

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - BSc/MMath in Mathematics / BSc in Mathematics & its Applications / BSc in Mathematics, Operational Research & Statistics (Applied Mathematics)

Dear Dr Harlen,

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

"We would like to thank Dr Harlen for his comprehensive and constructive comments. The School responses to the points highlighted are given below.

- 1. [1] the External Examiner's indication that the "syllabus of the "Methods of Applied Mathematics" course could be reviewed to make this a more integrated course"**

The module concerned was one of the new 20 credit modules introduced for 2012-13 and as with all new modules, it will require some adjustments to get it in to its intended form. Both module leaders have been informed of these comments (similar comments were also received as part of the student feedback for the module) and some minor adjustments will be made for 2013-14. More significant changes to the syllabus similar to those outlined are planned for the following year. (Such changes could not be implemented in time for 2013-14 as the deadline for the confirmation of programmes had expired prior to the feedback being received).

- 2. [3, second para] the request for internal "examiners to consider setting slightly more challenging riders at the ends of questions" and related observations**

Examination papers are designed to allow students to demonstrate more advanced knowledge in particular parts of each question, although it is appreciated that this might need to be introduced more consistently across modules. How this might be achieved will be referred to the School Learning and Teaching Committee. It is also hoped that examination boards in the near future will allow for further discussions relating to such matters to take place in more detail.

- 3. [4, second para] comments on the "use of different models of assessment in the third year" and indication that "the need for consistency of the form of assessment between different modules should be considered further"**

Introducing uniform assessment across all modules has been discussed at length within the School. For example, adjustments have been made to ensure that the implementation of class tests is more unified. However, the general approach of the School Learning and Teaching committee (which reviews such matters) remains to consider the assessment of individual modules on a case by case basis. It is felt that in doing so, assessments can be set more accurately in-line with the learning outcomes of a module, and also the workloads of students and staff can be monitored more effectively."

Positive Comments

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

- a. **[1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;**
- b. **[3 and 6] your particular commendation of the "system of preparing and reviewing examination papers", of marking practices, of the School's assessment handbook and of "the use of [a] criteria-based marking framework to provide consistency in the assessment of projects".**

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