



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Martin Conboy		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Sheffield		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MA Journalism, Media and Communication		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012/2013	Date of Report:	8 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

This is the second year that the programme has run as 'MA Journalism, Media and Communication'. This renaming had been done to clarify to prospective students the precise nature of the programme and to increase applications. The numbers on the programme have increased on last year and appear to be holding this upward trend into the next application round. However, the increasing numbers may have as much to do with the changing demographics of applicants as with the change of name. The renaming of the programme has had little impact on the content or delivery of the programme although the current programme leader has plans to introduce elements of a broader nature. In principle this is a good move, allowing for more contextualisation of the rapidly diversifying field of journalism as a part of social and media cultures. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the programme is at heart a Journalism Studies MA and one of its most attractive features is in its ability to offer practical activities to a wide range of students, including students from overseas. Many of the options are in name and in practice 'reporting' modules or a blend of theorisation and 'reporting' practice. It would be a shame if this existing strength were compromised by moving too quickly or radically given that the increase in recruitment is not necessarily predicated on a shift in the current provision. The programme provides a wide and rich context for studying journalism as part of the media and communications industries although the relationship of journalism to broader media and communication cultures may well be able to be enhanced. In doing so it may allow students to reflect further on the distinctiveness of journalism and the challenges it faces in the contemporary world. The content of the modules which make up the programme is, on the whole, extremely well rooted within

research expertise and there is a very high level of tutor expertise on display. Reading lists are up-to-date and encourage students to engage with the subject areas in topical fashion. There is clear guidance within all modules on preparation for the dissertation through reflections on and engagement with research methods. The students are exposed to the best and most contemporary thinking in the field, on the whole, and this is reflected in the work produced. High quality feedback of a formative nature enables students to continue to learn throughout the programme. There is a clear sense of continuity expressed through the tutors' feedback indicating that they all share an understanding of how students should progress.

2. Academic Standards

The work produced by the students is of a standard in excess of that characteristic of most UK universities. This reflects the level of live research activity which drives the content of the curriculum and the pedagogic excellence of the staff. Overall this is an extremely pleasing set of assessments. There is a blend of varied and challenging assessments on a series of modules designed to enable students to explore many of the issues relating to contemporary news media. There is a range of assessment strategies deployed, allowing students to take slightly different perspectives across the course of their studies. There is a good level of intervention by tutors and a consistently high level of engagement by module submission reviewers or second markers where appropriate. I look forward to the dissertation submissions towards the end of the year.

3. The Assessment Process

There was a range of different strategies for assessment and a good range of work presented as a sample for consideration. Still not all of the feedback was legible and not all of it was submitted on the general pro forma. Perhaps word-processing should be the norm for formative feedback

4. Year-on-Year Comments

On Media Law comments elicited from the second marker last year seem to have passed without action. Last year, the second marker's report pointed out the need, even the imperative for criteria to be published in the initial module guide since weaker students in particular would benefit from this level of transparency. Slightly more failure than one would expect at this level is testimony to this insight and it might be an idea to draw attention of the external examiner to changes which might effect this internal advice at an appropriate point in the future. See Enhancement below for comments this year.

Word-processing should be the norm for formative feedback and the pro-forma should be used on all module feedback without exception.

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

N/A

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

This was the first year that SIMS statistics were available allowing the external examiner an overview of recruitment patterns and achievement on individual modules year by year. This was very useful and provided some interesting food for thought. For instance, the average marks are up on last year but still rather dramatically down from the highs of 2010/2011. If this has something to do with the changing composition of the student cohort, I wonder what measures are in place at Cardiff to ensure the return to the previous expectations. There is a huge discrepancy between for instance Media Law and the new module Media, Activism and participation. Perhaps there needs to be some more specific attention to preparing students for modules where the marks are lower than average and a closer scrutiny by second markers of modules where the marks are exceeding the average by some distance.

This was the first year that I had been able to see such a wide range of work from across the optional modules. There was some excellent practice here. I was particularly pleased to see the integration of research and critical thinking with practical opportunities for assessment on International Relations for Journalists and Reporting Health and Science. The interventions into the portfolio work on the latter were exemplary and indicative as elsewhere on these option modules of the sustained quality in feedback available when students numbers are relatively low. The critical base to Insurgency into the Twentieth Century was also a commendable point.

Global Crisis Reporting provides not just a bibliography but a veritable running commentary on the various perspectives and trends of thought within the reading. This is an extraordinary contribution to the structuring of critical thinking for the students on the module. Given the note concerning the MA International Journalism students on this module who are not on a traditional 'academic' track, and that all students passed and passed well, I can only assume that the bibliography's structure is indicative of the energy that has gone into delivering a relevant research-driven module for these students. Well done module leader and module tutor!

The JOMEC guide to analytical features which is incorporated into several of the hybrid theory/practice modules is an excellent, concise guide and clearly assists the students in their preparation and delivery of this aspect of the assessment.

Introduction to Journalism Studies remains topical, full of vitality and provides an excellent up-to-date reading list well targeted at specific parts of the module. There is a good structure to the reading, divided as it is between 'required' and 'background'. The assessment tasks are very productive and there is a strong level of feedback from the marker

Media, Activism and Participation is a new module and as an indication of the new directions which the programme leader wishes to take the curriculum, highly promising.

Media Law – The second marker's comments highlight the need to emphasize the concentration on British law and the specialist nature of this module to overseas students. The second marker also highlights the need for full criteria-based feedback sheets to be completed especially where there is a need for students to improve

upon their initial assignment. The average mark on this module despite its low number of students is well below the average and this low point should not become the norm for the module in the future.

(ii) methods of enhancing consistency of marking;

On Introduction to Journalism Studies and Media, Activism and Participation there is work marked at Distinction level which has consistent language error. I think there is an urgent need to assess how language error by overseas students is assessed in relation to the overall quality of their work and in relation to language error in home students' work. Elsewhere, as in the published criteria, high levels of grammatical accuracy are expected from high level work and some module leaders make explicit in their comments that Distinction level work is 'polished'

(iii) explicitness of information relating to assessment;

There is no module handbook for Insurgency into the Twenty First Century. There did not appear to be any second marker's review of the marks on this module. Some comments are very, very brief. Guidance on writing includes a reference to the "recent bombings in Madrid". A clear and updated module handbook would allow me to ascertain how the students get from A to B.

(iv) other practice in the structure, delivery and assessment of the programme.

Overall second marker reports or module submission review demonstrated a robust and critical internal culture of review which is all the more reason why Insurgency into the Twenty First Century should have engaged in this process

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

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

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

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ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

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Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,
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