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**Sent by email to [j.fleming@soton.ac.uk](mailto:j.fleming@soton.ac.uk)**

**18 September 2017**

Dear Professor Fleming,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2016–2017**

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BA/BSc in Criminology.

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

**Issues Highlighted**

1. Inconsistent feedback to students across modules.
2. Observations on a lack of comments on exam scripts and that exam feedback to students was almost non-existent.
3. The use made of multiple choice assessments contributing to 100% of the assessment for a module.

**The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:**

1. The School has noted your comments and confirms that the School Undergraduate Marking Information Sheet is regularly updated and circulated to all staff at the beginning of each academic year (and then throughout the year if there any updates). This includes various guidance about marking and feedback on examination scripts and coursework. For example, it includes a

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section of guidance on 'feed forward' feedback. In addition, marking and feedback are regularly included in the School's teaching and learning away days throughout the academic year.

Furthermore, students receive cohort-level feedback on examinations, which includes mention of strengths and weaknesses of examination scripts at various levels of attainment.

2. As noted above, the School currently has a policy of providing cohort-level feedback on examinations and does not require markers to make comments on individual exam scripts. However, markers are encouraged to keep notes on each exam script to help them provide individual feedback to students if they request it. In addition the School is currently developing bespoke marking criteria for each module/assessment (rather than applying a generic School-wide set of criteria). This should make it much clearer why an assessment item has been given a particular mark – both for external examiners and for students.
3. The School note your comments and can confirm that MCE's do not count for 100% in any Criminology module - it counts for 40% of the assessment in the Policing module, and is complemented by an essay question. This assessment model of a comprehensive MCE to test knowledge on all topics covered in the module, complemented by an essay question (weighted more heavily at 60%) to test the student's critical thinking and analytic skills through focussing on one or two particular topic areas, has worked well (as evidenced by positive student evaluations and comments by other external examiners).

All modules are changing to some extent with the introduction of UG2020, and some modules will be dropped from the module diet, including Policing. However, the School does not think that a particular form of assessment, such as MCEs, should be ruled out altogether as being inappropriate, for any of our students on any of our degree schemes.

**The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. particularly innovative range of dissertation titles;
3. excellent support from the School to prepare you for your role;
4. varied assessments designed to test student learning and achievement rigorously and fairly.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar