

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):
Programme(s) / Module(s): Master of Science in Food Science, Food Biotechnology, Food Science and Nutrition, Food Quality and Innovation	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) MSc

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.

NA

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, at the end of the second visit and after the Board meeting I had one example of previous External Examiner's report, even related to Bsc and not Msc courses. Nevertheless I had not the response of the School to the previous reports.

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.*

Generally speaking Learning outcomes are adequate to the level of the award even all the courses are designed more on the basis of the specific competencies of the research groups than on the necessity of the complete skills and competencies that a Master of science award requires. It means that some learning outcomes are more related to some research subjects of food science, nutrition, biotechnology and innovation that are carried out in the Leeds university (among <<>> research groups) at very high level of scientific depth and expertise even though in a contest of necessary disciplines that the Master of Science in Food Science, Food Biotechnology, Food quality and innovation and Food science and nutrition needs and requires. Of course this is the consequence of the specific research activities that the different research groups inside the Leeds School for Food Science and Nutrition are carrying out.

Nevertheless, the performances of the MSc students in all the examinations resulted to be very good, on average, and more than adequate to the MSc level of awards. Course requirements in the prospective of one year Master are very tough for the students, overall taking into account that mostly there are from outside Europe and they need to complete the learning activity as soon as possible also considering official aspects as well as the permit to stay in England as extra-EU citizens.

Few topics are addressed to food quality, HACCP plan and hygiene and there is not many competencies given on different food productions (food chains; mainly of dairy food) and processing line / technology descriptions. Lecture on packaging seems to be too little.

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.*

Objectives of the Master course are quite well individuated. The difference among the four Master programmes are given by 30 credit of differentiation with different learning outcomes briefly listed in the student's handbook. On the basis of the student's interviews, there are some overlapping especially between Master of Food Science and Food science and Nutrition that does not permit a clear differentiation of the ILOs.

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.*

Assessment methods seem to be appropriate, even the performance of the students appear to be influenced by the previous student's background. In some cases the student's exam papers contain coarse mistakes in basic chemistry (nomenclature, dimensions, etc.) whilst are good (generally) for analytical approach.

At first view the assessment procedures in all the modules are definitely tough, with both simple and more deep questions or exercises, where students sometime reveal lacks in basic knowledge.

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, particularly during the preparation of the final Research projects, finalised in generally high level of papers in both scientific contents and format aspects. The project level is generally amazingly high for a one year master.

Laboratory works are demonstrated in periodic student reports, even students claim that too low is the percentage of mark for the lab work, in comparison to the total time spent the laboratory. Students claim more time for written exams,

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

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.

Areas of good practice could be individuated in most of the teaching fields, in particular related to product development, food colloids properties and characterisation, ultrasound technology applied in the food area and nutrition.

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.

Each Master's learning plan is based on specific research excellence that are present in the Department. All the student's practical activities are founded on the high level research activities that in the different laboratories are carried out. I found that, aside the Master in Food Science that is generally the "mother" Master course, the other Master programme are related to Nutrition, Biotechnology and Food design because of the deep knowledge in those areas following the top level research groups working in the Department.

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.*

I had several meetings with the Head of the School and with some teachers, module manager, in order to better understand the role for External Examiners. The material I received has been sufficient to do the evaluation even some papers, as well as the students' Handbook, was provided only my specific request. An updated student handbook as well as the courses/ modules detailed programmes should be given in advance each year.

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 received some documentation and I asked for more course plans, objectives, learning outcomes and research topics and I received all the document I asked for. Nevertheless, the student handbook does not report the detailed modules programme.

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

Yes, I think that the examination process has been fairly prepared, previously during the time before my first visit to Leeds in which I had the possibility to examine some exam papers for the MSc Programmes and mark sheets. During the first day of visit I had adequate room and facilities to look all the exam papers, mark sheet and student's laboratory workbooks.

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

YES, the administration is following very carefully any phase of the process, giving all the support that the Board of Examiners needs.

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

Yes, the consideration of specific needs of students having sanitary / medical issues or personal troubles are considered and appropriate procedures are followed during the Board of Examiner's meeting.

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.

A more intensive course on food microbiology and food microbiology laboratory activities should be given to give completeness to the ILO especially for the Master of Food Science. No industrial placement opportunities are given and some students claimed to have this possibility



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

20/03/12

Dear

On behalf of the School, may I thank you all of your work over the last year, from commenting on examination papers and inspection of examination answers and coursework through to examiner board meetings. We were especially grateful for the comments that you fed back to the School from your meeting with the Masters students.

We were pleased to note that you found the learning outcomes were suitable, that the courses have a high scientific content, and that the assessment procedures were appropriate but tough. Although students point out that there is a lot of time spent in laboratories and they feel that more marks should be awarded, the reports required are not that extensive to merit higher weighting. The students find it difficult to understand that much of the laboratory work is also training to allow the completion of the research project.

You noted that the courses have in their design incorporated a high level of competencies based on the research groups and research being carried out in the School. The University of Leeds is a research intensive university and all of its programmes involve research based teaching. The School recognizes the importance of food quality, HACCP, food production and process technology. Each of the programmes has set specializations and not all will study all aspects of Food Science and Processing – however all will include food processing, food safety and HACCP (in fact there is a compulsory HACCP examination question for all Masters students). The School does acknowledge that packaging is not covered in any detail and this is mostly because we do not have staff with expertise in packaging.

The programmes have been amended for the 2011/12 teaching session to ensure that each programme is distinctive. Compulsory programmes have been developed to give different specialities, with no possibility of students on one programme selecting options to overlap with a different programme. The ILO for the programmes now have clear differentiation.

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