

Academic & Student Support Services
Academic Registrar
Simon Wright LLB
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr
Cofrestrydd Academaidd
Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to m.hanrahan@ucl.ac.uk

14 August 2015

Dear Professor Hanrahan,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the French modules on all single and joint honours undergraduate programmes in the School of Modern Languages.

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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. Your comments regarding the severity of grading for the student Dissertation in French;
2. Your observations that the Year Abroad does not count under Cardiff's 'secondary rule' for consideration as a module achieving a grade in the target class;
3. Your comments regarding the absence of student anonymity at the final Board of Examiners meeting;
4. The existence of computational errors at the Final Examination Board.

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

1. The dissertation module has existed for a number of years but was rolled out for the first time to joint honours students in 2014-15. We were keen to ensure that intellectual rigour was central to this option module and we sought to ensure that all scripts were first and second-marked by staff who had considerable or at least some degree of relevant expertise. We will take fully on board the external's comment about the grading being relatively severe. All tutors will be made aware of this very fair observation and the threshold for Classmarks, particularly for First Class Honours marks, and they will be moderated accordingly.
2. The University has consulted widely on the contribution of the Year Abroad / Industrial Placement and the application of 'secondary rule'. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee has agreed that there could be a risk of grade inflation if it was included and as a result has taken the decision to exclude it as part of the 'secondary rule' process. Your comments have been noted and will form part

Cardiff University
McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 ODE
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 ODE
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189
www.cardiff.ac.uk

of the annual report that is presented to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

3. Section 2.2.3 of the Exam Board Handbook outlines that Examining Boards do not need to be held anonymously as Boards cannot change the marks awarded to an individual student. A copy of the Handbook is enclosed for your reference.
4. The University will work with the School to understand further what errors have occurred and ensure that there are no errors at the Final Examination Board on future occasions.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. The support offered by administrative and academic staff to facilitate your role as External Examiner.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 Student Intranet 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