



Academic & Student Support Services
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Sent by email

09 February 2017

Dear Mr Ray,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MA in International Journalism.

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. Balance between academic and vocational learning.
2. Challenges for students whose first language is not English.
3. The correlation between the tick boxes and the numerical mark did not always appear to be consistent.
4. Provision, in one place, of all marks across the programme.
5. Need to make sure that tutors are fully engaged with the latest apps, tools and techniques.
6. Communications received from many different colleagues.
7. Suggested "more focused look at journalism ethics" and related comments.
8. Suggested coverage of "Social media as a Newsgathering tool" and Deep web research and related comments;
9. Detailed comments and suggestions on elements of "storytelling" within the programme.

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

1. This is an issue with a course that aims to be both academic and practical and the School is currently aiming to reset the balance towards a more practical course by reworking the Information Gathering Analysis courses in both Semester 1 and Semester 2. This process has only just begun and while improvements are expected to be seen this year, it is likely to take a couple of academic years to fully resolve this long-standing issue.
2. This is absolutely true and it is most definitely an issue on a course that caters for international students. The School is trying to work more effectively with the English Language support team to make sure that students are taking advantage of this service but it can be tricky to make sure that they are using it to its full potential.
3. The School explains to students that tick boxes are there to help them identify areas that are weak and need addressing. They are there for guidance for the student and do not deliver the final grade. The Course Director agrees that the programme team needs to be clearer on this and to make sure that all staff are using the boxes to highlight areas where potential improvements could be made.
4. The Course Director will explore this request and hopes to have this available in future.
5. The Course Director agrees with this comment and confirmed that it would be good to discuss this issue with INP pathway coordinators to ensure consistency across elements of the course.
6. The Course Director will explore the School's approach to communicating with External Examiners.
7. There will be a session on Ethics within the newly-reworked IGA 2 lecture series. A number of the issues you highlight are dealt with in FNR sessions in Semester 1 and within optional modules. The School will consider your advice as part of a review of the programme over the coming semester.
8. The School will consider your advice in its review of the programme over the coming session and would value your input.
9. The School is introducing a specific session on storytelling within IGA 2 and a great deal of this material should be covered within INP sessions. Your feedback will help enormously as the School looks at reworking this course in the coming months.

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 teaching, feedback and marking adhere to the highest academic standards;
3. very effective second marking of dissertations;
4. diligent and committed students with a clear grasp of the programme's expectations of them.

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