



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:	Dr John E. Goldring		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Manchester Metropolitan University		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Social Analytics and Social Sciences		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016/17	Date of Report:	11/07/2017

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 my first year as external at Cardiff and the standards of modules I examined within the programme are excellent and adhere to the benchmark set out in the frameworks for higher education. I was impressed by the breathe and depth of what students were able to study. I particularly like how the programme has a variety of traditional units such as Social Theory and Dissertation.

Curriculum design is very current and there is evidence of an Engaged Curriculum with students given the opportunity to study/learn outside the classroom such as the module Real World Research with a placement. Being able to carry out research in an organisational setting not only provides opportunity to apply their learning in a real life setting, it also helps develop the type of soft skills that will assist their career readiness and ability to function as a graduate. There is evidence of other employability type skills being embedded throughout the curriculum and assessment e.g. presentations, groups work, reflective research reports.

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

The academic standards of the modules I examined are comparable to others HEIs and the Manchester Metropolitan University. The programme provides good opportunity for students to study traditional sociological issues while also engaging with more contemporary issues such as collecting empirical data online.

It is good to see a commitment to social research methods allowing students to experience both qualitative and quantitative. Across the sector, there seems to be a discourse of embedding methods into other units which in my view reduces the student experience of collecting and manipulating data. As a Q-Step centre, this is good practice and comparable to other HEIs across the sector.

Assessment marks are fair and the standards are comparable within same band and sufficiently different from the band below or above.

The exam board was very well run and on the whole provided opportunity to explore and apply the appropriate regulations to the more complex cases. However, while there is a commitment to reading out every students' name/results, I would suggest the time could be better spent focusing on more discussion of complex cases such the situation arise. This could make the exam board more engaging for staff.

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

The work I saw indicated a high standard of teaching and learning had taken place on the different modules. Students were clearly engaged and understood what was expected of them and there was some very good work at the top end. This in turn was rewarded appropriately as markers made full use of marks, especially in the higher range. There was clear evidence of constructive alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the assignments. Further, the learning outcomes were included in each of the module handbooks. This is good practice and supports the development of the institutional habitus needed to succeed in HE.

The feedback that I saw was supportive and also gave students a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of their work. In most cases, there was a good balance between feedback on the piece itself and practical advice for future work. The four level 5 units I examined were equally taxing in different ways. For some there are assignments followed the traditional essay or portfolio formats (Social Theory and Social Research Methods). Knowing the Social Word and Real World Research used a variety of alternative approaches to assess learning which includes and in class test (which appeared quite taxing), group research report, poster presentations and reflective report. This mixed of assignment is noteworthy and should place high demands on students while also keeping them interested in their studies.

It was good to see the higher range of marks used. However, I would suggest that the lower end of marking also be used. I did not see much evidence of marking in the 30 to 40 range. However, I acknowledge that this could be problematic in that students are working hard to achieve high marks, it is therefore likely that they will. Perhaps this could be explored?

i also noted on the Social Theory scripts that one student received a low mark for writing half a paragraphs whereas a different student with similar content received no

marks. Could advice be developed that supports tutors consistency when marking exam scripts that has little content. I note that there is a comprehensive information sheet for marking but this is not included.

Marking specifics:

The Social Theory Exam Scripts had no visible marks on the papers I was given. However, feedback was provided for each student on the Learning Central. This is to be commended, especially as the comments were typed and so much easier to read than when written by hand. I would however suggest that markers are encouraged to provide some indication that the work has been seen and marked, perhaps just some appropriately placed ticks and a few words of encouragement/advice on future performance. This is suggested in the Marking Information Sheet so students can request to read their script.

The essay assignments adhered to the Learning Outcomes and the essay questions would test the students' ability to combine their understanding of the key issues. It is also noteworthy that a detailed plan was provided what spelt out how students could address the question detailing the markers expectations. Scaffolding at this level is vital and good to see.

Social Research Methods: The portfolio assignment approach is appropriate to a methods module. It offers a weekly schedule of work can encourage attendance and engagement. Students can see their learning journey in real time rather than having to submit an essay and wait for a mark so each week scaffolds the next. The incremental aspect of the assessment would stretch the better able student while still allowing all students who engaged with the module to pass this work. I particularly like a methods modules that explores both quantitative and qualitative approaches and this unit did this extremely well. One thing I noted was the seemingly high number of students who did not pass this on first attempt (or did not submit). I am not sure if this was an artefact of it being a large student (so having similar numbers needing to retake the assignment) or is there a higher percentage of students needing to resit. As methods modules can be disliked by students, it might be worth checking if this is the case and if so, explore strategies that will support all students submit their work on time.

