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**Sent by email to [c.g.johnson@kent.ac.uk](mailto:c.g.johnson@kent.ac.uk)**

**10 November 2017**

Dear Dr Johnson,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for undergraduate programmes in the Cardiff School of Computer Science and Informatics.

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. Provision of more time in the first term for the preparation of student projects.
2. Variable average marks on a number of final year optional modules.
3. Your suggestion that consideration be given to examinations offering exams with a choice of questions to provide reassurance that choice of question does not excessively advantage/disadvantage students.
4. External Examiner consideration of second year student work.
5. Need for better evidence of how moderation has been carried out on exam scripts.
6. No default plagiarism detection system in use for student dissertations.

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

1. The School notes that in 2016-2017 some students selected and agreed projects with supervisors later than desirable. This year, all students have the opportunity to meet with potential supervisors and agree projects starting in Week 5 of the Autumn Semester which will allow more time for some preparatory work.
2. In preparation for Examining Boards, the School looks carefully at any disparity between students' performance on the various modules, and makes adjustments where it is evident that they have been disadvantaged. However, we acknowledge that it is desirable for the average marks on the various modules to be similar. At the end of 2016/17, the Director of Learning and Teaching and the School Manager met with each module leader to discuss students' performance across their assessments, identifying areas where improvement could be made for the coming year.
3. The School has noted this comment and will give it further consideration.
4. External Examiners were given information about 2nd year student performance. In advance of this year's Examining Boards the School will discuss with External Examiners any additional information and submissions they would like to have access to.
5. This will be addressed, in order to ensure that moderation annotations are consistently applied in future.
6. Projects range widely in nature, and a "one size fits all" approach to plagiarism detection is not necessarily appropriate. This will be considered further by the School Teaching Learning and Academic Quality Committee.

### **Additional Comment**

Your comment on the range of remedies available in cases of Extenuating Circumstances are set out clearly on the [Extenuating Circumstances webpages](#).

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### **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 particularly innovative Applied Software Engineering degree, which is taught in a largely project-based way and involves close interactions with the local software industry;
3. clear alignment of many assessments to the intended learning outcomes;
4. annotation of anonymous assessments with instructions relating to the consideration of special needs;

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5. high standard programmes that have, in a fast moving area, remained up to date;
- 6 the School's responsiveness of the School to your queries and support provided throughout the year and during your visit.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service 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 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