

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: Chemistry	Subject(s): Chemistry
Programme(s) / Module(s): Honours programmes in Chemistry	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BSc MChem

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.

I didn't see any areas of the programmes 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?
Yes, and I found them very useful.

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.*

I was generally impressed by the structure and content of the modules, which provide good breadth and depth of coverage at honours level and on the basis of all the evidence available (including poster presentations by final year MChem students) high standards are being maintained.

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.*

Programmes had evidently been prepared with care in order to fulfil the accreditation requirements of the Royal Society of Chemistry. In my experience, aims and ILOs are comparable with Chemistry programmes at other highly respected institutions.

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 various assessment methods were appropriate for the different module components and marking procedures were rigorous and fair. I have reservations regarding the University scaling and classification procedure, as indeed did my predecessor, but I will reserve comments until I have completed my second year of examining. The performance of the student cohort did not give me any reason to question the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods and students did not raise any significant issues either in discussions with a selection of the BSc class or the final year MChem class at the poster presentation.

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 mix of assessment methods provided ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their capabilities across the different aspects of the programmes. The students I talked to at the poster session demonstrated a lively enthusiasm for their project work and were able to discuss and defend their results with a significant level of academic maturity .

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.

N/A (this is my first year)

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.

The programmes have been designed so that, particularly in MChem, the final years provide an insight into current research priorities at national and international levels. Research projects enable students to experience the full-blown research environment at first-hand and the high quality of the poster presentations is testament to the benefit of this experience to the students. To some extent, the taught modules in the fourth year naturally reflect staff research interests, and introduce students to recent advances and achievements.

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.*

Extensive information was provided, and all requests for extra details were dealt with very efficiently.

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.*

Examiners were sent detailed descriptions of module content, assessment procedures *etc* in the form of programme handbooks.

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

Yes.

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

The whole administrative process within the School was excellent and all staff involved were very helpful. I found the booklets containing collections of exam papers and mark sheets particularly useful and they made our job much easier.

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

External examiners were given all necessary details of mitigating circumstances for candidates under consideration and were invited to comment on the outcome of School deliberations. It was clear that the School had done everything it could to ensure that all extenuating circumstances had been taken into account and that all students had been treated fairly.

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.

Whilst the external examiners were still uneasy with the Leeds classification system, we were pleased to see that it will be modified next year. I will reserve more detailed comments until after I have completed my second year.

School of Chemistry

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

20 October 2011

Dear

I am writing on behalf of the School of Chemistry to acknowledge that we have received your report and to reply formally to you as External Examiner for the Chemistry BSc and Integrated Masters programmes of study.

We are pleased that you have raised no immediate issues for us to address from your first year with us. It just leaves me to thank you for your involvement with our examination processes and I look forward to seeing you again in the coming year.

With best wishes