

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: Biological Sciences	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s): Human Physiology	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BSc

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 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.

none

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?

I think so

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.

N/A

Standards

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.*

The structure and content of the programme and the methods and criteria for assessment appear entirely appropriate for the award.

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.*

In my experience the programme and ILOs are comparable to those at my own institution and at other Universities where I have examined in the UK.

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.*

There is a range of assessment methods, which appear to be entirely appropriate. I was particularly impressed by the efforts to equate assessment of library project with laboratory based projects by the requirement to include a project proposal in the former. This is a good discriminator, which tests original thought and evidence of deep and critical understanding of the scientific method.

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.*
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There is great scope in both the library and laboratory the projects for the best students to shine and many of them produced excellent pieces of work, which reflects well on their learning and teaching experience of the course.

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. 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 past year has been particularly turbulent in the history of the University of Leeds and indeed, other institutions in the UK, with the loss of key teaching and administrative staff. However, neither the students nor the course in Leeds appeared to have suffered. The restructuring of the course by introduction of the new the Advanced Topics module, has been a success. With one minor glitch, which was outside the organiser's control and is already being addressed, the new module appears to have run very smoothly and the quality of teaching and the student experience has not been compromised. For this, the remaining staff at Leeds should be commended.

7. 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.

I cannot offer any comment

The Examination Process

8. **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.*

I was provided with a comprehensive booklet on the role of the External Examiner. The examination process appeared completely transparent and I was given access to all the scripts and dissertations, spreadsheets of marks etc and importantly, help to navigate through them if required.

9. **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?**

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

I have been informed and invited to comment at all stages

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

Yes, I had access to all scripts. Work from candidates whose examination performance had placed them at the boundary between grades had been highlighted and the material prepared for me.

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

Very smooth running, administrative staff very helpful

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

Appropriate mitigation procedures were in place and requests had been considered prior to the Examination Board.

For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements

If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.

N/A

Other Comments

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

Overall my first year's experience of the examination system at the University of Leeds has been a very positive. In March I was invited to meet with students from all years of the course who had the opportunity to discuss their experience in an informal setting and raise any concerns. Their experience of both the staff and the course in general, was also very positive.

External Examiner:

Programme Area: **BSc Human Physiology**

Academic Year: **2010/11**

Date of Response: **19.07.2011**

Dear

Firstly, we are delighted to welcome you to Leeds as our External Examiner and thank you for your first programme report which we have read with interest. We were pleased to note that you found our degree programme and its associated intended learning outcomes compared well with those offered by other institutions in the UK where you have examined. Also, that the structure and content of the programme and the methods and criteria for assessment were appropriate for this award. Your positive comments in relation to the scope in both the extended library and laboratory projects that afforded our best students the opportunity 'to shine' are also noted and evidences the strong learning and teaching experience for students on this course. No areas of serious concern for urgent action were identified.

As you know from your discussions with staff and students, significant restructuring of our degree programme has been implemented on the back of recommendations from our Biomedical Curriculum Group. We have developed and introduced innovative ways to teach more students using fewer staff with a long term view to improved efficiency of teaching delivery. The modified curricula for Years 1 and 2 appear to have settled well although we continue to monitor their effectiveness and minor modifications have been introduced on the back of staff and student feedback. The 2010/2011 academic year saw the completion of our curriculum re-modelling and the introduction of level three Advanced Topics with a focus on cardiovascular, membrane and neurophysiology for Human Physiology students. As you point out, aside from some minor issues, the 'Advanced Topics' modules were well-received by our students. There was some negative student feedback concerning the quality and scope of some of the topics offered and these will be reviewed for 2011/12 academic year. The issue raised by some students concerning 'Human Physiology' content, or perceived lack thereof, has been discussed by academic staff and inclusion of additional advanced topics e.g. 'Reproduction and Fertility' will help but not fully correct this imbalance.

The BSc in Human Physiology continues to be a popular programme, and draws applications from high numbers of well qualified students. Moreover, Physiology provides key elements of other undergraduate programmes important to the faculty, such as Medical Sciences, Pharmacology, Neuroscience and Sports Science with Physiology. Thus the continued good health, vibrancy and distinctiveness of this degree programme are vital to the broader faculty goal of delivering world class research-led undergraduate teaching in biomedical sciences. I have no doubt that your input in the coming years will ensure that we deliver on these fronts and we look forward to working with you in future years.

Finally, on behalf of all the staff connected with the Human Physiology programme I would like to thank you for your input as our External Examiner.

Yours sincerely,

Programme Leader

Faculty of Biological Sciences

University of Leeds
Garstang Building
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

26 September 2011

Dear

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2010/11: BSc Human Physiology

Firstly many thanks for agreeing to act in the role of External Examiner for the Human Physiology degree programme and for your effort throughout the year - we are very grateful for your input and I'm pleased that you found our administrative and support processes efficient. It is great to see the hard work of staff reflected in the positive comments you have regarding the programme.

Concerning the issue with the Advanced Topics modules in final year about the equivalence/assessment of the individual component units, we are working hard to sort these issues for next session and are hopeful of success. May I take this opportunity to thank you for your input into the moderation procedure which made sure that students were not disadvantaged as a consequence of this issue. I am also very pleased you find the scope of final year research projects appropriate and that you favour the inclusion of the grant proposal as part of the library-based research projects - staff will be very encouraged by your comments.

also notes in response about the inclusion of additional advanced topics in conventional Human Physiology territory which will hopefully go some way to assuaging student concerns about the physiology content of the programme.

Thanks once again for your efforts during the year and I look forward to seeing you in April next year. If you have any queries, please let me know.

With best wishes,

Faculty Director of Undergraduate Student Education