

## 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:	Dr Emma Uprichard		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Warwick		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Sociology <i>Sociology and Social Sciences modules on undergraduate programmes</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-16	Date of Report:	10 July 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

- The programme is excellent. Cardiff continues to adhere to the high quality standards that are expected by a Russell Group university set in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and international sociology subject benchmarks.
- I have said this in various ways before, but I say it and mean it again here: the degree is impressive in the way it brings together longstanding issues in Sociology (e.g. theory, work, methods, etc.) and newer social issues (digital methods etc.). This mixture of 'old' and 'new' is excellent and one that I think Cardiff can be very proud of.
- The degree is a forward-facing programme, driven by high quality teaching and research in core issues of the discipline, student experience and employability.

### 2. Academic Standards

- I am impressed by both the depth and breadth of the programme.
- There is a good coverage of 'core' modules as well as optional modules.
- Over the course of the degree, students gain an excellent grounding in sociology and are pushed to developed their own independent thinking on contemporary issues of sociological concern.
- The academic standards across the modules I saw were excellent.

- Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, medians and standard deviations) across modules would be good to have *ahead* of (instead of at) the board meeting.

### **3. The Assessment Process**

- The assessment process appears to be fair and rigorous.
- The exam board is conducted very fairly and professionally. I have been impressed with the ways in which rules and regulations are consistently applied and decisions seemed to be made sensibly and fairly.
- Moderator reports on all modules is strongly encouraged. Sometimes it wasn't clear how the marking between markers was conducted.

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

- The Chair of the board does an excellent job at 'holding the meeting', encouraging discussion, and explaining the university examination regulations.
- It is confusing to have some assessments on Learning Central and others not. Could this be made clearer at the beginning of the year maybe? E.g. along with a list of modules, assessments, could it be spelt out ahead of time what is expected to come electronically and what isn't. The mix is confusing and needs a bit more of an explicit set of guidelines.
- I have noticed that my previous comments to encourage markers to use the 80%-90%+ mark range for the best quality work has been followed by some markers. For consistency across the modules, it would be good if this was followed as a general principle across the programme rather simply to some modules.
- I worry a bit about modules that have 1500 word length pieces for 40% of the module mark – this is a very difficult length to do very well, even for professionals. That said,
- The role of the external seems at times redundant or tokenistic, since almost all decisions are made by the institutional regulations. Perhaps the externals could be sent more stats across the programme/s? Or asked to look at particular students across the whole degree? Something that provides a bit more of a 'story' about the programme as a whole whilst also getting the external to 'earn their corn' a little differently?

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

n/a

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

- I was especially impressed with the 'collective feedback and anonymised comments for individual work that went out to all students on the course. I hadn't seen this done before and I thought it was very innovative from a pedagogical perspective.

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

n/a

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

- Over the years I have been external at Cardiff, I have noticed the processes become more and more centralised, robust and top-down. On the whole, this has streamlined and benefited equity and standardisation. However, the motivation of staff seems to have decreased. Furthermore, efforts are placed to 'game the system', e.g. how can you creatively keep to a particular word length/component weighting whilst also appearing to keep within the rules? This is potentially a waste of expertise and will not necessarily lead to excellent student experience.
- Furthermore, one of the excellent aspects of this programme is the diversity in assessment. There is a real concern that harmonising word lengths for diverse assessments will unfairly dis/advantage particular kinds of assessments. For example, work that requires a lot of practical work even before anything can actually be written (e.g. quantitative analysis and empirical reports) needs to be recognised. Automatic word counts tend to count all words (and numbers) so expecting students to add up 'chunks' of prose and subtracted 'Table counts' or 'Figure Titles' etc. is problematic. I would encourage Cardiff to be reasonably flexible with these kinds of 'standardisations' in order to maintain the qualitative nuances between assessments that may be absolutely appropriate in terms of assessing specific learning outcomes in a fair and equitable way. After all, learning is demonstrated through more than merely achieving or not achieving to write to a particular word count.
- My overall impression of Cardiff's assessment processes is that they are regulated as a part of a 'big institutional machine'. At times, the centralised procedures can take away the human element of what universities are all about. At other times, though, the procedures create a real sense of 'institutional identity' which is excellent, robust and rigorous.
- One of the things that I have been impressed by throughout my time as external examiner is the sense that there is, in spite of the increasingly centralised procedures, a 'moral compass' at key points in the system. I think this 'moral compass' is superb and something that is core to practices at Cardiff and hope that it will continue to remain intrinsic to it in spite of the increased bureaucratization that is well underway in contemporary higher education more generally.

## 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?	Y		
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
<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		
<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?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		<b>Yes (Y)</b>	<b>No (N)</b>	<b>N/A (N/A)</b>
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	<b>Y</b>		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	<b>Y</b>		
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?	<b>Y</b>		
<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?		<b>N</b>	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			
<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?			<b>N/A</b>
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			

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.