

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Biological Sciences
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Anatomy
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	Anatomy in Relation to Medicine
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	Intercalated B Med Sci.

Completed report

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Academic Quality and Standards**

Academic Quality and Standards Team
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards***Matters for Urgent Attention***

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

I note that my comments in the previous report were attended to.

For this year I can offer 3 suggestions

- 1) That students be reminded that the reference criteria for high marks in essays and reports include an exhortation to use diagrams and illustrations. The number of diagrams (even in good essays) is low.
- 2) That the convenor of the History of the Body 2 module be invited to the exam board and that more information from this excellent cross-faculty module be made available before the board meets.
- 3) That through my meeting with students it appears they prefer written feedback and a specific comment from one student about a staff member was that they found their

feedback illegible. Perhaps typed email feedback would be preferable where this is possible.

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

NA Final Year in Post

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

As an external examiner in the final year of a 4 year term supporting the intercalated degree I have been able to observe this provision throughout a period of profound change for the University of Leeds. The academic and ancillary staff have been reduced in number but have increased their levels of productivity. They have been innovative in their teaching and curriculum design and have been rewarded by the excellent achievement of their students who hold them in high regard. Amongst the brightest features is the recently introduced Learning and Teaching Module that is very popular with the intercalating medical students. This popularity is in part because these students are aware of the need to develop teaching skills to support future training functions. They have noted the life-long learning and Career Development cultures that have become very widely embedded in the NHS and wish to prepare for this. Also the ascendancy of Medical Education as a career option makes this a timely and appropriate addition for those planning to enter this area.

On my recent visit (19th and 20th June 2013) I was informed that the constitutional position of the provision is to change so that it will be administered by the Medical School. This makes the terminal report more important than usual as basic planning information will be very valuable to the new reporting line. Care should be taken to ensure the science and medical parts of the University continue to benefit from this most basic and important subject. This goal will be aided by good diplomacy, effective communication and cooperation at a high level.

One aspect of staff student ratio changes that has impacted on the ability to deliver at high quality levels is the lack of staff cover in key areas. The case of illness of a staff member

delivering the History of the Body Module some 2 years ago is perhaps usefully seen as a warning that when staff numbers reduce to extreme levels the system cannot respond without impairment of Quality. In my view the Anatomy provision, which has sustained a key recent resignation, is at the point where good recent innovation may be lost because of lack of support and where systems of value such as sabbatical leave (a means of spreading and importing good practice) are effectively being abandoned because of work-load pressure.

Regarding assessment I can state unequivocally that overall the marking and assessment has been carried out to modern national standards with careful internal and external scrutiny of proposed question papers, double marking of material and care over borderline case resolution. The latter are dealt with in great detail and there is good awareness of University of Leeds standard operating procedures amongst the examiners. The Exam Boards carry out their business in a transparent and professional manner with the clear aim of achieving the fairest possible outcome for the students.

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

- Suitable
- Suitable

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Although there is a benchmark for core anatomy appropriate to a first degree in Medicine this is a highly specialised module with rather unusual aims. No benchmark that I am aware of is available. It meets certain aims of the GMC itemised in the 2009 revision of “Tomorrows Doctors” that relate to development of skills in basic medical sciences.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

- Entirely appropriate, fair and transparent
- Exceptionally good

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

- Yes

- See below. Generally an exceptional group of students

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N.A.

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

The exceptionally high skill levels fostered in the dissecting room. Introduction of the use of highly sophisticated operating stereo-microscopes for detailed deep dissections relevant to neurosurgery show a progressive approach to this traditional subject.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

Student projects are based in current clinical need and the emerging literature as the dissections are planned to resolve debates regarding best options in specified clinical situations.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

Not formally but extensively informally.

The Examination/Assessment Process

9. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

- *Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Yes.

10. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes. Request for additional information on carry forward marks was responded to.

11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes.

12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes.

13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Very good match with student requests and academic value. Assessment was varied and apposite.

14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

The administrative arrangements made by academic and support staff were very good. I was able to attend the main exam board and a number of specialised meetings (see below). There was minor administrative disruption in March owing to a room booking clash.

15. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

These were dealt with at a meeting that preceded the exam board. It might be better for external examiners to have more information about the existence and if possible nature of the circumstances so that their recommendations are more relevant/ responsive and less formulaic.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

External Examiners Report on:

--

External Examiner:

Programme Area: **BSc Anatomy in Relation to Medicine**

Academic Year: **2012/13**

Date of Response: **28 August 2013**

Dear

Many thanks for your external examiner's report which has been forwarded to me by our Academic Quality and Standards Team (AQST). The programme team are delighted to find that you report that the design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards is entirely appropriate, fair and transparent. We are pleased to note that you state that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods are exceptionally good. In addition it is good to hear that you stated you were provided with adequate access to examination scripts, dissertations, and marking sheets of students sufficient for your work, and that although there are no national subject benchmarks for anatomy that you state it meets certain aims of the GMC itemised in the 2009 revision of "Tomorrow's Doctors" that relate to development of skills in basic medical sciences.

With respect to matters which you think require urgent attention:

1. *That students be reminded that the reference criteria for high marks in essays and reports include an exhortation to use diagrams and illustrations. The number of diagrams (even in good essays) is low.*

This information is provided to students in their Code of Practice on Assessments guide which is available on the VLE and at the introductory meeting delivered by the Programme Leader at the beginning of the year. In 2013/14 these points will be emphasised to a greater extent during the introductory meeting and reminders sent out prior to the examinations.

2. *That the convenor of the History of the Body 2 module be invited to the exam board and that more information from this excellent cross-faculty module be made available before the board meets.*

These points will be brought to the attention of the Chair of the BMS Examinations Board for consideration.

3. *That through my meeting with students it appears they prefer written feedback and a specific comment from one student about a staff member was that they found their feedback illegible. Perhaps typed email feedback would be preferable where this is possible.*

These points will be brought to the next Faculty Undergraduate Taught Student Education Committee which is scheduled for September, as feedback on exam questions will have been given by not only anatomy staff but others within BMS.

With respect to other comments made throughout your report:

4. **Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year**

The exceptionally high skill levels fostered in the dissecting room. Introduction of the use of highly sophisticated operating stereo-microscopes for detailed deep dissections relevant to neurosurgery show a progressive approach to this traditional subject.

Such projects which have been offered in the past will continue to be offered as the degree programme evolves on its transition to the Faculty of Medicine.

5. *Amongst the brightest features is the recently introduced Learning and Teaching Module that is very popular with the intercalating medical students. This popularity is in part because these students are aware of the need to develop teaching skills to support future training functions. They have noted the life-long learning and Career Development cultures that have become very widely embedded in the NHS and*

wish to prepare for this. Also the ascendancy of Medical Education as a career option makes this a timely and appropriate addition for those planning to enter this area.

Due to staffing changes this module will no longer be available on the BSc Anatomy in Relation to Medicine programme but it is hoped that a similar module could be offered to other students within the School of Biomedical Sciences (BMS) in the future who have an interest in developing their teaching skills. This however would be dependent on the BMS Programme Leaders expressing the need for such a module and also on finding a suitable member of staff with the appropriate interest to run it.

6. *On my recent visit (19th and 20th June 2013) I was informed that the constitutional position of the provision is to change so that it will be administered by the Medical School. Care should be taken to ensure the science and medical parts of the University continue to benefit from this most basic and important subject. This goal will be aided by good diplomacy, effective communication and cooperation at a high level.*

The anatomy team are now working closely with _____ who is Head of the new Section of Pathology, Anatomy and Tumour Biology and with others in the School of Medicine to design an exciting and innovative new degree programme, provisionally entitled the BSc Clinical Anatomy. This will be offered from 2014/15 and will build on the strengths of the anatomy team and colleagues within Medicine.

As you know the programme is a highly popular programme which draws applications from high numbers of well qualified students: as it transitions to the School of Medicine it is hoped to offer this degree programme to an increased number of students. Your comments and suggestions over the past four years have helped in shaping this degree programme into what it is and into how it will evolve.

Finally I would like to thank you on behalf of all of the staff associated with the anatomy degree programme for all of your valuable input as our external examiner for the past four years. We have appreciated the amount of time that you have put into this role and for all of your helpful suggestions and advice. We wish you all the best for the future.

Best wishes,

Programme Leader