

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - all BSc(Econ) single and combined Politics programmes and all BA joint honours Politics programmes; all MSc(Econ) programmes and the Politics modules on the MA in European Studies

Dear Professor Keating,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of European Languages, Translation and Politics 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

Your Report commented on the nature of support you received from the School and on arrangements for the consideration of paperwork and for the Examining Board. These issues have been referred for consideration by the School. The following response has been provided by the Chair of the Board of Studies on behalf of the School.

"We welcome Professor Keating's positive comments on the overall standard of marking and the course structure and are pleased to note that no issues were raised with the academic standards of the modules or assessment process.

We are very sorry that there has been some breakdown in communication with some examiners this year. This is a disappointing departure from our usual high standards and we will be very clear to prevent this happening in the future. I had been in contact with Prof Keating in the Autumn Semester to introduce myself and ensure that he had a point of contact for any undergraduate queries he may have had. We had also corresponded on exam paper approval and later, in a more lengthy correspondence recognising that there had been a communication problem, about the examiner's role. We have had significant issues raised by recent School reorganisation and, even more recently, by the uncertainty and activity involved in demerging from Languages ahead of a new merger with Law. Internal School reorganisation has meant that, this year, there has been no single administrative or academic contact for external examiners for Politics. Academically this is divided between UG and PGT roles and administratively between 3 people (year 2, final year and PGT). In the newly merged School of Law & Politics we have made a decision that this has caused confusion for external examiners and will be having a single Politics administrator through which all significant communication with externals would be expected to go.

In response to Professor Keating's comments about papers perhaps being sent all at once, rather than as they are sat, I consulted two of our other externals and asked them about continuing as we are to send a module's sample scripts as they are marked; alternatively, sending a 'single pack' of all samples of exam scripts after the end of the examination period; thirdly, about bringing the examiners to Cardiff a day early and providing them with all the materials here. Given the tight timescales around the end of the exam period and marks needing to be final on SIMS it was felt that more rather than less time to consider scripts might be better. There was a concern that some options tightened that timescale further. We intend to continue to consult with continuing and incoming examiners about this in order to clearly establish their favoured practice and thank Prof Keating for raising this issue for consideration.

Additionally, I note from the checklist that Prof Keating says that he was not asked to approve all exam papers contributing to the final award. This is true. However, he did

approve all the exam papers for which he was the assigned external examiner. The remaining papers were distributed to, and approved by, the external examiner with the appropriate subject expertise. All exam papers were approved by externals.”

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Dr C B Turner
Director of Student Services and Governance