

Academic & Student Support Services
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Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to s.findlow@keele.ac.uk

23 December 2015

Dear Dr Findlow,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the Doctor of Education (EdD).

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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. Your comments on sanctions applied to work in excess of the stated word limits and on the need for a transparent policy in this area;
2. Your comments on the use of categorical marking and observation of instances where it was not entirely clear on the basis of the comments provided how the marks were arrived at.

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

1. The EdD programme guidance generally, and module assessment guidance specifically, are explicit in stating the 10% ruling in relation to the word counts for module assignments. In accordance with this, programme practice is to deduct one categorical mark where an assignment word count exceeds 10% in addition to the prescribed word limit. This is made clear to students. However, Dr Findlow has examined a sample of the assignments submitted for the first module in the sequence of programme modules and in assessing these assignments some slight flexibility is demonstrated in order to offer encouragement to learners during the introductory phase of their studies. This is always accompanied by clear feedback to the effect that any future over-use of the 10% provision will be sanctioned as described.

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2. The Professional Doctorate programme uses categorical marking in accordance with School and University provisions for taught programmes generally. Your comment regarding the need for consistent coherence between assessor feedback and the mark awarded has been noted with thanks and all module markers will be reminded that feedback should always be directly commensurate with the mark awarded.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. Your particular commendation of the module aims for SIR023 providing a valuable addition to a largely qualitative research programme, and of the system of compulsory, formal 'draft' submission encouraging good writing practice;
3. Your further commendation of the feedback provided to students, of the course materials and of the conduct of the Examining Board.

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