



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Vin Ray		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	N/A		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	MA International Journalism		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-16	Date of Report:	10-7-16

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

### 1. Programme Structure

This MA International Journalism (MAIJ) programme justifiably enjoys an excellent reputation as one of the most respected journalism schools in the UK.

The structure of the course is well established and carries many benefits, among them:

- Students study a real breadth of subject matter, which provides an excellent grounding for a career in journalism.
- The course covers a huge amount of ground in a relatively short space of time.
- Students gain a thorough grounding and foundation through mandatory elements, whilst specialising through a range of optional pathways.
- Digital additions to all media are required, developing crucial mindsets for modern newsrooms.
- For a dissertation, students can choose between a piece of academic writing and a significant piece of journalism.

The short timeframe for the course and the international nature of it do present challenges:

- The course appears to struggle to determine the right balance between academic and vocational learning; between the theoretical and the practical.

- It's also clear that not speaking English as a first language is very challenging for some students.

## 2. Academic Standards

The course is in very good shape and that is in no small measure due to the considerable time, passion and effort the teaching staff put into their lectures and marking.

In addition:

- students are producing high class work;
- the marks are a fair reflection of the standard of work;
- the teaching, feedback and marking adhere to the highest academic standards.

## 3. The Assessment Process

- Across the various pathways the feedback accompanying the marks was excellent. The comments were not designed merely to justify the marks but to genuinely help students understand how they could improve and develop.
- The correlation between the tick boxes and the numerical mark did not always appear to be consistent. For example, two separate pieces in one module were marked 85 and 68, but with a variation of only one box. The difference in the numerical marks was entirely justified, but the overall marking might be challenged by some students if they compared marks and tick boxes.
- The marking of work *within* modules appeared to be entirely consistent, and tutors are not afraid to fail or mark down unsatisfactory work. However, it appeared from the work available that the marks for the multimedia pathway were consistently slightly higher. It is crucial that tutors consider their marking together to ensure consistency, not just within modules but *across* them.
- The second marking of the dissertations was very effective, with cogent arguments for adjusting marks up and [more often] down where appropriate.

In terms of assessing the consistency of marks it would be useful to see – in one place - a set of all the marks across the course, if such a thing exists.

## 4. Year-on-Year Comments

Last year's external examiner remarked:

*“While the practical modules currently include some digital elements, there is perhaps a case for embedding them more...”*

This appears to have been resolved in part by ensuring students translate their work from broadcast or print to digital. However, there is still room for giving students the fullest grasp of the many ways in which social media can be used as a newsgathering and publishing tool. It is vital the course leaders make sure that tutors are fully engaged with the latest apps, tools and techniques.

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

I was made to feel very welcome and the work was laid out in a very organized way for me to view.

One minor observation: between agreeing to the role and coming to Cardiff I had emails from eight different people. It might be better to channel these through the course leader – or at least think about how to streamline the process.

## **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

Cardiff's reputation as a leading journalism school is justified: the students' work is in the most part very impressive. The students appear to be diligent and committed with a clear grasp of what's required of them. There were many examples of exceptional work. Equally importantly, where their work fell short, the tutors gave them detailed reasons why.

Course leaders might consider whether there is enough discrete teaching in the following areas:

### ***Ethics and Values***

Some of the feedback on students' work considered ethical dilemmas, but the course might benefit from a more focused look at journalism ethics, the more so because many of the students will be returning to countries where the media is not as free as it is in the UK. For example, the EU referendum has raised significant questions around impartiality, objectivity, balance and fairness, the difference between personal opinion and professional judgement, and when a right of reply is justified. There are other areas of ethics, of course. What it means to report in the public interest, what are the limits of privacy, what constitutes a conflict of interest, anonymous sources and so on. These are issues that can be considered in theory and practice and from an academic and vocational perspective.

### ***Newsgathering and research techniques***

Journalists going into entry-level jobs are required to do lots of research, finding guests and interviewees. In relation to this course, this raises the question of whether the curriculum could specifically cover:

- *Social media as a Newsgathering tool* [hugely important and prevalent – finding interviewees, eye witnesses, case studies, breaking news]
- *Deep web research* [searching beyond Google]

Of course, adding elements to the course means removing elements too. Here, course leaders might ask whether the two 'Information Gathering' modules offer as much value to the students as the areas suggested above. Teaching ethics and values need not be at the expense of an academic or theoretical approach, if indeed that is a concern.

One smaller point on ***storytelling***:

Some of the TV pieces – long and short and dissertations – would be improved significantly by three storytelling principles: shorter sentences [an average of 16 words or fewer], more natural sound [as important as pictures] and effective scripting of pictures [complimenting the pictures and adding value to them]. If there was space [and if they don't exist already] for a lecture or two on the basics of great storytelling the students would benefit enormously.

## **7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

N/A.

## 9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	x		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	x		
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			x
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			x
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			x
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	x		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	x		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	x		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	x		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	x		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	x		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	x		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	x		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			x
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	x		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?		x	
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			x
9.19	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
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			x
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			x
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			x
<b>Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)</b>				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	x		
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?	X		
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?	X		
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?		x	
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			x
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			x
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			x

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

[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto: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:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE

#### **SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

# Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.