

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of:	Food science and Nutrition	Subject(s):	Food Science
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc Food Science and BSc Food and Nutrition	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)	BSc

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.

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?

NA

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.

NA

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes are commensurate with the level of the awards at BSc Honours. The modules provide structured and progressive programmes for the students.

The standards are appropriate and I am delighted to see that progress has been made in challenging the students more, particularly in final year, which I commented on last year. This is, by its very nature, a slow process and the teaching team has made a positive start. The School is to be congratulated in developing further the modules 2190 and 3370 at levels 2 and 3 respectively, which are instrumental in developing advanced graduate level cognitive skills in the subject area.

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. There is a distinctive strength in the chemical aspects of the subject within the Food Science programme, which is clearly valued by both the students and the employers. The students I spoke to in February clearly indicated that the strong chemistry bias was an important factor in them undertaking this course. The content of the degrees is appropriate and meets the 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. For half modules where content is limited, I have discussed with the School giving consideration to changing the structure of examination papers to several short answer and/or MC questions to test the breadth of knowledge and one longer answer to test in-depth understanding/evaluation etc., rather than just long questions, which should enable more adequate demonstration of students achievement of the module learning outcomes. Interestingly this was raised in discussion with the students, who indicated they were unhappy that they could only demonstrate learning in selected topics within a module rather than comprehensive knowledge and understanding of topics across a module.

For the majority of modules, examination questions are given in parts with assigned marks. Whilst this is good practice in assuring the students are clear as to how the assessment is marked, it can reduce the demonstration of higher cognitive skills by the students within the examination environment and the School is encouraged to consider more open ended questions particularly for final year modules.

The marking was fair and the use of the online system for classification of awards is to be commended. This latter procedure ensures each student and their classification are considered fully and this was the case in the final examination board, where each student was discussed thoroughly.

There was some variation in individual staff marking within modules and there are clear and appropriate procedures for dealing with such situations. Whilst some variation is to be expected, I have encouraged the School to engage in more discussion of assignments, projects etc., where marks disagree, to help enhance the common understanding of standards. In particular, the School has been encouraged to collectively revisit the project marking scheme descriptors, to enable greater common understanding and agreement of the terms and descriptors used.

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, however as indicated above and in my report last year, the teaching team need to continue to develop mechanisms to enable development and assessment of higher level cognitive skills as an integral element of many of the final year modules. There have been positive developments in this area since last year and this momentum should be continued.

The students have many strengths in relation to their knowledge of the subject area, however as indicated above their higher level cognitive skills [i.e. evaluation, problem solving, decision making] in using this knowledge need to continue to be enhanced. In my discussions with the students, they were clearly initially uncomfortable with being asked to carry out an exercise which was open-ended within the programmes and there is a need to continue to develop the students as confident independent thinkers

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

Not applicable.

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.

As discussed above, the School has responded to the points I raised last year and are continuing to develop these. I am happy with the progress being made and also the enhancements initiated by the teaching team.

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 influence of research on teaching is integral to 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. This year, all students had to do a laboratory/data based project. Whilst the students I met felt initially this was unfair, they also indicated that they were glad that they had done this type of project. Consideration of project type and requirements is an issue across HE in this subject area.

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.

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.*

General information from the university was sufficient. The School could provide the examination papers and guide answers in a more timely manner. In some cases the papers were provided very late with a very short turnaround time for me to make comments to feedback to the teaching team. I received guide answers for only a few examination papers which made it more difficult to judge the appropriateness and accuracy of the questions.

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.*

I previously received information on the programme, however it would be useful to receive copies of module handbooks each year to be informed of any curriculum or assessment changes.

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

Yes, all examination papers and projects and sample coursework were available for my visit. I have asked the School to provide a selection of scripts from the top, middle and bottom for each module in addition to the remaining papers in future year to enable my examination of student work to be more efficient.

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

Administrative arrangements were very satisfactory and as mentioned above the discussion in the final board was excellent, with each student being given appropriate time to ensure a fair outcome in relation to their degree classification.

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

Yes, these situations were dealt with appropriately and with considerable knowledge of the students by the teaching team.

A situation arose whereby the mark for a student who had taken a module in another School was withheld pending an investigation for alleged plagiarism. From the description of the case given, the examination board and I were in

full agreement that the student had not plagiarised, which raised questions regarding a common understanding of plagiarism. Following my visit, the situation was resolved and the investigation withdrawn.

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.

Other Comments

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

The majority of the examination scripts are well annotated and provide an excellent indication of the mark awarded. It would clearly benefit students to be able to see such feedback, particularly as examinations contribute significantly towards the majority of module marks. Experience has shown that students continue to make the same types of mistakes in examinations [e.g. lack of detail, not reading the question carefully etc.] and that students benefit from seeing their examination papers and discussing through the guide answers. This gives them a much clearer understanding of what is required and acts as a feed forward mechanism to enhance their examination skills. The School has indicated it will consider if there is an effective mechanism to do this, for example through the tutor system or module leader feedback sessions and I fully support this development. It may be something the University may wish to consider more widely.

The School has recognised the value of work placement by appointing a co-ordinator from amongst the academic staff. In the current difficult economic climate and with increasing competition, this is to be commended. The students I met were critical of the lack of support in attaining work placements, but aware of the new appointment, which they indicated was a positive development. Whilst the resource commitment for work placement can be significant, this is balanced by the increased employability and personal development of the students which shows itself in their final year achievement.



20/11/12

Dear

I must apologise for the lateness of this reply to your Examiner's Report. On behalf of the School, may I thank you for the input from examination paper setting and inspection of papers and coursework through to examiner board meetings. We were especially grateful for your extra visit in February to meet with finalists.

Once again we were appreciative of your insights in to the programmes, and in particular the suggestion for the structure of examinations for 10 credit modules (along with the student comment on the structure) – this will be discussed by the staff at the next Student Education Meeting. The School will also consider the inclusion of more open ended questions in the final year to allow students to demonstrate cognitive skills.

The School was pleased that you feel that there have been positive development in development and assessment of higher level cognitive skills in many of the final year modules, and this is one of the many reasons why the School made it compulsory for all students to take a 40 credit research project in the final year.

In response to your comments about actions where the two markers of projects and reviews disagree, I can assure you that in any such cases, the supervisor and assessor are required to meet in order to discuss the marks. I would further add that the module leader for research projects is considering the project marking scheme descriptors

The School has further discussed a mechanism by which students could receive more feedback on examination papers and we hope to trial a new system shortly.

The School did note that a number of examination papers were late this year, and that many of the papers were submitted without marking schemes or model answers, and accept that provision of such marking schemes only just before the External Examiner visit is not good practice. There had been some difficulties this year but we shall endeavour to give timely provision of both papers and marking schemes.

The School looks forward to your visit in the coming academic year

best wishes,