



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Clare Holdsworth		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Keele University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MSc Social Science Research Methods		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	17/11/2015

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 of the revised programme structure and it is working very well this year. Last year I raised issues about the tension between methods and substantive teaching and this was less evident this year, in part because the changes to the generic skills module have made assessment for this module seem less arbitrary. This tension is always going to exist for a methods training course and is one that the programme team have to bear in mind. However given the constraints of running a one-year training MA this is an exemplary programme and is exactly the kind of programme that meets the aims and ambitions of the ESRC social science training requirements.

2. Academic Standards

Academic standards achieved by almost all candidates are excellent. This year there were very few fail components in the individual modules and almost all students who had completed by the November Board were awarded either a Distinction or a Merit. Some students lost out on a distinction by very few marks and while there always has to be a cut off boundary, staff could be reminded of the need to be very transparent in awarding boundary marks, particularly 68 for dissertations.

3. The Assessment Process

I am very impressed by the detail of feedback given to students. I do wonder how much of a burden this is for staff. It might be worth asking students if they appreciate

the very detailed feedback all of the time, as staff are clearly spending a lot of time providing this, it might help those teaching on the modules if they had a clearer sense of how the feedback is being used.

I should also remind module coordinators about the importance of moderating and if in the process of moderations concerns are raised about marks at a particular boundary (eg 68/70 and 58/60) then all assessments at this mark should be reconsidered. It is still the case that marks are changed without all work at the same mark being reconsidered. However overall I am very impressed by the rigorous application of marking criteria.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

The changes that have been made to generic skills training appear to have worked more successfully this year. This is an excellent programme to take forward to the ESRC DTP recommissioning process and I hope it remains mostly unchanged as a result of this.

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

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Very detailed feedback on assessment which is both formative and summative. This programme works very well as an integrated Social Science Training Masters. It brings together staff from different disciplines across the School of Social Sciences. Students completing this MSc will have an excellent grounding for careers in social science research both within and outside of academia.

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?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
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?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
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/A
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

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