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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Karen Lury		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Glasgow		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BA in Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, BA in Journalism and Culture, BA in Journalism and Communications, BA in Media and Communications		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2019/20	Date of Report:	30.6.2020

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the dissertation stage Examining Board in the case of postgraduate Master's programmes).

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to: externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

As in previous years I was very impressed by the range of modules and the quality of students' work. There is evidently a very deep level of engagement in teaching by staff and students have very clear directions as to what is expected for each assessment.

The level of work achieved is surely testament to the efforts of students but also to teaching staff (both permanent and GTAs) in supporting students during this difficult period – this was particularly evident in terms of the dissertations I examined.

The only key limitation within the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic that I could see was that students' experienced a lack of access to physical resources

in the library and in a few instances, the inability to follow up in terms of audience work (both obstacles difficult to mitigate for other than some discretion in terms of marking.)

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

I was provided with details of the scaling policy and interventions (safety net) put in place in relation to the current Covid-19 pandemic. These appeared to be consistently applied across the student intake.

While I cannot comment on individual cases, overall the practice here reflected the kinds of intervention practiced at my own institution and I can confirm that they were applied with the best interests of the students.

There was perhaps some sense that there was a small rise in the number of 1st class degrees awarded (a trend also observed at my own institution) but I felt comfortable that this reflected the students' achievement not just over the last few months but more comprehensively over their studies.

2. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

All modules I moderated appeared to have been carefully and consistently marked with detailed feedback. Where work had been submitted and marked after the institution of lockdown provision, I felt that the standards had been maintained.

4. Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable) (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

Initial concerns I have had about the running/duration of the exam board have been addressed in subsequent years.

One issue that remains outstanding that I address again in my final comments relates to the question of textual analysis and the need for students to gain specific skills in this area.

I would also suggest that there needs to be a more definite plan put in place to have a holistic review of the programmes addressing issues of content overlap both within and between the different programmes on offer to students.

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

6. **Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

n/a

7. **Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement** (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

Examples of good practice:

Fashion Futures: this is a module I have examined before and had some reservations about. This year, however, I was really impressed with the quality of work and felt that the module had evidently communicated its aims/aspirations to this group of students very clearly. It was evident from the portfolio that the students would leave with a very good set of transferable skills. In addition, the sustainability/ethical aspect of the project were often very well presented and this focus perhaps provides a useful connection to the other critical work of the students in other modules which had previously been a particular concern of mine.

Two modules I had not examined before – **Reporting Conflict in the Civil Sphere** and **Birth and Death and Marriage in the Media**, were fascinating and innovative modules. Students (particularly in Reporting Conflict) produced some outstanding work and it was clear to see how these modules could also ‘reach out’ and interconnect with other modules available to the students in a way that would develop their ‘independent curiosity’. By this I mean that they served as prompts not just for the development of students’ independent study in their final year dissertation perhaps but a clear and long term ‘valued added’ of the programme itself (lifelong learning is perhaps the appropriate buzz word here).

Body/Image was also an interesting module, with some of the students’ presentations presenting some really lively and interesting analysis and evidently reflecting their own interests/passions, I particularly enjoyed the presentation on *Her* which was innovative (discussing the ‘absent’ body) and seemed to offer a really good plan for a dissertation length project.

Other modules, such as **Mediating Childhood** and **Media and Gender** I had seen before but I continue to be impressed by the detail and resources provided in terms of the course modules, the evident support for students in relation to these assignments and their encouragement of a ‘learning journey’ (that is assessment that takes place throughout the module in the form of seminar work.)

8. **Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)** (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

I have enjoyed my tenure as examiner at Cardiff and feel that the teaching staff work very hard to provide a very strong line up of modules for students, offering diverse assessments. I would also thank the administrative staff who have all worked very hard (this year in particular) to ensure that examiners have easy access to relevant samples.

9. Issues for Response

Points to consider

1. **Would it be possible to provide a clear and universally adopted template for the second markers' summary comments so that they all provide the same amount of information?** At present these vary a little from module to module. They really don't need to be extensive. As a suggestion perhaps they could always include:

- Number of scripts moderated/ confirmation of consistent marking in adherence to School guidelines (perhaps note for instance all those involved in the marking team – staff/GTA or adjunct staff).
- Reflection on achievement of students (best and weakest and how supported).
- Reflection on models of assessment used and how they relate to ILO of module
- Consideration of how module informs or adds value to different programme aims (in terms of learning outcomes/transferable skills) – this might help in terms of thinking up how to 'join up' the various modules undertaken by the students.

I would stress that this summary doesn't need to be extensive – each heading might only require a few lines at most but it might be helpful to staff and certainly to external examiners.

2. There remains a lack of confidence (at least in the modules I examined) in addressing the 'formal' properties of the various media interpreted and analysed by the students. While semiotics is sometimes referred to (in dissertations for example) images are often referred to as if their meaning can be 'taken for granted' and there is a sneaking suspicion that textual analysis is dangerously 'subjective'. Quantitative methodologies tend to dominate in dissertations and in the assessments I examined this year. This means - again in the modules I examined – there is little room or evident training in qualitative analysis. **Could there be more opportunity for students to develop their skills in textual analysis? And would the department consider future appointments in this area?**
3. Related to my point above – reflecting on my experience of the programmes offered by the school over the last few years I am really impressed by the students' political engagement, their sense of justice and skills in terms of assessing media bias. Yet questions of why/how audiences respond with 'pleasure' to texts, or questions of taste, learned understandings of 'beauty' or humour or 'cultural value' are not always confidently explored.

My point is that many students choose to do media because they 'enjoy' and find 'pleasure' from different media texts. Would it be possible to expand their horizons in terms of the media texts they are exposed to (national origin, older texts as well as contemporary media.) Could the teaching team consider what tools students might need to explore questions of taste/pleasure, and how the formal and affective properties of texts can also be understood critically (allowing students to continue and deepen their engagement with the programmes' key concerns with representation, gender, class and culture.) **Would staff consider introducing modules that offered students access to older media texts/historical studies of media?**