



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Sarah Waters		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Leeds		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA in French		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012/13	Date of Report:	1 July 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

I have been very impressed since the beginning of my appointment at Cardiff with the French programme. The BA programme offers an excellent range of research-led modules across French Studies, alongside specialist language teaching in written and oral French. It is commendable that students are offered such a diverse and interesting range of modules in literature, culture and politics. There is consistent emphasis throughout the programme on fostering both the language and the broader intellectual skills of the students. There are good processes in place for delivering feedback to students on the modules that I have seen.

2. Academic Standards

The programme maintains rigorous academic standards and the achievements of students in the final year are comparable to some of the best students in comparator institutions. I saw evidence of some outstanding work in the final year, both in terms of analytical depth on 'content' essays and idiomatic flair in French language, particularly in essay-writing.

3. The Assessment Process

The internal marking process is fair and meticulous with detailed comments by both internal markers and the use of marking sheets to standardise the awarding of marks. The volume and range of assessment is commensurate with the aims and learning outcomes of the programme. It is commendable that students at Cardiff are

assessed across such a range of language skills in French including translation, essay-writing and comprehension. Students in the final year might however be exposed to a wider range of text types, including texts of greater linguistic complexity, so that the use of journalistic passages is balanced by an exposure to historical and literary texts for translation purposes.

Exam boards were conducted with rigour and efficiency and I received samples of student work on time and with clear deadlines. I welcome the introduction of standardised university practices for managing students with extenuating circumstances, so that the existing university regulation at Cardiff of not accepting oral requests from students for extenuating circumstances is more systematically applied in exam boards and so that students are encouraged to request extenuating circumstances only in severe and exceptional cases and not as a routine practice.

During my period at Cardiff, the specification of the job of external examiner changed, in that the emphasis in the guidelines (in line with national quality assurance practices) has shifted away from assessing the performance of individual (and especially borderline) candidates to ensuring parity across modules, checking student cohorts and verifying that procedures are properly implemented. Given this change of role, it might be helpful if average marks on modules were made available across the French programme, so that external examiners could verify comparability of standards across different parts of the degree programme. Similarly, it would be helpful to have a sample of assessed work across the full range of marks on language modules (rather than solely at the top or bottom), so that overall performance levels can be verified. In accordance with university guidelines, I have focused my comments, during the course of the academic year, on students' overall performance on modules and I have not recommended changes of marks to a student's individual performance.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Colleagues at Cardiff have always been very receptive to any comments or suggestions that I have made. I am pleased to report that all the substantive recommendations I made during my period of office were implemented. I particularly applaud two changes. Firstly, the move to a paperless system in the exam boards which makes the exam process more efficient and transparent, as well as significantly reducing the amount of paper needed in advance of exam boards. Secondly, the change in the format of the oral exams from a prepared powerpoint presentation on a pre-selected topic, to the presentation of an unseen topic with a short preparation period beforehand. This new format ensures that students are developing their language skills across a wider range of lexical themes throughout the academic year and it also provides a better gauge of their language skills in the oral exam itself.

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

N/A

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

- The Cardiff-Bordeaux scheme provides students with a very unique programme and helps the French programme at Cardiff to stand out in relation to comparator institutions. There was evidence of some outstanding

work in the dissertations completed by final-year students on this programme with work, in some cases of a publishable standard.

- The assessment of French language across a diverse range of language skills incorporating translation, comprehension and essay-writing.
- Some excellent essay performance in exam conditions amongst final-year students on modules such as France and Africa.
- Rigorous and fair internal marking with an excellent use of marking sheets to justify and standardise marks.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience as external examiner at Cardiff and I think that the undergraduate French programme offers an excellent, diverse and intellectually-challenging set of modules. As the above comments suggest, in my view, the provision of French is on a par with the best institutions nationally and makes Cardiff an excellent institution in which to study French.

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