



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | For completion by External Examiner: | | |
| Name of External Examiner: | Professor Carrie Paechter | | |
| Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner: | Goldsmiths, University of London | | |
| Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report: | MSc Education | | |
| Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report: | 2012-13 | Date of Report: | 24 th June 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

The programme structure seems to be appropriate to the subject area. It is not entirely clear to me how this degree sits with the overall offer of the School, but as an offer in Education it is fine.

2. Academic Standards

Academic standards are high, and comparable to equivalent courses at high-status universities. There is considerable evidence of exacting and appropriate assessment. Some courses seem to have very few students, however, so it is not always possible to see a full range of marks.

3. The Assessment Process

There is a good range of imaginative assessment methods. However, I remain concerned that in some modules the students are over-assessed. It also seems rather odd that on some modules you can get 20 credits with a 4000-word essay, but have to produce 3000 words for 10 credits. 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.

Feedback on the marksheets is usually good and well-constructed to support the student, giving pointers for improvement even to high achievers. However, I remain

concerned that some of this feedback is hand-written and on occasion hard to read. This is particularly unfair on students whose mother tongue is written in a different script. While handwritten comment on the script represents good practice, formal feedback should be word-processed. Some examiners made no written comments at all on the scripts themselves. In my view there should be both comments directly on the script and detailed remarks on the marksheets.

The format of the marksheets varied considerably. Some simply left space for an examiner comment; others structured the feedback for the examiner. I think it is likely that the structured feedback would be more consistently helpful to the students than the open-ended format.

The handbook for Managing and Improving Learning in Schools and Classrooms states that the assignments should be 5000-6000 words. However, all the assignments that I was sent were only 4000 words, and students do not appear to have been penalised for this. I would be grateful if you could tell me what the true position is.

I was concerned that I was sent a script that appeared to have sections that had been plagiarised. I raised my suspicions of plagiarism with the programme secretary and was informed that this was already being looked into. If that was the case, I do not think it was appropriate to send me the script. Because it was not made clear that the student was already being investigated for plagiarism in this assignment (and, indeed, the marker's comments suggested that it was being overlooked), I spent a considerable amount of time checking this out for myself. The University presumably has a policy regarding whether scripts suspected of being plagiarised are sent to the external examiner; if they are, I think that the examiner should be informed of this, and possibly also supplied with the evidence. Sending out suspected plagiarised assignments without indicating to the examiner that this is the case, is likely to lead an alert examiner to draw the conclusion that the University is ignoring cases of plagiarism.

In the module Contemporary Developments in Equality Theory and Practice, students are encouraged to write from personal experience – and then one student was told in the feedback not to use the personal pronoun. This does not seem sensible.

I remain concerned about the ability of the oral presentation for Working and Learning in the Further Education and Post-Compulsory Sectors to differentiate between students. This year the marks ranged between 72 and 75. While this is a good activity, and could be used formatively, as a summative assessment tool it seems to be seriously problematic. Also, if you are going to send CDs containing film of these presentations to the external examiner, the clips themselves need to be labeled with the candidate numbers, so that the examiner knows whose presentation she or he is looking at. This was the one assignment which was not properly labelled or presented this year – but it was particularly bad: unlabelled recordings, student lists on scrappy pieces of paper.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

The programme continues to provide a good educational experience for students, with a range of assessment methods. I hope that the convenors will take my

comments on these modules forward in their preparation for the new version of the programme.

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

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

The interview analysis task for Working and Learning in the Further Education and Post-Compulsory Sectors was a very nice task.

The structured feedback on Sociology of Childhood assignments was an example of particularly good practice in this regard. Similarly, the personally-tailored feedback for Psychological Perspectives on Teaching and Learning, especially on Task One, was an example of good practice.

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

| | | Yes (Y) | No (N) | N/A (N/A) |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| 8.17 | Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting? | Autumn 2012 | | |
| 8.18 | Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction? | x | | |
| 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? | x | | |
| 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? | | | |
| 8.21 | If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees? | | | |
| 8.22 | Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules? | | | |

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