



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Mathew (Mat) Hughes		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Durham University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MSc Business Strategy and Entrepreneurship		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014-15	Date of Report:	19 June 2015

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

I am very pleased with the programme structure and appreciate that my prior observations about setting out a more clear strategy *and* entrepreneurship focus across modules and assessment have been accounted for in the previous year and again this year. This gives the programme its distinctive identity, differentiation and value. I also appreciate the institutional response provided in response to my previous comments. I know there is a passionate and professional team at place in Cardiff with the desire to take this course from strength to strength. I also feel the programme benefits from dedicated and professional academic and administrative teams. I hope the programme will continue to go from strength to strength.

2. Academic Standards

The academic standards of this programme are high and rigorously upheld. I appreciate that examiners and markers use the full range of marks available, rewarding excellence while being willing to maintain the necessary standards when those are not met.

I did note that in several cases, it was apparent in the assessments that students had simply not answered the questions or tasks set. I also came to the same conclusion while examining the works I received. Staff were right to allocate low marks in such instances as it is important for students to adapt their knowledge to demonstrate their understanding of the content to respond to the task at hand. Really good works genuinely were very good or excellent and rewarded accordingly. But in other cases, and somewhat too often at times, students missed out on marks

due to fundamental errors such as not answering the question or task set or failing to engage with and use academic content approximately. Having reviewed the questions/tasks set previously and having revisited them while marking, I believe the tasks and questions set were clear and capable of testing students to the appropriate level. While attending the Board I had an opportunity to review the statistics relating to each module. These were broadly in line with expectations. Concurrently, my assessment of the marking standards was positive and it was clear that internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent, the general standard and consistency of marking were appropriate, the material had largely been marked in such a way as to enable me to see the reasons for the award of given marks, and I was therefore satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners.

There are some instances where I would recommend improvements:

1. The standard of feedback was generally very high and I found annotated comments on exams to be very helpful to further offer guidance on why a mark was provided. This was not always present in exams and I would encourage some small notes to be made to facilitate second review and my own audit. About coursework, the standard of feedback varied but was generally great. The one situation I found a bit odd was the use of electronic systems (Grademark) to mark comments, and this did not always work well I felt. Still, on balance, staff offer good feedback and I'd encourage that practice to grow and continue.
2. In future, it would be helpful to record in some systematic way feedback/reasons given for scores relating to presentations.
3. Sometimes it was not always clear whether/how second marking had taken place, so perhaps brief comments and a signature to initials in all cases would help support that.

It is obvious to me that the module leaders and lecturers care about their modules and the standard of work students present, with several airing their frustration with how students had not addressed some of the tasks sufficiently in-depth or given them due credit. A notable example being how students offered little depth in response to the discussion questions on the Entrepreneurial Finance exam. Just because it is a numerical module in general does not mean abandoning good practice of critical discussion, use of content and referencing in response to such questions in the exam! I shared the module leader's frustration in seeing marks being needlessly lost while reviewing the material. I saw a similar pattern in Entrepreneurial Marketing wherein students simply did not address the question set or did so in superficial ways. Perhaps the programme team might want to consider signalling resources in the School/University on academic writing, revision etc. to students.

3. The Assessment Process

The assessments are well designed and appropriate to determining whether the learning aims of each module have been achieved and its outcomes arrived at. Also, as noted above, the questions and tasks set seem largely capable of differentiating between those who understand the content and those who merely memorise it. My views here therefore echo with my statements under section 2 above.

Universities are increasingly mindful to the dangers of over-assessing students but on balance I feel the practices on this programme are appropriate.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

I am satisfied with how the School and the programme team have responded to my comments in the past year and can 'see' the improvements in place and the benefits derived. The most obvious improvement for me was the module, 'Innovation Management'. Previously I was quite critical about its grading system but this year, under new leadership as I understand, that has not only been fixed but markedly improved.

Staff offer good feedback on the whole and show a great ownership of their modules and care for their students in their comments to me and from the feedback I see being given.

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

Not applicable.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

I find the short personal reports given to me by the leaders of some modules extremely helpful as it offers context to the marks allocated and how the module played out. This reflection is great. I don't believe it is standard practice and I don't think it needs to be but where it happens, I find it helpful. Again, it is one of those things that shows the care staff have, but not the only way by which I see it.

I would like to reiterate the importance of detailed, constructive and good quality feedback to students. As I have explained above, I am pleased with many aspects of this in terms of the assessments I saw, it is something that I would like to reemphasize for the benefit of the students now and in the future. The feedback given on the Leadership and Personal Development module for example was exemplary and extremely thorough, perhaps overly so, but no doubt of benefit to students. I think the practice across the programme is good (not always consistently thorough but on balance, good) and so would further encourage staff to keep up their good work and momentum in this respect.

I noted in the previous year that some further practical evidencing of second marking would help increase transparency and the perceived robustness of what is a good system in place at Cardiff. This certainly happened this time round but could perhaps be further evidences as I note in section 2 above.

The programme is dynamic, has a good mix of modules, delivered by staff who are excellent at what they do and clearly care for their modules and students. I would like to offer my thanks to everyone in that respect as well as the administrative team that support this.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

Not applicable.

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?	X		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		X	X
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	X		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	X		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	X		
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?	X		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	X		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	X		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	X		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	X		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	X		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	X		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	X		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	X		
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?	X		
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?			X
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			X

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

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:

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