



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof. Andrew ROTHWELL		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Swansea University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MA in Translation Studies		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012-13	Date of Report:	16 July 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

The programme is particularly innovative in that, in theory, students with any language pair can be accommodated, without the need to offer whole language-specific modules (general principles of translating particular types of text are taught to the whole group, before language-specific work with a tutor begins). Among other advantages, this academic design decision has the great merit of flexibility, and doubtless also aids student recruitment. It also provides an opportunity for students with language combinations which are rare in the UK to gain an MA qualification and training that many other programmes would be unable to provide.

The programme contents are organised according to two main strands: (1) theoretical/cultural/literary and (2) professional/specialised, corresponding respectively to an 'academic' and a 'training' pathway. This is in line with the MA's twin objectives of providing both a rigorous preparation for PhD work in Translation Studies, and a recognised entry point into the translation professions. My sense, after my first year of involvement with the programme, is that it achieves both these objectives quite successfully. However, it does appear to me that the 'academic' pathway (1) is perhaps a little dominant, and I would suggest that the programme team consider whether a little more flexibility of choice for students might help it to cater even more effectively for those primarily interested in pathway (2), and re-balance the programme slightly.

Part 1 of the programme currently contains 75 compulsory credits and only 45 optional ones (3 modules). There is quite a rich selection of Specialised Translation

options (six), of which students are only allowed at the moment to take two – a choice made even more difficult when they might want to gain expertise in translating from more than one foreign language. The third option must be chosen from a list of ‘cultural’ modules. My first suggestion would be that this requirement be relaxed so that students could have a free choice of options, allowing them to take entirely specialised or entirely ‘cultural’ modules, or a mixture (as at present). Secondly, I would suggest that consideration be given to discontinuing the 15-credit EUT402 All Languages Translation Class module in semester 2, the contents of which, though interesting, are neither particularly coherent internally, nor closely related to either of the two main pathways. This idea, which I have already discussed in outline with the Programme Director, would allow a fourth optional module to be taken instead, and would also restore a 60/60 balance between compulsory and optional modules. Finally, I would suggest a minor change to the syllabus of the foundational module EUT401 Theory of Translation, which at the moment concentrates on cultural/literary theories, to add one or more sessions on pragmatic Functionalist approaches (Skopos, text typologies etc.), which arguably have more professional application. This would also allow the introduction of some aspects of skopos, translation commission etc. into the exercises for the Specialised Translation modules.

While it is of course not within my remit to insist on any of these changes, I do think they can be made relatively easily and would have a useful effect of re-balancing what is already a very successful programme, to give more equal weight to the training pathway. This might in turn result in a more equal distribution between cultural/literary and pragmatic Dissertations / Annotated Translation Projects, a large majority of which at the moment are of the former type.

2. Academic Standards

The standards set in work I have seen this year have been high, and fully in line with both QAA descriptors for work at this level, and the standards of comparable programmes with which I have been involved as external examiner over many years. With rare exceptions, student achievement this year has been good to excellent, with some really outstanding work at the top end. This suggests highly skilled and committed teaching which deserves commendation here.

3. The Assessment Process

I found the assessment methods used across the MA to be appropriate, varied and well tailored to the type of module. The use of annotated portfolios as an alternative to the traditional essay, e.g. in EUT408 Subtitling, is commendable, as is the use of translation portfolios to assess the practical translation modules.

The assessment of the MA has been detailed, thorough, collaborative and fair, with clear criteria that are transparently applied (using a very helpful tick-box grid) and an assessment trail, including dialogue between markers, that is easy to follow. The quality of student feedback is also very high.

I have made a few comments on details of assessment procedure (rubrics, word limits etc.) in individual modules which do not need to be repeated here. In December 2012 I also made a preliminary report on the Dissertations and Annotated Translation Projects that I had been sent, with a number of recommendations for increasing the consistency of assessment practice. Again, I will not recapitulate them

here, but I hope consideration can be given to them when it comes to marking the new crop of projects this autumn.

The MA board that I attended in late June was well run, with appropriate consideration of individual cases, particularly in respect of special circumstances, which had been pre-assessed by a confidential committee and were not re-presented to the board, but which were allowed to play an appropriate role in the decision making.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

The final report last year made a number of observations and suggestions on which I might usefully comment here.

1. Much of the work she saw had been scanned and sent by email attachment, which she found helpful not least because it gave her more time (see 3, below). The work I received was all in hard copy, and in fact two parcels were delayed due to an error in the Swansea mailroom. I am always happy to see work electronically, although I appreciate that scanning exam scripts adds a significant administrative burden. It is easier to make essays and other electronically-originated work available online, via Blackboard, Dropbox etc., but for this to be useful it would need to have been assessed electronically as well. I would strongly recommend a move to this as standard practice, not just for the convenience of the external examiner, but because students receive more complete and timely feedback.
2. EUT411 Translation of Minority Languages – in some instances, there was a need for more evidence of consultation with a native speaker of the language in question. I was quite happy with the way it was done this year, but this does remain a key requirement for an MA where the range of languages that can be accommodated is so wide, with the consequential need to consult non-academic native speakers about translation quality.
3. Need for a second external examiner to cope with the workload, particularly at high-pressure points in the year, and also to cover more languages than a single person can be expected to do. Given the modern remit of the external examiner, to check processes and standards rather than to be a third assessor, I did not find either of these points to be a problem this year. My own other commitments put me under some time pressure, and this might be alleviated a little in future years by greater use of electronic transmission.

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

The documentation on the role and duties of the external examiner with which I was provided was admirably clear and cogent. Since I have extensive experience of the role in other universities, I found this quite sufficient by way of induction.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Let me start by commending the excellent organisational work and rapid and thoughtful responses of the Programme Director. She has picked up responsibility for a complex programme this year with admirable efficiency and gone to considerable lengths to facilitate my work and ensure that everything was presented clearly, accurately, and in a timely manner. I am also most grateful for her quick and

detailed answers to my queries, and her engagement with preliminary suggestions I have sent in as the work progressed.

The design of the practical translation modules, in which students of all languages together are given introductory presentations on the characteristics of specific types of text before they start their language-specific practical work, seems to me an innovative example of good practice from which other programmes could usefully learn.

EUT413 Training Placement seems to me an innovative and highly valuable module, acting as a bridge between academia and professional practice and enhancing student employability. I do wonder however whether 35 hours is long enough.

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?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
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		
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	
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