

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

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

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>BSc Medical Sciences</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

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?

N/A

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 modules are well suited to this kind of degree programme, and their ILOs are entirely appropriate.

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.*

Medical Sciences degrees in the UK form a heterogeneous group (and in some cases are awarded as BMedSci). Notwithstanding this caveat, the overall programme at Leeds is comparable with similar and related programmes across the UK with which I am familiar, and it achieves national benchmarks.

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.*

A wide variety of assessment methods is employed, which is a positive feature of the programme. The marking is rigorous and fair, and in my opinion the classification borderlines are properly set. Mechanisms for double marking and moderating are transparent and sensible.

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.*

Examiners use the full range of marks available to them, thus providing every opportunity for students to properly demonstrate their academic potential. The research project in particular offers a vehicle for students to fully demonstrate their abilities, and there are many examples of excellent achievement. This particular student cohort demonstrated excellent academic abilities, with over 80% achieving class 2(1) or better.

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 advanced topics modules provide a wide range of subject material, which is further enhanced by the inclusion of topics from other schools (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology). SBS has now developed effective mechanisms to ensure consistency of marking standards across school boundaries. This was clearly evident from a detailed analysis of these module marks.

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.

The most obvious example of research led teaching is provided by the research project, and can be seen in both the laboratory and literature based projects. The advanced topics in medical sciences also clearly demonstrate research led teaching, which is fully evident from student examination answers.

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

N/A

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.*

I was provided with everything that I needed, and the roles and powers of external examiners were widely discussed on numerous occasions.

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.*

Everything necessary was provided.

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, I was provided with these, and had the opportunity for input into them. Their content, level and scope were appropriate.

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, all assessed work was available, with the exception of a module administered by a separate examination board. However, this did not impact significantly on my ability to evaluate the standard of student work. The scripts were clearly marked, and in the main, extensively annotated, which was very helpful. The marking/comment matrix for the research projects is particularly useful.

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

An extremely wide selection was provided for the students dissertations. These were assessed appropriately.

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?

As usual, the administrative procedures were excellent. I attended the board of examiners, which was operated fairly and effectively. Both the internal and external examiners had every opportunity to engage with all aspects of the process, which was completely transparent. The performance of all students with mitigating circumstances and/or borderline degree classes was discussed in detail. Treatment of these cases was consistent across all degree programmes covered by the BoE. I was fully satisfied with the board's operation and recommendations.

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

Yes (see 14)

Other comments

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

In a climate where external examiners generally seem to have little contact with students, the invitation to meet with the students (and staff) in March was greatly appreciated once again. This provided a valuable opportunity to gauge student opinion and to discuss any issues with programme leaders. The several students that I met represented all years of study. They were unanimously positive about the degree programme and the staff who deliver it. No adverse issues were raised.



3 October 2012

Dear

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2011/12: BSc Medical Sciences

Many thanks for your constructive report on the programme and your input into our M.Biol planning process this year. I'm pleased that you found our administrative and support processes efficient and that the strengths of the programme include the breadth and research focus of the final year projects as well as the research-based advanced topic modules (ATMs). Following up from last year, thankfully our efforts to mitigate for the disparity in assessment of the ATMs seen last year, has been successful though as points out in his response, we shall continue to be vigilant and ensure that more open questions are asked to allow students to display the knowledge and understanding they have gained.

Thank you for also commenting positively on the wide range of assessment strategies employed, that marking is rigorous and fair, examination boards appropriate and transparent but also very importantly from my point of view, is the improvement in the quality and extent of annotations of examination scripts by staff, an initiative we have been progressing across the Faculty.

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

With best wishes.

Faculty Director of Undergraduate Student Education

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External Examiner:

Programme Area: **BSc Medical Sciences**

Academic Year: **2011/12**

Date of Response: **25 July 2012**

Dear

Many thanks for your supervision of our examination process again this year, and for your report, which has now been forwarded to me by our Teaching Quality and Support Office. Thank you for your supportive comments, and for the commendations on the annotations of the scripts. I will pass this on to the other members of staff, so they know their good work is appreciated.

I am pleased that you found our examination procedures fair and transparent, that you felt you had access to materials and students sufficient for your work, and that you regard the course as meeting the standards and expectations of the national benchmarks.

In regard to your specific comments:

I am glad that you are happy with the way the advanced topics modules are working now, and that we have achieved a good measure of parity in the marking. We will continue to encourage staff to set open questions which maximise the ability of students to demonstrate their grasp of research-led topics and thinking.

As a research-led university we also see the final year projects as a key component of the course, and a lot of staff time and effort is committed to both running and marking them. I am glad that you found the standard high, and reflective of our research-led approach. The hypothesis-driven model, and use of the grant proposal to encourage those doing critical review projects to consider future research directions to address their hypothesis, both seem to be working well now.

I believe the visit you made in March, partly to meet with students, provides an important opportunity both for you to determine how the course is perceived by the students, and also for us to get feedback from them in an additional way. We share your view that this is a valuable part of what you do, and thank you for the time you give up to do it.

Although not related to the current examinations process, your comments on our plans for an integrated masters programme, and the approaches we propose to take to it, were interesting and useful. We will continue to discuss it as our plans mature.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for your positive approach and support as our external examiner for our course, and for agreeing to act for another year: we greatly appreciate the time and effort that you have put into it.

Yours sincerely,

Programme Leader