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Sent via email to Professor Mike Holcombe

22 February 2019

Dear Professor Holcombe,

Re: Institutional Response - External Examiner Annual Report 2017/18

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for the School of Computer Science and Informatics BSc Computer Science programmes and BSc Applied Software Engineering programme.

Your report has been considered by the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

You highlighted the following issues in your report:

1. **Academic Standards:** The number of firsts awarded is of serious concern. Around 80% of students gained a 1st or 2-1.
2. **The Assessment Process:** Your observations that examination papers have become too easy, rather formulaic and lacking in challenge for most students.
3. **The Assessment Process:** Consideration of raising the 1st class borderline to 80% to produce more realistic results.
4. **The Assessment Process:** The use of anonymised lists at Examining Boards.

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The School has reviewed the issues raised and provided the following response:

- 1 & 2 Following the discussions and related comments raised at the Examining Board, and in order that we can remain confident in the standards of the degrees awarded for our Computer Science programmes and the Applied Software Engineering programme, we confirm that the School is reviewing the level, type and content of final year assessments.
The School's Teaching, Learning and Academic Quality Committee has convened a working group to look at these issues across all final year assessments; its membership includes the Director and Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching, the School Assessment and Feedback Lead, and final year tutors.
The working group has made good progress and has drafted guidelines for the setting of examinations, which includes information on the content of an examination, information for moderators, and marking criteria.
The working group is also considering a system of panel moderation for coursework and examination assessment to provide increased confidence in the consistency of coursework and examination level and quality.
The guidelines and the marking criteria will be made available to external examiners when they are asked to consider and comment on examination papers and other assessments which contribute to the classification of the degree.
3. The degree classification boundaries and the rules for classifying degrees are specified by the University's Academic Regulations and applied to all Bachelor degrees to ensure a consistent approach.
The University is contributing to the UK-wide consultation on the degree classification system, facilitated by the QAA, and we will consider the outcome of this consultation once published.
The action being taken to review the School marking criteria will ensure the clear definition of the standards for marks in each classification boundary. If there are issues with the appropriate calibration of degree boundaries, Examining Boards may consider taking remedial action by scaling. Advice on scaling is made available to Examining Boards to ensure a consistent University-wide approach.
4. I am pleased to confirm to you that Examining Board lists will be anonymised in future.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. the software engineering programme is very innovative and is highly commended.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and 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's [public information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar