



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Ben Cocking		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Roehampton University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BA Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012-13	Date of Report:	11 th August 2013

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

It is clear from studying the programme aims and comparing them with the learning outcomes of the modules I examined that there is a strong and coherent relationship between the former and what students are actually engaging with on specific modules. Particularly impressive is the ways in which the programme appears to be developing creative and innovative connections between the theoretical, practical and professional (employability) aspects of the subject area.

2. Academic Standards

It is interesting to note my predecessor's comment that last year's cohort produced work of a particularly strong standard, higher than they had seen on similar programmes at other institutions. I would certainly agree with these observations only to add that last year's cohort seems to have been matched by another very strong performance from this year's cohort. In comparison with similar programmes at other institutions including my own, work produced at the upper end of the marking scale is particularly impressive. It is also very impressive to see that work at the other end of the marking scale, whilst of an appreciably lower standard, nonetheless, tends to demonstrate a level of engagement that is higher than I have seen on similar programmes elsewhere.

3. The Assessment Process

The programme makes use of a very broad range of assessment strategies. Across the modules I examined the assessments deployed were well designed and there was a clear relationship between learning outcomes and specific assessment criteria. This is reflected in students' coursework which shows they are engaging with a broad range of subject specific and transferable skills, from more traditionally academic research based ones, to practical and professional ones (such as designing blogs).

It is clear that the marking process is conducted very rigorously and is consistent both from module to module and in comparison with similar programmes at other institutions. Certainly, I found no issues in the marks awarded to the work I examined and it was clear to me how these marks had been derived. However, across the sample of work I looked at there seemed to be a mix of double marking and moderation being practised. On some work double markers had added comments (sometimes quite detailed) indicating how and why they agreed/disagreed with the first marker's grade. On other work an approach more akin to moderation seemed to have been used where it was noted that the mark was agreed. I am well aware of how time consuming double marking can become and certainly it should not turn into a process of 're-marking' work nor should it necessarily become an opportunity to provide additional feedback to students (over and above the first marker's comments). Nonetheless, it might be worth the team discussing this issue and arriving at a more consistent approach. Perhaps, given the size of the cohorts on the programme, moderation rather than double marking might be most appropriate? Certainly, it is very clear that discussions between first markers and second markers/moderators are taking place but perhaps this could be presented in a more consistent form.

A related, though minor, issue is the way in which typos and mistakes in referencing are factored into the marking. As I have noted elsewhere in this report the standard of work produced by students on this programme is exceptionally high, however, in looking at work across the marking range there were (entirely unsurprisingly) typos and mistakes in referencing. It would perhaps be worth the team discussing how this might be addressed more explicitly in the feedback given to students and the extent to which it is factored into the marking process. Clearly typos and mistakes in referencing need not have a particularly significant impact on the overall marks awarded to students. Nonetheless, it seems important to make students aware of these issues and the extent to which it is costing them marks – whether they are achieving marks in the low 40s or the 80s.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

This is my first year of appointment.

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

As noted above I found the practice of reviewing coursework on site to really beneficial. This process was very well organised.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Across the modules I examined I was particularly impressed by the high standard of feedback staff give in marking students work. Interestingly, a variety of formats of

feedback seem to be deployed. I really liked this approach in that it was clear staff were tailoring different forms feedback to suit particular assessments. This seems, on balance, a more effective approach than the more uniform one deployed at my own institution. The standard and form of the feedback given to students on the British Comedy module was really excellent. It was written in a very accessible way and felt like part of an on-going dialogue between the lecturer and students about their work and their academic progress more generally. Other approaches, such as assessment check lists, also seemed well designed and certainly give students a quick visual representation of how they are doing. In some cases assessment check lists with numbers (i.e., using numbers to indicate how students are performing across the assessment criteria) were used and they seemed to lack the more detailed written commentary of other forms of feedback. This is not a criticism or a point of concern but it might be worth the teaching team considering a “base line position” on what “feedback” should encapsulate. This might be an opportunity for sharing good practice amongst the team. It might also be worth discussing this issue with students to see what sorts of feedback they find most useful. It is clear though that overall staff put a great deal of effort into marking and giving feedback and clearly care a great deal about (and take pride in) the academic performance of their students.

In terms of the curriculum, the programme seems to be developing a very successful integration of theoretical, practical and professional (employability based) aspects of the subject area. In looking at similar programmes at other institutions, as well as my own experience of this at my own institution, this is a very difficult and complex thing to undertake. My impression is that JOMEC is drawing these different elements together in innovative, cohesive and creative ways. This is extremely commendable in that it puts graduates of this programme in a very strong position to gain employment in the media and related creative industries.

It is also very clear how the research interests of staff feed into their teaching. Again, this is something that can be very difficult to achieve without the programme losing coherence. Yet, JOMEC seems to be avoiding such problems and offering its students a very rich and varied range of modules. This gives the programme a very contemporary feel, one that is responding to and reflecting on the ways in which young people engage with the media and creative industries in the current economic climate.

The practice of not posting coursework out to external examiners but inviting them to review it on site is excellent. I was able to discuss observations with my fellow examiners as well as meet with many of the module leaders. This helped give a much clearer view of the programme as a whole and how it is managed. With this being my first year external examining at Cardiff, having contact with the other external examiners on the programme gave an invaluable insight into how the programme has developed year on year.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

N/A.

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/A
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
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		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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?	Y		
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