EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Alison Gow		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Trinity Mirror		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	Digital Journalism module		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	21.11.15

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

Students undertook a community project, incorporating a blog, multimedia tools, and social media, and from that write a feature that demonstrated their course learnings. There was a very broad spread of topics in the samples I received, which was great to see as it was obvious the students had been encouraged to explore areas they were interested in but with the wider audience in mind.

A great deal of thought had gone into the different types of communities available, from niche interest to geographic, and I felt I learned something from just about all of them.

It was also encouraging to see some negotiating the treacherous waters of Reddit successfully; Reddit can drive enormous traffic to news sites but is a tricky area to successfully navigate as a journalist, so it was excellent to see students had learned how to best to use it for research and promotion of their work.

I was also interested to see that one student found Facebook was a more suitable platform for him to move his conversations - this ties with what we, at Trinity Mirror, have found in our own experiences of social media tools for engagement; Twitter is generally more attractive for journalists, but Facebook drives greater traffic and encourages more debate and audience views.

At my company we are constantly training in how to do effectively use FB pages now, and any interview candidate with a good understanding of how to use it should find themselves at an advantage.

One student in particular had carried out highly detailed research into their chosen topic and the result was a richer, more rewarding community project, and a feature submission with more depth and breadth for the reader. Those who used data visualisations and multimedia content well in their feature managed to pack a lot more content into their submitted articles.

In terms of digital skills, from the sample I saw, students are well advised on how to use tools (Wordpress, for example is not the most intuitive blog-of-choice and so I'm always happy when interview candidates use it to showcase work- it says something about their training and approach to digital journalism).

They obviously listened carefully to the digital tools suggestions given and I liked the fact that other tools beyond, for example, Google Maps, were used for storytelling (Timeline.js, for example). An ability to jump to a different tool because the one you use most frequently is offline, or has closed, is something any journalist (particularly mobile journalists) have to get swiftly grasp.

As with the previous year, it was sad to see most of the students had discontinued their blogs once the coursework was completed; I cannot stress enough how favourably I would view a link to an active, engaging blog on a candidate's CV; it demonstrates their commitment to publishing, showcases their multimedia work, and is excellent practice for writing styles and forming coherent arguments on issues.

2. Academic Standards

There was a generally good standard of academic learning, especially literacy, in the samples I saw. As with previous years, the quality of the samples from this module are heartening to see. There is a lot of tough competition for journalism jobs now, but with as newsrooms expand their digital operations new roles are becoming available all the time, and the skills being taught here are very much in tune with what I would hope to see on a candidate's CV.

At least two of the feature samples submitted were of an immediately publishable quality. I believe this course is equipping students for real world newsrooms, rather than passing exams, and this is heartening for the future of our profession: We need people with these sort of skills in our newsrooms.

3. The Assessment Process

There was a rigorous, detailed and supportive assessment process; as with the previous year it was obvious students had been held to account where corner-cutting had been attempted! Also, there was a strong theme of encouragement to strive for more, and from the sample it was obvious which of those had listened and acted on the feedback.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

As with the previous year's sample, I was again struck by how rooted in reality the Cardiff course is. Whatever the aspirations of the students, they have developed skills that will put them ahead of many established journalists - particularly in regional newsrooms, I'm afraid to say. This is a course I have consistently recommended as an option to work experience students who are considering their next steps, and on the strength of this year's showing I will certainly continue to do so.

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

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

I believe this to be an excellent course, providing students with a toolkit that employers should value. This is a course I have consistently recommended as an option to work experience students who are considering their next steps, and on the strength of this year's showing I will certainly continue to do so.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		N	
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		

	Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Examining Board Meeting		N	
8.17 Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?			
8.18 Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			**N/A**
8.19 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?			**N/A**
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)			
8.20 Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			**N/A**
8.21 If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			**N/A**
8.22 Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			**N/A**

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

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

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Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE