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Sent by email to d.wiggins@ucl.ac.uk

28 July 2017

Dear Professor Wiggins,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MSc/Diploma in Social Science Research Methods and Pathways.

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. The need to increase the time available to external examiners to consider sampled work.
2. The adequacy of opportunities given to the external examiner to discuss the Programme with the Examining Board and its officers.
3. Comments and suggestions on the extent of integration of methods theory substance in students' work, including your recommendation for the wider adoption of the statistical analysis package 'R.'
4. Your request for a standardisation of the inclusion of moderators' reports on assessment for each module on the programme, the provision of data on grade distributions in each module and individual 'student mark profiles' to accompany dissertations.

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

1. External Examiners are expected to be given remote access to 'Learning Central', the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for the programme and this will include access to both coursework and assessment comments made through 'Grademart', the on-line grading software included in the VLE, the moment they are assessed. This ought to dramatically improve the amount of time that external examiners will have to consult sampled work ahead of the relevant examination boards.
2. The Programme Director will investigate opportunities for scheduling time for the external examiners to meet module convenors either at the dissertation conference or in advance of the exam boards.
3. Your comments have been circulated for consideration by module convenors ahead of the 2017-2018 academic session.
4. The Programme Director will investigate the resource implications of these requests and related administrative support and these proposals will then be discussed at the next Board of Studies.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. clear and constructive feedback to students;
3. the support you have received from the programme administrator;
4. commendation of the 'Dissertation Conference' and the opportunities it afforded you to meet and talk with some of the students and staff.

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