



Academic & Student Support Services  
Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr  
Registry  
Y Gofrestrfa  
Academic Registrar Cofrestryydd Academaidd  
Simon Wright LLB(Hons)

Cardiff University  
McKenzie House  
30-36 Newport Road  
Cardiff CF24 0DE  
Wales UK  
Tel please see below  
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4130  
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd  
Tŷ McKenzie  
30-36 Heol Casnewydd  
Caerdydd CF24 0DE  
Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig  
Ffôn gweler isod  
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4130  
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

Sent by email to [jennifer.birks@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:jennifer.birks@nottingham.ac.uk)

30 October 2020

Dear Dr Birks,

## Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2019/20

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for MA Journalism, Media and Communication.

Your report does not appear to raise any significant issues that require a more immediate response however, the School has been asked to address the following comments raised in your report:

- **Unfair practice:** I did note a range of responses to evidence of plagiarism and poor academic practice in coursework submissions. Students were reprimanded in feedback for a range of poor practice (perhaps through misunderstanding UK conventions, for instance) and suspected intentional deception, **but it's not clear how consistent penalties are imposed across that spectrum. It would be worth considering a consistent policy across the school to apply a specific penalty (such as a written warning, a percentage decrease, a mark of zero for the plagiarised material, or a mark of zero for the whole component) depending of the severity of the infraction and whether a prior offence has occurred.** It is also increasingly common practice to afford the student a hearing to allow them a right to reply and give mitigating explanations.
- **English Language support:** Following my suggestion, some markers did signpost explicitly to language support services in their feedback. **Others suggested a proof-reader but improving their written English skills would be preferable to paying someone to tidy their work up.**
- **Outline of the sample moderated:** On two modules there was **a very useful outline of the sample moderated, the moderator's comments, and the overall spread of marks.** I imagine this may have been more widely adopted without the pandemic placing marking schedules under pressure, but it would be good to see that best practice extended next year.



Registered Charity, no. 1136855  
Elusen Gofrestredig, rhif 1136855

- Lecture capture: there has been a reliance on full-length lecture capture, research suggests that students respond better to shorter sections of online video, perhaps with small tasks interspersed between lecture 'chunks'.
- Online learning tools: **I didn't seem to have access to seminar-type activities, which may have been undertaken synchronously through video-conferencing platforms, but a range of other tools can also enhance learning and facilitate collaboration asynchronously**, such as discussion forums, collaborative Padlets, or shared annotation of PDFs on MS Teams.

#### Academic misconduct

The University's [Academic Misconduct procedure](#) applies to students on taught programmes and explains what academic misconduct is, the procedure and the decisions. These are standardised for all Schools and should be applied in a consistent and equitable manner for all cases of academic misconduct.

I am confident that the Programme Team will endeavour to address the issues identified in your report and your comments will help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments, including:

1. Your positive comments regarding the programme structure, academic standards, and assessment process.
2. Standards have been maintained, even at the cost of failing some students who cannot meet them, and most markers are using the full range of marks into the high 70s and low 80s at the top end to properly recognise superlative work.
3. The assessments are appropriate to the learning outcomes and stretch the more able students appropriately. Marking criteria are very clear and prominently presented in module handbooks.

In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar