

## INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - MSc in Education

Dear Professor Paechter,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of Social Sciences (SOCSI) in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

### Issues Highlighted

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School.

1. **[3, first para] your perception of over-assessment, comments on a lack of consistency between credits and assessment lengths and related indication that "The practice of using a lot of shorter assignments in some modules possibly breaks things down too much for students as well as making it harder for them to prepare for the extended writing of the dissertation";**
2. **[3, second and third paras] your detailed comments and suggestions on the nature of feedback to students and on the varied format of "marksheets";**
3. **[3, fourth para] your comments on the length of assignments for one element of the programme falling short of stated margins and request for clarity on local protocols on this;**
4. **[3, fifth para] your detailed observations on protocols in cases of suspected plagiarism;**
5. **[3, final para] your concern about the ability of "an [identified] oral presentation" to differentiate between students and related comments on the presentation of CDs for moderation by External Examiners.**

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

1 *"In relation to the observation that in some 20 credit modules there is a 4000 word assessment, whereas in others there is a 3000 word assessment for 10 credits, all MSc Education modules are 20 credit modules have a 4000 word assessment. It is possible for a student to elect to take 10 credit modules in another programme, in this case the SSRM, where a 10 credit module has a 3000 word assessment. However, from the 2013-14 session all SSRM modules will be 20 credit modules and have a 4000 word assessment."*

2. *"Variation on mark sheets is most likely because some markers produce detailed typed written feedback which is appended to the pro-forma mark sheet. You may have been sent the text without the standard assessment form in some cases. We will sort this out in the future."*

3. *"In relation to Managing and Improving Learning in Schools and Classrooms the statement in the handbook that the assignment should be 4000-6000 words was an error. Student were informed of this error in the first week of the programme and given the corrected word count of 4000 words. This was conveyed to each student orally and by email, and each acknowledged the correction."*

4. *"There is a process for checking for cases of Plagiarism that is carried out at each assessment period. It can take time and sometimes the process will not have been finished by the time the scripts are sent to the external examiner. Unfortunately, this*

*might be unavoidable due to time pressures at exam time. Regrettably, on this occasion whilst the checking process initiated an investigation, we did not keep you informed of the situation. We endeavour to do so should a similar situation occur in future.*

5. *“The University has encouraged all schools to be more diverse in their assessment approaches, actively encouraging the use of smaller mini tasks including oral presentations as part of a module assessment. These can be weighted appropriately to contribute 15% or 20% of a 20 credit module. The key aim is to meet the learning outcomes. SIT121 employed 3 tasks this year, all were assessed out of 100% using M level 7 criteria but were weighted differentially [20%, 20% and 60% for essay] .*

*All student participants this year are qualified and experienced teachers /trainers so for the oral presentation task the marks allocated were high [based on oral skills, AVA/slides, NVC, content, timing, use of questions etc... ]. All students were briefed on the elements of assessment and these were explicit on the marking proforma feedback sheet. Thus it was possible to differentiate between the 4 students’ delivery and tabled material. [This is a well-established SOCSI assessment mode used with annual UG dissertation conference, whereby the student’s ORAL presentation is weighted at 20% of the dissertation module].*

*Unfortunately, the DVD recording of the 4 oral seminar talks made on a March evening 4-7pm was of a poor quality this year, and as a result difficult for the second marker and examiner to gauge students’ actual performance as experienced in real time . In future, a technician will be on hand to ensure better quality and to label discs clearly and accurately against the list of student numbers.*

*We note all of these points and will address them individually and collectively within the SOCSI masters’ programmes.”*

#### Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School’s provision including:

- a. **[1 and 3] your endorsement of the programme structure and indication that there “is a good range of imaginative assessment methods”;**
- b. **[2] your indications that “Academic standards are high, and comparable to equivalent to equivalent courses at high-status universities”.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

The University’s provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Mrs Jill Bedford  
Director of Registry and Academic Services