

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



Sent by email to gary@fishdragon.com

12 August 2015

Dear Mr Merrill,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MA in International Journalism.

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 regarding embedding more digital elements into practical modules whilst considering exposing all students to broadcast, print and digital media in the first semester and then allowing them to specialise in the second;
2. Your observations that there may be a case for an academic module that takes a critical look at journalistic cultures by comparing, for example, the *modus operandi* of practitioners and news organisations in the UK, Europe, China, India, etc;

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

1. Digital is embedded in the programme across all modules, academic and practical, as we seek to match the mix of changing platforms in global journalism. Both print pathways are already digital first.

We plan to take this further with the switch from two separate print-dominated pathways – for magazine and newspaper – into one multimedia pathway which will span a wider range of formats and give greater prominence to multimedia skills such as shoot and edit, and data visualisation. This will make those students more versatile while allowing for some specialisation in the second semester.

Within broadcast, digital delivery is playing a more prominent role, but students there do have to master information gathering and storytelling techniques appropriate to professional radio and television output so the mix is different.

By providing separate strands throughout, digital can be embedded in ways appropriate to the priorities of the different output platforms.

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

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 ODE
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189
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Employability is essential to this vocationally-orientated MA, so it is important that all students can create work to the standard employers expect.

We keep a close watch on employment patterns of journalists globally and feel that recruiters do still want high-level specialist skills even at entry level. To achieve those within the two 20-credit modules is a challenge for us and the students so we are cautious about expecting students to master all skills to the same level. We will continue to monitor this mix within and between pathways so as to provide choices for our students and provide them with the best possible foundation for a career in international journalism.

2. As the MA International Journalism teaching team has developed, we have been able to embrace a more global approach and we can certainly take this further. Discussion of different journalistic cultures comes through not just within Information Gathering and Analysis but very much in the practical International News Production (INP) modules where aspiring and experienced journalists from more than 20 different countries work together. Global media monitoring by the students within these INP pathways also prompts much discussion of these varying cultures. There is a strong multinational element too within Foreign News Reporting which includes guest lectures from foreign correspondents, and in many of the optional modules, such as Reporting the Middle East.

We will continue to differentiate the programme with greater global content within existing modules, but we are not convinced that a separate module is warranted, especially if it were at the expense of the practical journalism which is the main attraction for the vast majority of our students. Input from the external is most welcome and our direction of travel is very similar as we make fine judgements about how best to serve our students.

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 positive comments stating that the module guides and the assignment briefs were comprehensive and unambiguous;
3. Student work was of a publishable quality.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and as this is your final year as External Examiner, we thank you for your continued support of the programme. We are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 Student Intranet 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.

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We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar