



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Patricia Hogwood		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Westminster		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BscEcon Single and Combined Politics/BscEcon European Union Studies/ BA Joint Politics (Cardiff School of European Languages, Translation and Politics)		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012-13	Date of Report:	04 October 2013

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

Overall, the structure and content of the programme are appropriate to its stated aims, learning outcomes and specification. Generally, curriculum provision is wide-ranging, of contemporary relevance and in line with developments in the field. It achieves a good balance between theoretical understanding and case study applications.

Module provision in my specialist area (European area studies and European Union studies) is heavily oriented towards structural and institutional politics. This traditional focus, while significant and of continuing relevance to the field, would benefit from diversification to link in with new influences in politics and IR writing, including, for example, international political economy, globalisation, international security, political sociology and political psychology.

If funding permits, the School would benefit from an appointment in the field of International Political Economy (Eurozone/global), which would enhance the existing curriculum considerably.

2. Academic Standards

The standards of the programme are comparable with similar programmes nationally. The School should be congratulated on the very high standards of student performance achieved in the cohorts I examined. Standards of tuition and evidenced student support (e.g. low percentage of fail grades, feedback on assessments) are consistent not only with national standards, but with the best standards and practice I have observed in the UK. Students achieved appropriate benchmark standards and in some cases exceeded them considerably.

3. The Assessment Process

Assessment methods:

Overall, the modules I have reviewed demonstrate an openness to new priorities in the HE sector concerning the integration of transferable and professional skills into the curriculum and some real innovation re learning and teaching. In particular, the new module EU9387 Elections in the UK combines academic integrity (learning outcomes pertaining to analytical competence in the field) with professional training in a skills set (the design, conduct and implementation of opinion surveys) and teaching/assessment methods that encourage students' responsibility for their own learning and collaborative work in a team of peers. EU9388 Modern Welsh Politics offers a unique class with a professional orientation in a field of particular significance to the locality, thereby training a future generation of policy and opinion leaders with a commitment to Wales. EU9392 Personality and Power trains students in the use of a specific research resource (political biography), bringing a fresh approach to a traditional field (British politics) and promoting outstanding scholarship skills. Other modules are assessing students in more traditional ways that feature the learning of empirical material, awareness of the literature in the field, synthesis of sources, critical analytical skills and interpretation of political developments. These skills are central to student development and their retention in the overall assessment profile is essential.

I would like to raise a concern about the consistency of assessment workloads and the weightings of assessments between modules. Students in modules at the same progression level (level 5, level 6) have very different assessment workloads in different modules. The general expectations of assessment workload for modules at different levels should be addressed and reconciled at School level. Otherwise it might be possible for some students to graduate on a very much lighter assessment profile than others. This can be achieved in the form of a framework to ensure flexibility, by e.g. setting minimum and maximum word-length 'envelopes' for module assessments at each progression level; setting a maximum number of different assessments per module at each progression level, etc. Also, there are wide discrepancies in the module assessment weighting of the same two-question exam format, with final-year modules allocating between 50% and 80% of the module's final grade to this element of assessment. This degree of variation in the weighting of the same assessment format is of concern.

Marking scheme and second-marking:

I found the Politics Marking Criteria (December 2012), which specify that the marking of essays and examinations should normally be restricted to 3-6-9 for each decile

above 40, were applied consistently. While there is no doubt that second-marking procedures are being carried out assiduously, in some cases adequate documentation of these procedures was not made available. In particular, the School should ensure that: the standard guidelines for the documentation of second-marking procedures are implemented by all teaching staff; all feedback and scrutiny comments are provided in a legible (preferably typed) form; justification is provided to support an agreed mark between first and second markers where the original first- and second-markers' grades straddle a degree award boundary (e.g. 2:2/2:1).

Recommendations re assessment methods:

Modules with large numbers of students (e.g. EU9287 British Politics since 1945) or complex assessments (e.g. EU9387 Elections in the UK) need a little more time for second marking and external scrutiny but both were scheduled towards the end of the June exam diet, putting considerable pressure on the markers. Could the university authorities please schedule these earlier in the exam diet?

The University's plan to pilot online submission of coursework is to be commended. My own department has used online submission exclusively for the past two years, except for end-of-year exams. This mode of submission ensures legible feedback as this is typed onto the database; helps to ensure the timely and secure return of grades and feedback to students; stores grades for future reference; has radically improved student engagement with feedback; allows second markers and externals to deal with samples without delay; reduces the workload for the departmental office; and is environmentally friendly.

Procedure for the classification of awards:

The documentation of procedures for the classification of awards is detailed and clear. I was not able to attend the examining boards in June 2013 and the resit board in August 2013 and am therefore unable to comment on the application of these procedures on this occasion.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

I first expressed concerns in relation to the standardisation of documentation sent to external examiners in my report of 2010-11. These were addressed satisfactorily in 2011-12, but some problems (see above) resurfaced in 2012-13. However, it should be stressed that staff cooperated fully and in a timely manner in sending additional information I requested and I was able to carry out the scrutiny of modules to my satisfaction. It should also be noted that the School's handling of external examiner documentation was adversely affected this year by changes in administrative personnel and the problems experienced are expected to be rectified for 2013-14.

I did not raise any specific concerns in my report of 2011-12, so no response was needed from the School.

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

N/A

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

The modules I reviewed demonstrated exceptionally high levels of commitment to student development, particularly in relation to analytical and critical skills but increasingly also to transferable skills.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

My time in office has coincided with a period of innovation in the curriculum offered by the Cardiff School of European Languages, Translation and Politics. The range of modules offered has diversified considerably from a relatively narrow focus on normative political theory and European country studies/European Union to encompass new theoretical and empirical interests in IR, including international security and globalisation. This modernisation of the curriculum content has helped the School's teaching provision to keep pace with a fast-moving literature and real-world developments, and, given similar developments at other universities, to retain a competitive edge.

Likewise, innovation in the design of assessments has introduced a new focus on student attributes and transferable skills to complement and enhance the outstanding analytical skills taught under the more traditional programme that was in place when I took up my post. I would judge this to be the most significant development of my time in office, as the new skills incorporated into curriculum assessment will give students competitive advantages in the local (Wales policy community), national and international employment market. The School is aware that more can be done in this area, but the changes I have seen are far-reaching and positive.

I have observed consistent and outstanding commitment to teaching, reflected in student performance in every progression cohort and across the range of student ability. Failure rates are exceptionally low and are associated with factors other than the quality of teaching, such as health or other problems affecting individual students. Second-marking and scrutiny procedures have always been carried out scrupulously, but the School accepts that efforts need to be made to standardise the formats for the completion and documentation of such scrutiny procedures in order to guarantee transparency and a consistent audit record. Plans to pilot online submission through Turnitin are to be welcomed.

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?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
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?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	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				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?		N*	
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?		N	
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			N/A
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?	Y		
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?			N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

* Please see my comment on the late scheduling of examinations under Recommendations re assessment methods on p.3 above.

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