

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013-2014

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

Faculty / School of:

Biological Sciences

Subject(s):

Pharmacology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BMSC310101 Inherited Disorders
 BMSC314301 Advanced Topics in Pharmacology I
 BMSC314901 Drug Development: pre-clinical to practice
 BMSC330201 Medical Pharmacology
 BMSC12101 Introduction to Pharmacology
 BMSC221001 Chemotherapy
 BMSC221401 Introduction to toxicology
 BMSC222301 Neuropharmacology
 BMSC222401 Principles of Drug Discovery
 BMSC323301 Advanced Topics in Pharmacology II
 BMSC211701 Cardio-respiratory Pharmacology
 BMSC11901 Experimental Skills
 BMSC211801 Neurobiology
 BMSC314001 Advanced Scientific Skills

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BSc

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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 Quality Assurance
 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
 There are no matters arising from my examination of the course and the scripts that require urgent attention.*

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?

All required materials were provided and support staff were efficient and helpful.

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

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.*

Programme ILOs were appropriate to the year of study and to the level of the award. These courses have been very well thought through and their content is both relevant and rigorous.

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.*

The aims and ILOs were of a standard that I would expect from most UK institutions offering degrees in Pharmacology and Biomedical Sciences at BSc. level. The breadth of the material covered, as well as the level of detail, was excellent, and the broad range of pharmacology-based research at Leeds meant that the course offered a rich and diverse array of subject material with which to engage the student.

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.*

In general, assessment across the scripts I reviewed was of the short answer or essay format, with some questions based upon calculations or problem solving. All of the methods of assessment were appropriate to the subject material and were in line with assessment methods at my own and other institutions of which I have knowledge. Answer plans were generally clear and the wording of the questions sufficient to allow candidates to prepare answers that were likely to be relevant to the answer plans.

It was notable that some members of staff (e.g. ARP in the Drug Development module) were particularly excellent markers, providing extensive feedback on the script and having clearly thoughtfully and thoroughly read what were often very lengthy essays. This degree of application to the task of marking examination scripts is to be commended and is, in my experience, significantly above the norm and evidence of particularly good practice. I noted good evidence that scripts were moderated by a second marker, however, it was apparent at times that the marks changed by only a single percentage point. I am not sure that I could discriminate to this level myself, and it may be worth considering whether such slight alterations in marks are really justifiable in a rigorous way.

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.*

Students were clearly able to demonstrate their achievement, with the better students scoring well across questions/modules. The Advanced Pharmacology modules, in particular, were useful in showing student engagement with topics they enjoyed, and showing good evidence of having read the literature in depth. In general that the students appeared to perform as well as students on similar courses on which I have taught and/or examined, and upon speaking top students during informal interviews in March, I was hugely impressed by their drive and engagement, and can say that the pharmacology staff are very well regarded indeed.

In terms of student strengths, I would say that many of the cohorts showed evidence of having read around the subject, with many quotations and citations from journal articles used to underpin statements. For obvious reasons, this was most apparent in the Advanced Topics modules; however, it was evident elsewhere on occasion too. I was particularly impressed with the Introduction to Toxicology module, where scripts were of a very high standard indeed, and the level of performance suggested to me a really superb engagement of the students with the material and strong evidence of further reading. Where I found weaknesses, they were most clearly associated with poor use of English. Some students appeared unable to communicate well in written English, and, although this is now quite common in my experience, it is a concern that IELTS scores given upon acceptance do not always match with student performance.

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.

I have no comment to make in this regard.

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.

There is a clear thread of research informing the curriculum, be it from epilepsy research, neuropharmacology or drug discovery or through the topics found in the Advanced Topics modules. I was very impressed by the links between research and teaching, although, on interview, I did note that students thought the Advanced Topics modules were very onerous in terms of commitment to many topics. This perception of difficulty did not seem to affect enjoyment of the research based taught topics, however, and the course would be poorer without these modules. Some students noted that some researchers were not the best teachers, but that this difficulty was often outweighed by the interest afforded by the subject matter.

Some students had clearly experienced research-intensive placements, and this generated very interesting responses in which some students indicated a great boost in motivation and a mature perspective as a result of the placement, whilst others indicated that the placement had made returning to the final year more difficult.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

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

Mentoring support by _____ was excellent and I am grateful to the University and to _____ for their advice. All arrangements were of a very high standard and made the examining role as straightforward as one might hope or expect.

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. 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, all materials were clear and were made available.

11. 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.

All documentation was supplied.

12. 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 considered draft papers and made comments for feeding back to the relevant assessors.

13. 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?

Marking was often of a very high standard indeed (see comments above), and I was presented with a sufficiently large 'mountain' of scripts to be certain that they were indeed representative.

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

The dissertations were appropriate save in one case, where the student had clearly declined all advice and had failed to interact with the relevant staff member in any meaningful way. Assessment was very good, with proposals being marked as well as project themselves, and with clear and well thought through marking schemes.

15. 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?

I was, unfortunately, unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment, however, I submitted a report and every indication was that there were no difficulties with particular candidates.

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

This would appear to be the case, yes.

Other comments

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

I particularly enjoyed meeting the students in March, which was a very informative and rewarding experience and one I have not seen offered to external examiners at other institutions. I would like to thank _____ for _____ advice and help on both of my visits.

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

Student Education Office
Irene Manton Building
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT, UK



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

30 September 2014

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013/14

BSc Pharmacology
BSc Pharmacology (Industrial)
BSc Pharmacology (International)
BSc Pharmacology in Relation to Medicine
MBiol, BSc Pharmacology (Integrated Masters)

Thank you for taking up the position of External Examiner and for your examiner's report and for the many positive comments you made on the degree programme's content, teaching and student performance. The performance of the final year students was particularly pleasing with six first class students from the cohort of 25. I am pleased to see you have highlighted the excellent marking by which you noticed in the Drug Development module, and the high quality of the Toxicology module which is delivered by

This year there were no issues to address regarding problems with modules or with individual students. I noticed that you showed some concern regarding the standard of English for some of the weaker students - I will take this concern forward so that it can be discussed further.

Thank you once again for the all the effort you have put into the role of External Examiner during the academic year. I look forward to working with you again next year.

Best wishes,