



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:	Richard Donovan Wiggins		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	UCL-Institute of Education, London, U.K.		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	MSc Social Science Research Methods		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-17	Date of Report:	5 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)

This is a wide ranging programme which attracts students from a broad discipline base. This makes the delivery of research training in methods and analysis one which has to sustain an appeal to specific student interests in substantive areas which are not always going to be common to all and at the same time imbue the student with a core set of competencies and theoretical understandings that will enable them to grow intellectually as well as engage with policy matters. By and large, this programme succeeds in achieving those goals but I would like to see more integration of methods, theory and substance in student's work. For example, essays on 'advanced concepts in contemporary sociology' need to demonstrate both a theoretical understanding and an awareness of the practical challenges of doing research. Equally, 'quantitative research methods' reports must engage with the literature to support their topic choices or inform the reader about what their findings can bring to current thinking about policy etc.

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

The academic standards are impressive. Students (in the main) do demonstrate a sound understanding of research methods which are comparable to the standards achieved elsewhere

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

Generally, this is very clear for each of the modules I have examined. However, I would like to receive further clarification of the role of the moderator as distinct to the second marker and whether or not I should always expect to see a moderator's report for each module?

In future it would be helpful to receive a summary mark distribution for all of the modules across the programme as a whole. In particular, when I begin to receive dissertations later in the year to have a 'student mark profile' so as to be better able to judge how well individual candidates build upon their coursework achievements in their dissertation work.

On a slightly bothersome note I would have liked to have received the second batch of scripts (typically, with a 10th May 2017 deadline) much sooner than a week before the June Board. This may imply holding the Board meeting to a week later in the future?

Finally, I would like to commend the staff on providing their students with clear and constructive feedback to their students and the programme administrator for her competence and efficiency.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Not applicable.

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)

I received most of the information about the programme by email and I'm sure that a lot of misunderstandings about the programme arise from my having to

take the initiative to ask questions or raise queries myself. When I have had occasion to do so the responses have been prompt and helpful but an initial 'skype' briefing or telephone conversation may well have accelerated my assimilation into the role of external examiner.

What really made your programme come alive for me was the invitation for me to attend the 'Dissertation Conference' in April this year. I was so pleased to meet and talk with some of the students and staff and would, indeed liked to have had the opportunity to be introduced to all staff on the day. Alternatively, individuals could have been asked to introduce themselves on an informal basis.

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

The care and attention that goes into providing detailed comments on student's work which typically provides insight and direction.

I would also like to commend the use of R programming in the delivery of quantitative research methods (BST215) training. How difficult would it be for all students of QRM (including SIT701) to adopt R? For these modules, I would also like to see some acknowledgement or discussion about the misuse of statistical significance testing (April 2017 Issue of Significance Magazine, pp 38-41, RSS & ASA)?

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

Not applicable.

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?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				

8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
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?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
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?		N	
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?		N	
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			N/A
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?		N	
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?			
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			

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?			
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			
8.30	<p>Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i></p> <p><i>I understand that the Registry requires annual report forms to be returned after the June 2017 Board. Obviously, as a new external examiner I have not seen any dissertations.</i></p>			

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