

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

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

Faculty / School of:	Food Science and Nutrition.
Subject(s):	Food Science
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc Food Science and BSc Food Studies and Nutrition, including International, European and Industrial options
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

During the period of my appointment as external examiner I have encouraged the school to implement changes to enhance employability of the students. I felt this was essential following my discussions with the students in my first year when they were very unsure about the opportunities available to them and also about their individual preparedness for employment on graduation. The changes implemented include a more professional and thorough approach to the management of work placement, the progressive development of the Food Product Design module in final year and specific changes to exam paper formats to enable the students to demonstrate comprehensively their achievement of learning outcomes and in final year, higher level learning and understanding such as evaluation and application which was limited in previous exam papers formats. The final year students I met this year are confident and many have specific career goals in mind, a significant change from those I met in my first year. All those involved in the programmes should be congratulated on achieving such change in this short time. The standards the students achieve remains consistently high and the marking and assessment procedures ensure a fair and consistent outcome from year to year. Overall the programmes are of high academic standard and are preparing students for a wide range of opportunities on graduation.

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes are commensurate with the level of the awards at BSc Honours. The mix of modules enables a structured and progressive development of students as they progress through their programme. The standards are appropriate at all levels and it is noticeable the greater academic achievement in final year of those students undertaking the industrial programme, a trend that we also see in my institution.

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 degree aims and intended learning outcomes are similar to other programmes in the subject areas with a distinctive emphasis on the chemical aspects of the subject within the Food Science programme. This is known and recognised by students and employers as a strength of the programme. The content of the degrees is appropriate and meets the relevant QAA benchmark statement.

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 design and structure of the assessment methods is satisfactory to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. There have been some positive changes in exam paper design to enable more comprehensive testing of student achievement of the learning outcomes and the use of more open ended questions in one final year module to enable students to demonstrate higher level learning skills for which those involved should be commended. The School is encouraged to continue to introduce more open ended questions in other final year modules.

The marking was fair and the use of the online system for classification of awards is an asset. This latter procedure ensures each student and their classification are considered fully and this was the case in the final Board of Examiners, where each student was discussed thoroughly.

It was clear there had been considerable efforts made to achieve a greater consistency in marking of the Honours projects following comments made last year and there were very few major differences between markers this year.

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 students were given good opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes. As noted last year the strengthening of the work placement scheme has had a significant positive influence on the industrial programme students as evidenced by their excellent final year results. The students have many strengths in relation to their knowledge of the subject area, and I see clear indications of their development as confident independent thinkers, a concern I have raised previously. The final year students I met in February 2013 were confident, assured, very employable and maturely considering their options for the future: as graduates a credit to the School and university.

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 indicated previously the team project in final year, which is now settling down into an excellent module is clearly becoming a positive influence on students.

I would commend in particular the School's commitment to work placement. Whilst a resource intensive activity, the development, in both personal and academic terms, of the students is significant and cannot be replicated within the university.

The introduction of broader examination questions in module FOOD3041001 to enable students to show a wider range of knowledge and understanding is commended.

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 influence of research on teaching continues to be an important integral element of the module teaching. There are many examples of current research impacting on the curriculum through the content of taught modules, the delivery of modules linked to recent developments in the subject area and the research project which the final year students undertake.

The requirement for students to prepare a scientific paper based on their project work rather than a thesis is to be commended. Although not all graduates will progress to a scientific career, the skills learnt from this [i.e. summarising, critical analysis of information, concise writing] are beneficial to all students.

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 information received was sufficient.

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.*

As asked for last year, I received a copy of the handbook prior to my visit and this was also available during my visits.

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?

There was some improvement in the timeliness of providing the draft examination papers and guide answers; however, there are still a number of papers where guide answers are not provided at this stage which makes it more difficult to judge the appropriateness and accuracy of the questions.

The nature and level of the questions were generally appropriate and most of my comments related to the wording of questions to ensure it was clear to students what was being asked.
There were more guide answers provided during my visit, which helped considerably.

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 examination papers and projects and sample coursework were available for my visit.
There was greater consistency in the level of annotation on the scripts, with most being very good. Some scripts however, still have minimal annotation.
I found the comment sheet from each module co-ordinator regarding the mark spread and the performance of the student useful and informative.

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

The students have a wide choice of subject topics covering all the areas of the degree programmes. The method and standard of assessment were appropriate with a much closer mark agreement between the supervisor and second marker this year compared to last year, demonstrating that the School had worked hard on this following my comments last year.
The practice of using a paper format for the report is to be commended.

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?

All administrative arrangements were very satisfactory and the Board of Examiners conducted in a fair and appropriate manner. I attended the Board of Examiners meeting and was impressed with the care and attention given to each individual student to ensure a fair outcome in relation to their degree classification.

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

The members of the Board of Examiners were very knowledgeable about the students under consideration and where necessary a full and frank discussion occurred.

Other comments

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

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Dear <>,

Thank you for your recent External Examiner's report. Your positive comments on the programmes and changes that have been made to enhance employability were much appreciated. School members were pleased with your recognition of the industrial placement scheme and the work the School has done to strengthen the scheme. Your continued support for the Food Product Design module and the developments that are being made to the module is very encouraging to all involved in the delivery of this module.

School members were particularly pleased with your observations on the confidence and employability of our students and on the improvements in our students as independent thinkers.

The School is pleased that there was an improvement in the provision of guide answers but note that there are still a number of papers which did not have the guide answers provided along with the draft examination papers. The School has been active in trying to persuade all members of staff to provide guide answers at the time of setting draft examination questions. This will be discussed further at the School Taught Student Education Committee and at a Staff Meeting to find ways in which we can ensure that guide answers are supplied at an early stage.

You have pointed out that although there has been an improvement in the level of annotation on scripts, there are still some examination scripts with minimal annotation. This is another aspect that the School has been working on to improve and will continue to do so. Those examination scripts with minimal annotation will be identified in order to ask the markers to add more annotation.

On behalf of the School I wish to thank you for the dedicated work that you have carried out as External Examiner over the last 4 years. Your advice and suggestions have been invaluable in improving the whole assessment procedures and the student experience here at Leeds,

Best wishes,

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Head of School