



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Eoghan Mortell		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Working Word Public Relations		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	MA International Public Relations and Global Communications Management		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015/16	Date of Report:	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2016

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

### 1. Programme Structure

I'm content that the programme is well structured to achieve its stated aim, which is to equip and develop students to practice public relations at an international level. It gives students a strong grounding in the fundamental principles and theories of the profession while at the same time equipping them with practical tools and giving them ample opportunities to apply – or demonstrate the application of - core principles in professional/commercial situations. This is further underpinned and reinforced by the department's practice of linking learning outcomes with specific employability skills.

The different elements of the programme are complementary and mutually supportive. For example, given that sound research is at the heart of good evidence-based PR practice, it is beneficial that the programme provides students with a good foundation in research techniques at an early stage so that this skill can be a practical asset to them when addressing the remainder of the programme.

There is a valuable emphasis within the course on digital communications skills which reflects the increasing importance of online platforms in PR programmes, particularly international campaigns which cross many borders.

Programme content is relevant and up-to-date, underlining the excellent work of the team in ensuring that students are gaining knowledge and skills that will be of most use to them in starting their careers.

In my view the programme does meet the current standards required by professional bodies representing the PR industry; for example course content reflects the industry's growing emphasis on robust campaign evaluation.

One observation which I'd like to discuss with the course director is the fact that some of the core traditional skills, such as news development and press release writing, sit within a non-assessed part of the course. I would hope this doesn't in any way reduce the importance students place upon these indispensable skills.

## **2. Academic Standards**

As someone with an industry rather than an academic background I'm not in a position to provide comparative analysis of academic standards on the Cardiff MA programme. However my perception is that the standards are very high and rigorously upheld. They certainly provide an intellectual challenge of a level that future employers would expect to be imposed upon young professionals entering the world of PR. Indeed some of the coursework I have seen would already have a commercial value in that it provides insights and advice that would stand up to scrutiny in a 'real world' scenario.

The importance placed upon providing evidence for all conclusions is obvious, both in the marking and the feedback. Clearly students are encouraged to reference a wide range of credible sources when presenting their work and are also well rewarded for undertaking good quality primary research.

There is evidence also of the effective use of analytical tools and the setting of SMART objectives when responding to a brief set by course leaders.

One area which perhaps could be clearer is the extent to which the importance budgeting is emphasised to students. I noted that some otherwise excellent work was short on financial detail - eg applying a cost to the practitioner's time in a PR proposal – and this did not appear to have resulted in loss of marks.

## **3. The Assessment Process**

There was a good spread of marks across all submissions, and, from the scripts I reviewed, there appeared to be a rigorous but fair and consistent approach by the markers that could be easily mapped against the desired learning outcomes.

Feedback was detailed and constructive and I'm confident that students will have clearly understood why their work was marked at a particular level and would have had clear guidance on how to improve.

A point for further discussion may be the assessment of teamwork activity and how the marker can be sure the score awarded to teams accurately reflects the contribution of all members of the team concerned and not just the role of dominant individuals.

As indicated above I would also be interested to discuss whether the multi-platform component of the IPR theory module should be assessed rather than non-assessed, given that it contains such fundamental operational skills.

#### **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

Not applicable – first year as external examiner

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

I was given the opportunity in advance to speak face-to-face and individually with the module co-ordinators, each of whom explained the aims, objectives and structure of their module and allowed me to ask questions. This was very helpful for me in putting the various different parts of the programme into context.

I was provided with guidance notes on what is expected of an external examiner and supplied with easy-to-follow information on the programme overall and with detailed but accessible handbooks covering each module.

This was all provided in good time and assisted me greatly in preparing for my role.

#### **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

There were many examples of good practice on the course and a clear commitment by the director and team to continuous improvement.

I would draw attention to the following:

- Module handbooks not only highlighted desired learning outcomes but spelt out the associated employability skills – this is very helpful in keeping a focus on the ultimate aim of the course which is to make students functional in a PR role and lay the foundation for successful careers
- Early introduction of research skills so that these can assist the students as they progress through many different aspects of the course.
- Regular opportunities to hear speakers from industry in order for students to get valuable and current insights into how their new learning can be applied in a modern workplace.
- Strong focus on digital communications skills; particularly the requirement to deliver real world campaigns for real 'clients.' In addition to helping students apply their skills, this work has brought tangible benefits to businesses in Cardiff and has left a valuable legacy for the firms concerned after the students had completed their work.
- Very supportive and committed team, willing to adapt to the differing needs of students from multiple different countries

**7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)**

Not applicable

**8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

Not applicable

**9. Annual Report Checklist**

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		N	
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?		N	
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
9.19	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		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A
<b>Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)</b>				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto: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:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE

## **SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

# Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.