

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

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

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Faculty / School of: | Faculty of Biological Sciences |
| Subject(s): | <i>Human Disease and Therapy (plus other Bioscience programmes)</i> |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | Bioscience |
| 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.

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

No urgent action required

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?

Yes

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 Aims and Learning Outcomes of the programme and individual modules are clearly presented, and they are appropriate for the overall programme and for the individual modules.
The standards are 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.*

The programmes compare well with similar programmes and their standards at other institutions, and the academic standards are consistent with a stringently assessed course. The content is clearly designed to provide a combination of a strong, broad foundation in Biosciences, with the opportunity to specialise in particular areas, which reflect the expertise in the Faculty.

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.*

The assessment was continuous, without exams. Students were required to undertake a wide variety of assessment formats. In addition to assessing their knowledge, this variety allowed them the opportunity to acquire and display important transferable skills. It could be argued that the lack of exams might not allow some aspects of students' abilities to be assessed. However, it would appear that the quantity of coursework and the deadlines for this, and also for the project, provide a way of determining how they perform under pressure.

The quality of the teaching is difficult to directly assess, but can be inferred from the quality of the students' outputs, and the interaction with students on Poster Day. From these, it is clear that teaching quality is high and provides the students with a sound basis for advancing their studies.

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.*

The general standard of the students' performance is high, and it compares favourably with comparable courses. No obvious weakness could be noted in the student cohort. They appeared to be to be a cohesive and cooperative group.

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.

As this is my first year of involvement, it is not really possible to comment on enhancements from last year. This is a strong programme, but I would like to highlight the use of the mini project and the research proposal part of the project as ways of preparing the students for practical laboratory work, and for research planning. Inviting external examiners to attend the poster session and to meet with groups of students was extremely useful.

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.

It is clear that the Faculty's research has a strong influence of the programme, as is entirely appropriate and desirable. As mentioned earlier, one of the strengths of the programme is the provision of a graded guidance towards the research project via laboratory experience and students taking a significant level of responsibility for planning their research project. One slight issue that I would like to raise is that although I know that Leeds has a strong track record in biological microscopy, there is not much presence in the programme, with very few of the projects involving any microscopy. I make this comment from the viewpoint of a microscopist, so it may be a little biased, but worth some consideration.

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.*

The material that was made available and the briefings with the staff provided more than sufficient information to allow me to get to grips with the course.

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.*

All the information was provided in a timely manner, and the policies and procedure were clear and appropriate.

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 in this programme, as it is continuously assessed.

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?

The amount of assessed work made available was more than sufficient. I was able to examine all projects, and a significant proportion of the coursework. In my view, the assessments were carried out in a stringent but fair manner. The quality of the submitted work was generally strong, but any weaker pieces that I examined were assessed fairly and appropriately.

I have one relatively minor quibble; a few of the pieces of work that I looked at only had one marker's sheet and comments attached.

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

With any programme of this type, the dissertation topics generally reflect the research interests and backgrounds of the academic staff. This is appropriate, and the range of projects suggests that students are able to undertake a topic allied to their interests. The project assessment was, as with other assessments, stringently and fairly assessed. The different component parts of the project assessment and the instructions to markers are clear.

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?

I was extremely impressed with the arrangements for the external examiners and for the exam board. The staff members involved were exceptionally welcoming and helpful, and it was easy to access to all of the materials and information necessary.

I did attend the Board of Examiners. It was conducted scrupulously, and the recommendations made were agreed by all parties.

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

There were no cases of medical mitigation, but other cases involving re-sits and failure to fully engage with the programme were discussed, and it was evident that students were fully supported by a robust system.

Other comments

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

This is an impressive programme. It is well-run by staff who are enthusiastic and committed. The students were mainly of high quality and the programme will provide them with a very strong qualification.

**Faculty of Biological Sciences
Graduate School**

University of Leeds
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Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

16 January 2014

Dear

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012/13: MSc Human Disease and Therapy

Thank you for your report on our MSc Human Disease and Therapy programme. We are pleased to hear that you found the teaching materials in the research proposal and mini project useful in preparing students for their projects and that you find that it is a strong and impressive programme.

We are pleased that you found the projects appropriate and well assessed. We will continue the Poster sessions as you describe and are glad that the quality of the students and programme were found to be high.

Particularly, thank you for your commendation of the arrangements and commitment of the staff on the programme. We are indeed proud of them.

We look forward to your engagement with the programme over the coming years, will strive to maintain its quality, and look forward to your input.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Taught Graduate Student Education