

**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:	<b>Biological Sciences</b>
Subject(s):	<b>Biosciences</b>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<b>Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy)</b>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**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](mailto: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.*

N/A

**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.*

Overall I have enjoyed my 4 year tenure as external examiner and will miss it. I understand that one of us is to be given another year and I would be happy to volunteer if needed.

**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 aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are entirely commensurate with the level of the award, in a difficult year the staff should be congratulated on their professionalism (specific comments below).

**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.*

Yes (see separate sheet)

**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 are some minor issues in my "other comments" below

**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 also comments below)

**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.*

See attached comments

**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.*

I am happy that this is a research-led course.

**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

## 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.

No problems

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, it was excellent

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?

N/A – no exams

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, bar a few specific comments

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

Yes, bar a few specific comments (below)

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 were more than adequate and I, and my fellow examiners, really benefited from an overview from the course team from the outset. This gave us an opportunity to get a feel for the extent to which our suggested changes from last year had been implemented. The board of examiners was fine.

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

Yes

## Other comments

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

*In general terms, I like to use this box more extensively than the "proforma" approach above. Herewith therefore are the bulk of my comments.*

I, and the other examiners noted, immediately upon our arrival, a much lighter mood than last year. We were aware of, and highly sympathetic to, the problems facing the course and the staff cohort last year and pleased to note that these at least seem to be in the past.

In general terms, when meeting the students, there were one of the malcontent issues that I experienced last year. The students were very happy with their experience and the issues raised were more specific ones.

The issue of shared modules with undergraduates was raised and caused some concern, however I think this is maybe a case of managing their expectations and explaining that, although the core material is the same at both PG and UG levels, the expectations of each of the cohorts is different.

I was pleased to note that my comments about collaboration with the faculty of medicine were being looked at. I understand that such collaborations can only be facilitated with robust central systems in place to encourage it.

The projects system appeared much improved, there was clear evidence of an independent process for first and second markers. Some markers do however need to fill in comments sheet and it is disappointing to note that a proportion of staff do not think the system applies to them. Perhaps "mail merge" system to ensure at least names and details are ready filled out on the front page might help. Can I suggest a system where staff are not considered to have completed the task unless the system is followed and the proformas completed.

In terms of the marking schemes for the core skills modules in particular, but all the modules in general. It is nice to see established systems being used and, where an essay marking scheme is not appropriate, novel and inventive schemes being used. For the most part, this was very refreshing and easy to follow.

Some specific comments on modules follow:

BIOL5205 (core skills 3) DNA sequencing assignment. Use of the scheme was erratic. Sometimes there was no highlighting. For the proteomics exercise, how were marks arrived at?

BIOL5231M. Topics in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Initially I had no idea how marks were arrived at. No model answers, no mark schemes were apparent. However, upon discussing with the course convenor, it was clear that there was a scheme and it had not been included in the module box.

BIOL5235M. Molecular Cell Biology. Data handling exercise – The makers seems to using the essay marking scheme when the questions were in a "short answer" format. The essay marking scheme was not relevant in this case. In the literature review component, there are a few minor comments like "excellent, well, done" on sheet but not (apparently) using marking scheme by highlighting relevant points. Also true for BIOL5212M BIOL5260M. Human diseases. Not using marking scheme for essays at all.

I think, given the systems are now being imbedded well, it might be appropriate for the admin staff to monitor samples of the marks. It is also worth asking whether all work should now pass through, the VLE, the central office and Turnitin (unless there is a good reason not to).

**Faculty of Biological Sciences  
Graduate School**

University of Leeds  
Garstang Building  
Leeds LS2 9JT



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

Our Ref:

21 November 2012

Dear

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2011/12: MSc Bioscience (*Human Disease and Therapy*)**

Thank you for your final year report on the Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) MSc programme. We are pleased to hear that you noted the students were very happy with their experience and thank you for the congratulations on our professionalism in a difficult year.

In response to the specific issues you raise in your report:

- **Issue of modules shared with undergraduates.** We are raising the awareness of the students that some modules will be shared at the Induction meetings and explaining that expectations differ for them at postgraduate level. We are also changing the modules in this degree programme with a high percentage of overlap with undergraduates.
- **Completion of comments sheets.** To increase compliance by markers of completing comments sheets, we will return these to markers if they are not properly completed. Thank you for your suggestions in this area that we will consider implementing. These improvements will apply particularly to this issue noted in the BIOL5205 (core skills 3), BIOL5212M BIOL5260M.
- **Relevant marking scheme for short answer and data analysis.** We have developed a standardised comments sheet for application to assignment marking that can be adapted for other forms of assessments. We will advise that it is adapted for short answer questions and data analysis on the applicable modules and that it is properly used by markers.
- **Passing all work through Turnitin.** All pieces of coursework with the exception of a few are submitted to Turnitin. In the few cases that are not; we will consider whether these should be.

Allow me to finish by thanking you for your time and devotion and helpful comments while serving as External Examiner that have improved this taught MSc programme.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Taught Graduate Student Education