Real World Research: the assignment approach is very good and offers students a realistic opportunity to report research (poster presentation) and explore the process of carrying out research in a real world setting by producing a reflective report. Having listened to a selection of the presentations and seen the posters, it is clear why the students received the high marks. The feedback on both elements of the module is excellent and will support students as they progress on their learning journey. The feedback on the reflective accounts runs throughout the reports as well as providing an overall narrative of the assignment. One student was late submitting their presentation and had their marks lowered. Is this in line with university regulations? As I was still learning to navigate Learning Central, I was unable to find the marking criteria for the presentation.

Knowing the Social World – Online Offline. In class test and group research report. These are appropriate for the module and it is nice to see such an interesting and taxing in class test where students have to engage with statistical formula. Moreover, in class test did not just test the ability to do statistical analysis but also focused on developing/demonstrating statistical literacy with some of the questions.

I also like the style of report that gave students a sense of urgency in that it was needed for the ONS with quick turnaround. Students had to work in groups to produce the work. Which can be an issue in that their marks are tied to the effort of their colleagues. However, the employability skills that are developed by doing this make it a worthwhile endeavour.

Dissertation: This is a standard format – 40 credit level 6 (3rd year) independent study. The examples I saw were comparable to those I mark at the MMU. It was good to see the full range of marks used, especially at the higher end. One of the pieces of research I marked received 92% with seemingly extra marks being awarded for the creative approach taken. While I thought 92% was a little on the high side, I could also make a case for it being so high. Importantly, the standard of work was vastly superior to the other dissertations which received in the 2.1 and 2.2 range.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Previous comments indicate that the exam board is conducted fairly and professionally. This continues to be the case. The regulations are applied consistently and members of staff at the exam board are given the opportunity to explore areas of ambiguity where appropriate. I would prefer to have more time to explore the complex cases rather than read out all the students names.

One area raised last year was to encourage moderator reports. This was evident this year with all modules I examined providing moderator reports.

The issue of receiving assessments either on Learning Central or in paper form was raised. This seems to have been resolved in that I was given the option of how I wanted to view the work.

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)

It was useful to meet with module leaders prior to the exam boards. It was not possible to meet with them all due to vacations. Perhaps it would be useful to have a phone or Skype call if face to face meeting cannot be arrange. It was however, good that a colleague stepped in and provided an opportunity to discuss the units.

There was an issue with Learning Central in that it was not possible to see much content of each module. This was a glitch that was cleared up on the Monday of the board (which met on Tuesday and Wednesday). It might be useful to have a system set in place that checks new examiners are able to access the necessary information several weeks before the board. This might also support all external examiners in that they are made aware of when content is available and ready to examine.

On the whole, the supporting information I have seen is of a high standard. The modules I examined all provide student handbooks and module outlines. Embedded within are evidence of some exceptional pedagogy that supports and scaffolds student learning and manages their expectations. The generic SocSi assessment handbooks for both levels were very detailed. I was unaware of a programme

handbook other than that which detailed the different units that can be taken in each programme. If this is the programme handbook, it might be useful to have a little more information directed at the student experience at that particular level. For example, the current graduating 3rd year student are the 'Class of 2017'. Calling their handbook something along this line makes it more student friendly and approachable. It is then also a celebration of their journey.

I was appointed late meaning that I did not get chance to review the essay/exam questions (as noted in 8.2).

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

There is evidence of a good deal of noteworthy practice. In general, the moderation process stands out. Often, moderation can become a process of second marking which could advantage or disadvantage those scripts which are seen. However, on the whole the regulations were adhered to with individual marks not being changed at the behest of the moderator while the range of marks were explored and amended where necessary. The range of assessment type is also noteworthy with particular attention being paid to employability skills.

Looking at some specifics:

- **Social Theory.** This module was underpinned with some extremely good pedagogic practice. The essay questions were well written and I suspect many students would find them taxing. However, there were supplemented with high quality signposting that should scaffold the students' endeavours. The multiple choice tests was a good strategy to encouraged engagement and attendance.
- **Real World Research with Placement.** Taking learning outside the classroom has many advantages and can keep students motivated in their own learning. This module was placement based with the assignment being a poster presentation and reflective summary of their time in the organisation. The quality of work was standout with one student receiving 100% for their poster (which was well deserved).
- **Knowing the Social World – Online Offline.** This had good assignments that used traditional exam/class test and research report. I like the urgency embedded into the latter by providing a scenario that it was commissioned by the ONS and was needed quickly. This has an element of employability embedded in it via it being something that happens in the world of work. A small but noteworthy point in the age of fake news was a small but meaningful comment in the handbook stating a commitment to 'informed use to the World Wide Web.

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

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?	x		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			x
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		x	
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			x
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			x
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?	x		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	x		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	x		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	x		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	x		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	x		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	x		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	x		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			x
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	x		
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	x		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	x		

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?	x		
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?			x
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			x
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			x
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?			x
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			x
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			x
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			x
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			x
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			x
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

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