the top end.

3. The Assessment Process

My positive comments from last year about Part 1 apply equally to 2013-14, particularly with respect to detailed and careful marking, and high quality of feedback to students. There are also some commendably innovative assessment methods in use. My one fresh suggestion this year is that a little more consideration be given to awarding marks at the top end of the scale, by reference to the generally comprehensive and well worked-out criteria. I sense an occasional reluctance, based

on concerns for standards, to award marks in the 80+ band, but I would encourage assessors to do this where the quality of the work merits it. Nowadays, numerical degree averages are playing an increasingly important role in e.g. award of PhD funding and it would be unfortunate if the very best Cardiff Translation students were to be disadvantaged in such competitions by a relatively conservative marking policy at the top end.

The MA board that I attended in late June was efficiently run. The helpful new method of treating special circumstances was fully explained and meant that there were no ambiguous or difficult cases to resolve.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

All of my suggestions relating to **Part 1** from last year's report were implemented by the programme team this year, after careful further discussions with the programme director. In particular:

1. The programme was re-balanced to give greater parity between the 'academic' and 'professional strands, by opening up more optionality between modules.
2. EUT402 All Languages Translation Class module in semester 2 was discontinued.
3. The syllabus for EUT401 Theory of Translation was adjusted to allow the introduction of more professionally-relevant Functionalist theories.

I suggested last year that this might lead to a more even balance between literary and non-literary projects at Part 2 of the degree: this of course remains to be seen.

With respect to the **Dissertation work** from students of the 2012-13 cohort that I saw last autumn, a number of recommendations that I had made in an additional report on Dissertations the previous year remained outstanding or only partially implemented. I very much hope they can be fully adopted in time for the dissertation marking season this coming autumn:

1. Particularly in the case of dissertations that take the form of translation projects, or ATPs, (where assessors need to engage in great detail with the verbal matter of the translation), there is little point in sending blind marked scripts to the external examiner. The external's job is to check the quality of the marking process, of which a blind marked script contains, by definition, no evidence. **I strongly recommend that ALL dissertations be fully annotated throughout by both internal markers**, with a criteria-referenced summary judgement at the end showing any discussions between assessors and a clear breakdown of how different numerical components have been aggregated – indeed, without these elements I will not be able to approve the marks.
2. I would also like to see a printout of the full set of dissertation marks, even if I am sent only a sample.
3. It would also be helpful to see the **full documentation and guidance** given to students about dissertations. The MA TS Handbook I was sent contains instructions on layout and submission only. Particularly in the case of literary ATPs, I would recommend that students be required to address their skopos and commission directly, rather than merely paying lip-service to it ('intended for the educated general reader'). This would involve identifying a plausible TL publisher, discussing the TL market and expected readership, and relating

those considerations to the translation strategy adopted (introduction) and detailed decisions made (notes).

4. **Language competence.** I think there is a problem of principle in allowing students to undertake translations, at this level, between languages in which staff have limited competence. A student working between French and English can expect expert supervision and guidance, whereas someone working between Swedish and Romanian is likely to have had very limited practical help. In my view there are only two defensible options with regard to language competence at this level: **either 1) you only allow students to work in language pairs in which supervisor and assessors are fully competent, or 2) you use the translation as a pretext for analysis and assess only the commentary (so that the ATP becomes closer to a traditional dissertation).**
5. This leads on to the subject of **assessment criteria** for the ATP exercise. There are inevitably many staff with different languages involved in assessing ATPs, so in order to ensure consistency of standards there should be clear assessment criteria (which should be shared with students and the external examiner). This is particularly important when the ATPs are literary and therefore potentially offer scope for the application of a range of different translation strategies (so the criteria would need to be flexible enough to allow assessment of translation quality to be referenced to the chosen strategy, which in turn will need to be defended in the commentary). **Markers should then be required to refer explicitly to the criteria in their assessment** and, in cases of disagreement, their subsequent discussions. This would help the external, and the student, understand how the final decision had been arrived at and reduce the likelihood of appeals. Some assessment I saw was exemplary in these respects, but much of it fell short of this desirable level of transparency.
6. I would recommend that a **standard report form** be devised that reflects the assessment criteria for ATPs, and that it should be completed electronically and so be available for upload to the external and return to students. The form should have space for a **record of discussions** between the markers, where relevant. Markers should also be required to engage in detail with the criteria: in one or two cases I saw, only 4 or 5 lines were provided by way of justification of the mark awarded, and this really is not an adequate reflection of what is inevitably a complex assessment process with many variables – it could also lead to difficulty in case of appeal.

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

N/a

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

As last year, I must commend the excellent organisational work and rapid and thoughtful responses of the Programme Director. She ensured that work for moderation was sent to me in a timely manner which fitted in with my own schedule of availability. We also had a thorough dialogue throughout the year about the implementation of my suggestions for change last year.

I would again commend the design of the practical translation modules, and EUT413 Training Placement, from which students seem to derive a benefit disproportionate to the amount of working time they spend in the placement organisation.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) N/a

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?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
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	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
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	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

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

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

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Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE