



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Jessica Davies		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	The Open University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	Certificate of Higher Education (Humanities and Law)		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012-2013	Date of Report:	07.08.2013

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 structure and content of the programme are entirely appropriate and constitute a varied and suitably wide-ranging and flexible curriculum for students. Careful consideration has been given to the range of subjects included in the programme and, where possible, progression is built in, either between courses within LEARN (as in Music, Philosophy and Creative Writing), or in the form of pathways to higher level study (as, for example, in History with *Exploring the Past*). This seems to me an excellent way of providing an opportunity for students who are interested in pursuing their studies further to do so with continuity of support and guidance.

The recent re-introduction of English Literature modules is a welcome addition to the Programme. Currently the modules offered are on the Victorian Novel and British and American Fiction, and it would be good to expand this range to include some poetry courses at some point in the future.

2. Academic Standards

The standards set for attainment are fully appropriate for qualifications at this level of study. In cases where external benchmarking is used in conjunction with LEARN assessment criteria, as in some of the music courses, the alignment works well.

The performance of students is consistent with that of students at the same level in similar programmes at other UK institutions I am familiar with. This is the case within the ranges of performance I saw in sample assessments; many of these samples were at the middle to higher end of the range, and it would be useful to see some further examples of lower end assessed work next time.

The structures in place at LEARN to ensure the adoption and maintenance of academic standards are very effective. In particular, the internal moderators' reports on each subject strand and their remarks on sample assignments, were invaluable to me in my first year as External Examiner.

3. The Assessment Process

The range of assessments for the Programme is obviously varied and designed to give students of different abilities a clear structure within which to learn and improve. The decision to move away from a single end of course assessment to a number of smaller-scale 'embedded' assessments seems to me to have a sound rationale, given the range of students and their varying reasons for studying. It has clearly been a successful strategy, as the number of students taking part in assessment increased by 8% last year.

Overall the teaching and feedback on assessments was of a very high standard. I was impressed with the professionalism and conscientiousness shown by the tutors in the assessment process; in most of the cases I saw the marking was fair and meticulous.

One feature of the assessment strategy I commented on was that of the relationship of Learning Outcomes to the assessment process. Specifically, I made the following observations:

- In general the number of Learning Outcomes could be reduced, while some modules are in need of some further discipline specific Learning Outcomes; for example, in the English Literature and Music history modules.
- It would be helpful to see a clearer relationship between Learning Outcomes and assessed work - and sometimes between assessment criteria and assessed work, as in the Music history modules. In one Historical Studies module, for example, the setting of Creative Writing assessments appeared inconsistent with the Learning Outcomes and the scope and nature of the discipline.
- The information in the Module Handbooks designed by tutors could be more consistent, so that a clear schedule of work is made available to students at the start of the module, together with a list of assessment tasks. It wasn't always clear to me what the assessments for each module were, as the Handbooks vary according to the tutor's approach in terms of its content and layout. While I am not suggesting uniformity of approach, the inclusion of certain key pieces of information (such as a list of assessments) would help students to plan and anticipate the stages of their study more easily. (Some exemplary Module Handbooks are commented on below in section 6).
- Clear progression between assessments is evident in some of the modules (Philosophy and Music Theory are two examples), and this is especially

helpful for enabling the staged development of skills; one of the assessment options in most modules is to write two short pieces (with varying rubrics) and conclude with a longer piece of writing. It seems sensible therefore to create assessments that allow students to practise skills in the early assessments that they are then able to consolidate in their final assessment.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

This is my first year as External Examiner.

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

The preparatory materials, including the External Examiner Handbook, Undergraduate Examining Handbook, Annual Assessment Report and other briefing documents were all made available to me in good time, and provided comprehensive information about the role of External Examiner and the University's policies and regulations.

The two Co-ordinators for the Humanities programme and the *Exploring the Past* pathway also provided me with a selection of material from the Autumn and Spring courses in advance of the Examination Board meeting; this included samples of student assessments, tutor feedback, module descriptions and tutor and student handbooks. This was invaluable and enabled me to spend the time needed to gain a clear sense of the Programme, its structure, teaching and students. I would recommend that advance provision of such sample materials become customary practice, as there is not enough time on the day of the Exam Board to assimilate all the necessary information and make informed judgements about it. The Co-ordinator for *Exploring the Past* also sent me examples of student feedback, and it would be helpful to see further samples of feedback from a range of other courses in the Programme.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

I commend the practice of three tutors whose Module Handbooks for 'An Introduction to the History of South Wales' and 'South Wales Miners', 'An Introduction to Modern Journalism' and 'Music Theory I and II' were excellent, both for their clarity and detail. The Internal Moderator for History commented on one of the Historical Studies Handbook cited above, and recommended that it could be adopted as an example of good practice. I fully endorse that recommendation.

I was impressed with the documentation for the *Exploring the Past* Pathway. The Student Handbook and the two sample Module Handbooks (for 'Archaeology' and 'Magic in the Ancient World') I saw were exemplary; accessible and encouraging, appealing and lively in tone and design, full of interesting detail for students, with clear information on the structure of the Pathway and its relationship to SHARE.

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	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			NA
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			NA
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			NA
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?			NA
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			NA
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			NA
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			NA
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			NA
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?			NA
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y (see 5 abov		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
		e)		
Examining Board Meeting				
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?			NA
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			NA
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			NA

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