



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:	Martin Powell		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Birmingham		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Social Sciences (Social Policy) <i>Social Policy and Social Sciences modules (undergraduate programmes)</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-2016	Date of Report:	21 July 2016

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

Comments here largely follow previous years. I found the programme to be well structured, with considered core/ compulsory modules and a wide range of optional subjects. The individual modules clearly reflected recent scholarship in the area, including (which is always good to see) the work of the staff teaching the courses. There was a clear coherence to the programme and 'routes' were well considered. Although some progress has been made, I would still like to see a more common approach considered for two issues across modules. First, the degree of choice of both examination and coursework questions (choose x from y) varies significantly. Second, 'effort' in the form of a 'x word assignment' or a 'y hour examination' comprising a different percentage of contribution towards total marks varies.

2. Academic Standards

In my view, basic descriptive statistics (eg means/ medians/ standard deviations and coefficients of variation) that allow a comparison between modules should be available to the Examination Board.

My comments here are again similar to last year. On the whole, I feel that standards compare well to leading Universities in the UK, although I still have some concerns over marking being perhaps a little over generous at the 'bottom end', especially for truncated/ note form examination answers, and some coursework material with high similarity scores (Turnitin) was perhaps marked too generously. This is not a question of plagiarism, but of value-added. For example, a similarity score of 50%

suggests that half the essay is not the student's original work (eg quotations). I did have some concerns that some students with good marks (eg 2i) had higher similarity scores than I would have expected for such a mark.

I did not see many Dissertations this year. However, my concerns from last year remain: some elements of the 'literature review' ('pure' narrative; lacking structure) and 'qualitative analysis' (lack of discussion of coding: 'the following themes emerged.....') were disappointing (even from otherwise good students).

3. The Assessment Process

As usual, I found the assessment process was well carried out by internal markers. I remain impressed to see a variety of assessment methods, including a good balance between coursework and examinations. Internal markers clearly put a great deal of effort into the process, and the practice of having two markers for pieces of work is to be commended. However, the process of agreement/ moderation was a little variable. As External Examiner, I would IDEALLY like to see limited variation between internal markers. However, where there is a significant difference I would like to see a clear explanation of how the difference was resolved (ie not simply splitting the difference), While this was clear in some courses, in others I did not receive any 'moderation' material. In the case of one course, I appear to have been sent scripts that had not been moderated (ie difference between the scripts received by me, and sample with mark by marker and moderator). In my view, any penalties for over-length or lateness need to be clearly on reading lists (assessment section) and perhaps on the electronic system at the point of submission (perhaps 'I understand....') rather than only being buried away in the Handbook (which may not always be consulted for every assessment).

I still struggle to some extent with the new electronic marking system. The amount of 'within text' feedback varied between courses. I realise that this is very time consuming, but suggest that particular attention should be paid to 'fails' and to students with a high 2i (what do they need to do to push their future marks into a 1st?).

The administrative arrangements have not been as smooth this year compared to previous years. In particular, it has not always been fully clear (with the mixture of coursework and exam scripts) what work needed to be done at what time and via what system (eg via the problematic IT system). With the appointment of a number of new External Examiners next year, it is vital that arrangements are clear.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

As last year. I am impressed by the 'Institutional Report' which shows that the University takes External Examiners' comments seriously, and deals with them in a transparent fashion (even when you do not agree with me or vice versa). However, although there has clearly been a genuine attempt to consider these issues, some of my comments this year are similar to last year (see below!)

With the move towards a more mechanical approach to marks and the reduction of discretion by Examination Boards, you may wish to consider if the formal 'full meeting' Board over two days remains a good use of people's time. You could perhaps consider a smaller Board; or use External Examiner's time more in

discussion rather than simply noting a long list of marks that require no discussion/ action.

Finally, I am very pleased to note that new social policy appointments are being made, which will mean that the current small team may be under less pressure, and could increase both the variety of topics and approaches of teaching, and allow students to see some more 'faces'

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

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

As above, I remain impressed to see a variety of assessment methods, including a good balance between coursework and examinations, and the practice of having two markers for pieces of work is to be commended. Moreover, I am impressed by the 'Institutional Report' which shows that the University takes External Examiners' comments seriously, and deals with them in a transparent fashion.

7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)

N/A.

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

Over my term as External Examiner I have been very impressed with the high standards of the work that I have read and the commitment of the whole team involved in delivering the programme. The courses consist of a good range of material that is clearly well delivered, and show a good balance between modes of assessment. On the whole, the administrative arrangements have been excellent, and the Boards have run very smoothly. I have made some critical comments, and your considered responses to them illustrate a high level of openness and transparency. I am grateful for the welcome that you have given all the External Examiners. Finally, I am sure that my successor will inherit a programme that you can be proud of.

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)
Programme/Course Information				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			NA
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
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?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			NA
Sampling of Work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		

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

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:

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.