



Academic & Student Support Services
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Sent by email to j.goldring@mmu.ac.uk

18 September 2017

Dear Dr Goldring,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2016–2017

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the Social Analytics and Social Sciences modules on undergraduate programmes.

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

1. The Examining Board's commitment to reading out every students' name /results.
2. Development of advice to markers on the marking of exam scripts where answers have little content.
3. Encouragement for markers of Social Theory exam scripts provide some indication that the work has been seen and marked as suggested in the School's Marking Information Sheet.
4. Seemingly high failure rate on the Social Methods module.
5. Late submission of a submission leading to an adjustment of marks.
6. Technical difficulties regarding early External Examiner access to Learning Central.

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The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The arrangement to continue to read out every student's name when confirming their degree award was considered and re-confirmed by the exam board two years ago.
2. The School has noted your comments and it may be the case that the School can develop guidance for marking scripts with little content.
3. The School has noted your comments. The SOCSI Undergraduate Marking Information Sheet is regularly updated and circulated to all staff at the beginning of each academic year (and then throughout the year if there any updates). This includes various guidance about marking and feedback on examination scripts and coursework.
4. Colleagues in the School were really pleased to speak with you and to hear what you felt was working well with the module. You were particularly complementary about the portfolio that the students do in both the Autumn and Spring Semesters, and the School was pleased that you did not believe it to be too easy. The School feels that the percentage of fails was not incommensurate with the size of the module, particularly taking into account that it is a methods module. The School remains confident that it offers the students a range of support to ensure that they understand the assessment, and know what is expected of them in completing it.
5. The individual who handed in their poster late (which accounted for 50% of the poster presentation assignment, the other 50% coming from the actual presentation) was awarded a zero mark for this, in line with Cardiff University regulations and the student had no extenuating circumstances.
6. The School will endeavour to ensure that you have access to Learning Central earlier in the year.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. opportunities to carry out research in an organisational setting, to apply learning to a real life setting, helping the development of soft skills;
3. other employability skills embedded throughout the Programme curriculum and assessment methods;
4. constructive alignment between intended learning outcomes and assignments;
5. noteworthy mix of assignments, placing high demands on students while also keeping them interested in their studies;
6. provision of feedback to students via Learning Central;

7. student handbooks and module descriptions embedded with exceptional pedagogy that supports and scaffolds student learning and manages their expectations;

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

In order to meet the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar