



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

The completion of this Report is supported by *Annual Report Form – Guidance to External Examiners*. The Guidance and this Form are available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/rep/index.html>. Fee information and claim forms are available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/fees/index.html>.

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | For completion by External Examiner: | | |
| Name of External Examiner: | Professor StJohn Crean | | |
| Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner: | University of Central Lancashire | | |
| Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report: | 5 th BDS | | |
| Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report: | 2014-2015 | Date of Report: | 21 June 2015 |

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

Introduction

The examinations were held in University of Cardiff Dental School Monday to Wednesday. I was accommodated in a comfortable hotel in Cardiff city centre and each day took a taxi to and from the hotel to the University. We were taken to dinner each evening and each lunchtime received lunch within the Dental Hospital. As usual we were well looked after at all times. The administration and as well as the academic staff were very friendly and supportive and made the process as easy as it can be at this stressful time for everyone. I would offer a special note of thanks to Professor Shelia Oliver and Rhian for their support and willingness to explain issues of process and to make available material when required

On arrival we were given access to the current mark sheets for the examinations written elements, Short answer papers x 3, the research project and the marked case report. We were also given access to the marked written answers for all candidates and could correlate the mark sheets with the written evidence. We also saw the marking schemes employed for the various elements of the examination some of which are held on repository electronic data base.

The overall impression is that the examination process followed lines which were equitable with other institutions in which I have either worked or examined. I recognised the support provided by all the senior clinicians and academics in the process whilst balancing alongside the challenges of a heavy service commitment. The group were all engaged in the process once they were in place.

I felt the research projects were an example of good practice and represented a useful exercise to create an evidence based mind set in the student body.

I felt the exams ran smoothly and did not experience any significant operational issues during the three days, all ran to time in my experience and thus did not appear to disadvantage any of the students.

At completion we were invited to the examination board and allowed to observe the process. We were also allowed to provide feedback which I did on behalf of the external examiners.

Matters to be taken into consideration

This was my second time of examining and thus would like to make a number of comments which I feel the school should consider when looking to align the process with changes in modern day assessment and in the schools open aim to improve standardisation.

Written exams

I received the written exams in autumn of 2014. I was asked to comment and make suggestions. This, along with my fellow examiners I did and submitted them back to the University. Thus I was surprised that NONE of my suggestions were acknowledged and in line with my fellow examiners did not note any changes were taken up in the final exam paper. This is frustrating and would hope to see an improvement in feedback on the submitted comments. This is important because the biggest comment in the variability in the format of the questions. Some questions were asking for one word answers for 2 marks whilst others were asking for 4 answers for the same number of marks. Other variations ranged to 10 marks for one answer, inviting the candidate "to discuss" which in a short answer paper is unusual, especially when in other questions short single word answers were available. This is a challenge with such as large bank of questions but I would recommend that the format is standardised to ensure a fair comparison between the subject areas.

There was evidence of standard setting provided to the external examiners and I would see this as a vital part of the process if conclusions were to be drawn on an honours based degree system as operated within Cardiff. Was the pass mark Anghoff set?

I could also not see any evidence of psychometric analysis to see how the questions were performing. This is again a vital QA procedure for the examination to ensure it is doing what the School wants from the process. Thus it was interesting to note that the student could fail 7 out of 15 elements within each paper and yet still comfortably pass the assessment.

Research Projects

We were delighted to see the various research projects and thanked the team for access. The topics varied and again we were verbally assured that each assessor had been standardised in their marking, but we saw no evidence of that process.

I thought the marking scheme was complicated by having too many available grade points and the difference between each was not clear, e.g. good versus comprehensive? I would recommend these are simplified to reduce the subjective risk of variability.

Case Reports

I noted that the case report oral assessments had changed in line with last year's advice. They were shorter. But there was still the section "additional category" which every examiner I sat in with struggled to understand what it was providing. This should be removed as it serves no obvious purpose.

The most significant issue is however what this session actually bring to the assessment. This report has already been marked and having the student come and sit and read out the report with questions interjected did not seem to add anything more to the assessment process. The questions being asked by the examiners reflected their own speciality and thus each student underwent a different assessment making comparison difficult and in many cases unrelated to the case report. In essence these sessions were very variable and ended up as a case prompting rather than case report session.

I would ask the team to consider whether this element should be retained?

Unseen cases

The library of cases which Professor Oliver has put together is very impressive and the range of material is reflective of the clinical challenges in dentistry. However the overriding impression I was left with from sitting in all the sessions was the enormous variability each one of these cases provided as an assessment process for the students. Those even having the same case, were asked questions based upon the examiners specialist area and thus no one student underwent the same assessment. In many cases the questions did not even refer to the case presented because of lack of subject knowledge. Some cases students were allowed to just read from the sheets uninterrupted for a significant proportion of the oral, whilst others were interrupted straight away. This was compounded by the fact that as examiners admitted they had not been trained in the process, standardised and questions were made up once the case was presented to the examiner, only one examiner I saw had pre-prepared his questions but then no one else had commented on where the pass mark would be set. The default mark appeared to be 50% (2nd class degree for many of the examiners whereas the minimum pass mark (3rd Class) was supposed to be 40%.

Thus it is challenging to compare students' performances directly with each other with strong confidence levels and I would strongly suggest that;

- i) Drop the case report oral sessions
- ii) Have 3 unseen cases but ensure that students did the same 3 cases (e.g. adult, child, human disease based)
- iii) Prepare examiners by agreeing the questions and the answers. Make sure there is a recorded standard setting event and agreed marking schemes adhered to in pre exam marking practice.

- iv) Make sure students are kept isolated from each other one each day to prevent cross cohort noise.
- v) On different days cases could be changed but agreed to be at the same standard
- vi) Thus three oral events are maintained but standardisation becomes more manageable and allows a more accurate reflection of the student's performance.

Summary

Overall the standard of student being assessed was equal to that of other institutions with whom I have been involved. But I would expect that going forward Cardiff Dental School, recently voted number one for student experience would embrace the approach toward standardisation facing every institution across the UK. This would mean the head of the assessment process Dr Oliver would be allowed to focus on this role with reduced clinical input, otherwise the challenge may not be realised. The days of exam questions being based on a student's previous answer, whilst traditional and enjoyable, has had its day.

2. Academic Standards

Please see number 1. above

3. The Assessment Process

Please see number 1. above

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Please see number 1. above

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

Please see number 1. above

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Please see number 1. above

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

Please see number 1. above

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 | | | | |

| | | Yes (Y) | No (N) | N/A (N/A) |
|--|---|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 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 |

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE