

Academic & Student Support Services  
Academic Registrar  
Simon Wright LLB  
*Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr*  
*Cofrestrydd Academaidd*  
*Simon Wright LLB*



Sent by email to [chris.smith@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:chris.smith@rhul.ac.uk)

23 November 2015

Dear Professor Smith,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MSc International Management.

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 Highlighted:**

1. Your detailed concerns regarding the achievement of Chinese students on the Programme and suggestion that growth in student numbers be limited until systems are in place to ensure all students have a good chance of earning merit awards.

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

1. There are clear patterns of student progression and our current cohorts of international students have complex needs associated with various educational traditions and styles, as well as the challenges of engaging with new ideas and concepts through a second language. Without good listening, reading and writing skills in English, students do suffer detriment in and out of the classroom, and this explains the failure of our some of our students to gain marks in the Merit band or above.

As we move forward with the programme, maintaining a good level of staff and student experience is potentially put at risk by the pursuit of unsustainable growth. We have managed student expectations reasonably well in the taught modules thus far, but the challenges are growing – particularly during the dissertation phase – and will need to be addressed strategically by the School.

Cardiff University  
McKenzie House  
30-36 Newport Road  
Cardiff CF24 ODE  
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

*Prifysgol Caerdydd*  
*Tŷ McKenzie*  
*30-36 Heol Casnewydd*  
*Caerdydd CF24 ODE*  
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

To this end, a full report on the MSc IM Programme was prepared by the Programme Director and presented to the Dean, the Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching, the Head of the MEO Section in July 2015. The full report has been (and remains) subject to on-going discussion, and encompasses issues raised by the Programme Director and as well as including your comments as External Examiner. There is a need for strategic long-term decision making on student recruitment at IMG level, but for the coming year, it has been agreed that the following initiatives will be taken:

1. The School is piloting six study skills lectures as part of the timetable in the present year. They will focus on basic skills like essay writing, group work and the construction of academic argument. Each module has donated time for study skills content and it is being delivered during normal lecture sessions. The success / impact of the pilot will be reviewed in March 2016 with a view to either increasing or changing provision for future years, and considering how study skills tuition might be made credit bearing;
2. Detailed analysis of student progression in relation to IELTS entry standards alongside pre-sessional courses and term-time study skills coaching will continue this year;
3. A review of Phase Two of the Programme – research Plan and research Project - is underway.

**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 innovative use of new media, diverse forms of assessment and imaginative ways in which students are taught about international business and management.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Wright', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar