



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Colin Johnson		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Kent		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Undergraduate courses in the School of Computer Science and Informatics		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016/17	Date of Report:	4 th July 2017

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught stage** Examining Board in the case of **postgraduate Master's programmes**).

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The curriculum is well designed and keeps up to date with changes in the subject. In a subject such as this, where the latter stages of the programme depend in detail on earlier stages, it is important that the learning in the programme be well structured. This seems to have been well thought through for these programmes. Methods of teaching and learning appear to be appropriate for the programmes. An important part of the final year is a substantial piece of project work, as is common in computer science degrees, and these were of high standard and the best demonstrated a very strong engagement with research and contemporary technology. The best projects received very high marks, which is appropriate. A particular innovation is the Applied Software Engineering degree, which is taught in a largely project-based way and involves close interactions with the local software industry. This is a good way for the University to expand its offering, attracting a different kind of high-quality student to Cardiff.

It might be useful for the School to provide a little more preparation for the project in the first term, without stretching formal module time into term 1. I understand the

motivation to concentrate the project work in term 2, but some projects involved e.g. getting familiar with some complex technology, and so if students made an earlier project choice and then had a little time to think about their projects and do preliminary work during odd moments in that first term, I can see benefit from that, particularly as some projects were very ambitious yet ran out of time to achieve the originally stated aims.

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

Overall the academic standards and breadth of achievement on the programmes in the School are comparable with other UK universities of a similar standing and entry requirements to Cardiff. The achievement of a typical student on the programmes demonstrate a strong knowledge of both practical aspects of computer science and software development relevant to industry, and engagement with a research-led knowledge and skills.

The average mark on different optional modules at Stage 3 was rather variable, and this did not correspond strongly with the overall performance of those students. Whilst this probably averages out for most students, I was a little worried that the choice of options could lead to an unjustified difference in marks between students. It would be worth the School having a brief look at this and particularly examining the teaching and learning on modules that were at the most extreme in these regards.

It was good to see students who carried out final year projects of an excellent standard receiving very high marks. The project is often used as evidence that students can draw together

3. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

Overall, the assessment process seems fair and appropriate. Assessments and exam questions are carefully mapped to the aims of each module.

The exam board is well run and it was easy to understand how classification decisions were arrived at. Some scaling was made to student marks—less than in previous years—and this was well justified.

It was good to see that there is a mechanism to give exam feedback to students where needed.

I would advise the School to look at exams with choice of questions, and have some mechanism in place to reassure themselves (and external examiners) that choice of question does not excessively advantage/disadvantage students. For example, it would be good as part of the module review process to be able to see question averages/distributions.

I was slightly surprised not to be asked to look in detail at 2nd year student work (though I did look at the assessments/exam papers before they were issued to students), as this does contribute to degree classification.

It would have been good to have seen better evidence of how moderation had been carried out on exam scripts. Some had clear markings to indicate where a second

marker had confirmed (or raised questions about) the first marker's mark. However, marking seemed to have been well done and I am confident that exams have been fairly marked.

I understand that no plagiarism detection system (such as TurnItIn) is used by default for dissertations. It would be good to see this happen by default, and this is easy to do using contemporary VLEs.

I was shown a marking scheme for the final year project module. It appeared from the VLE that this was not given to the students, which would have been useful.

I was told that students who had mitigating circumstances (e.g. personal/medical/disability issues), and yet who passed a module affected by those circumstances, were not allowed to retake the module for a higher mark or have their mark adjusted to take into account those circumstances (though, they would be allowed to retake for an uncapped mark if they had failed the module). If I have understood this correctly, this seems inconsistent and should be addressed at the University level.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

I am happy with the responses from the School/University to my previous comments—much of this appears to be feeding into a longer process of quality enhancement within the University.

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

n/a

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

As part of the marking schemes for many exams and assessments there was a clear articulation of how that assessment fitted into the planned outcomes for the module; for example, marking schemes frequently described which learning outcomes were being assessed by a module, and there was often a clear description of whether a specific question was bookwork, application of learned ideas to a new example, bringing together different parts of the course, etc. All of this was very useful when it came to assessing the standards and approach of the examiners to assessment.

Students with specific needs had a note on their exam paper with instructions to markers about how those needs should be taken into account in marking the exam. This was very useful, particularly as the examinations were anonymous and so markers would not otherwise be able to look up the details.

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

This is my last year as external examiner. The courses that I have examined have maintained a high standard and have, in a fast moving area, remained up to date. Marking is well done, and procedures for assessment and award are good. The School has been responsive to my questions and has always been well prepared both throughout the year and during my visits. It has been a pleasure to work with the staff in the School.

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				
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?	Y		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	Y		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	Y		
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?			N/A
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A
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>			

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