

## The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

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

Faculty / School of:	Chemistry
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc in Chemical Biology and Drug Design
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner****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](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**  
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 have two suggestions to improve the MSc course in Chemical Biology and Drug Design.

1. As courses are up dated progress to a more uniform method of assessment should be implemented. This would mean assessing courses against an agreed format for elements of assessments. At present courses are assessed with a wide variety of marks.
2. Project abstracts should be a simple clear statement of the main achievements of the work done including formulae and a concise statement of the background to the work.

**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?*

**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*

## 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 objectives for the programme are entirely appropriate for the level of the degree of MSc.

**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 standard of the degree is comparable with the MSc courses we run at the University of <> and with other courses at UK universities.

**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 MSc course is well designed and the methods of assessment are entirely appropriate. The quality of the teaching and learning experience is exemplary.

**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.*

I observed the project presentations which were all of a similar standard to such talks by MSc students at the University of <>. At the top end of the ability range students were clearly well on the way to becoming highly competent research workers. At the other end of the scale students had worked very hard to produce results but they found difficulty in relating their work to wider fundamental issues at least in oral questioning. This situation is quite normal.

**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. 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.*

This year optional modules in Synthetic Chemistry, Practical Informatics and Biosensors and Drug Delivery have been introduced all these are topical areas which add to the range of modules available on the course.

**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 research project counts for 90 of the 180 credits of the MSc so clearly research is a very strong element of the course. The lecture courses cover current areas of active research and the continuous assessment elements require students of critically review current literature.

**8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

## For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

## The Examination/Assessment Process

10. 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 have had access to all material necessary to assess the course.

11. 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.*

Yes I received all relevant documents for the course.

12. 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?

I was provided with draft examination papers and model answers. I made some suggestions for corrections and changes and these were incorporated in the final papers.

13. 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?

Sufficient assessed work was made available to me so that I am confident in my evaluation of the course.

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

Yes the research topics covered topical areas of synthetic chemistry related to drug design, bio-inorganic chemistry and biochemistry. The method of assessment was appropriate with a range of marks against a series of criteria contributing to the final mark.

15. 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 satisfactory, I was able to attend the meeting and I am satisfied with the recommendations of the board.

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

Procedures were in place to consider mitigating circumstances and medical evidence.

## Other comments

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

I have prepared a one page report on my opinions on the course I enclose it below.

## 10-9-2014, Report on the MSc in Chemical Biology and Drug Design University of Leeds

The examination process for the MSc is very well organised. I received the examination papers in good time and my comments were incorporated as appropriate. The 5 courses in each semester cover the subject from biochemistry to synthetic chemistry very well. Over the 2 semesters, students take 90 credits of courses and a research project of 90 credits, making the whole course 180 credits. This course organisation is comparable with courses in other universities and is entirely appropriate.

One point I would like to raise for discussion is the number of components that make up the mark on each course. For example in the course CHEM5117M the mark is made up of three components A, B and C. Mark A is arrived at from an examination of 10 questions and the candidates do 8 questions so there is some element of choice. Mark B is arrived at by an examination of two questions with no choice. There are two continuous assessment marks which counts for 20% overall, the combined exam mark counts for 80%.

In course CHEM314501A there are 12 questions out of which the candidates do 10 and in CHEM314501B the candidates do 2 questions with no choice. All exams are 2 hours long and so the candidates have to get used to answering questions of varying length in different exams within a course and between different courses.

The way all the marks are presented is exemplary and completely transparent so I can see exactly how the mark for each student is arrived at. I just wonder what a TQA assessment would think of a collection of courses where the marking format is different for each course and the examination questions are of varying length. I would invite the staff to discuss this point and, as courses develop it is worthwhile to work towards a more unified format for all examination questions. One possible arrangement for a 2 hour exam would be three 40 min questions split into sections a, b, c as appropriate with 4 questions on the paper so candidates do 3 out of 4. Clearly to change everything at a stroke would be a lot of work, but if an agreed layout could be established, then as courses evolve they would coalesce to a common format.

The project reports made interesting reading and were well done by the 9 students of all abilities. One point I would like to raise is the abstract. At least one student did not have an abstract and all the others wrote an abstract on the background to their project and not on what they actually did. In my opinion the abstract should say exactly what has been achieved in the project with chemical structures and a single sentence on the back ground to the work. Several students showed a summary slide of exactly what they had achieved. I would say that this should have been used as the abstract to the project so that a person in another University can tell if the thesis is of interest to them.

In their presentations all students were enthusiastic about their projects; clearly some very good work had been done. As is quite normal, answers to questions varied in quality and understanding, but overall the standard was good. I am happy with the method used to assess the projects.

With the demise of several sites of big pharma in the UK, one wonders where drug design is going to take place in the future. There are certainly big challenges facing us, such as the development of new antibiotics. The course in Leeds is well placed to carry out University based drug discovery with its expertise in 'hit' generation arising from the work of <>. I am impressed with the MSc in Chemical Biology and Drug Design and wish the course every success.

<>



28 October 2014

Dear

**RE: MSc Chemical Biology and Drug Design 2013/14**

I am writing on behalf of the School of Chemistry to provide a formal response to your Examiner's report for 2013-14. I would like to thank you for your contribution; we have certainly valued your input greatly. I am pleased to hear that you feel we cover the subject from biochemistry to synthetic chemistry very well and that this course is comparable to that of other Institutions.

Your comments (and those received from other examiners) regarding the format of our examinations were considered at a recent Organic Sectional meeting. As a result we have agreed on a plan to devise a more standardised format which will address the length of papers for the 2 hour examinations. Rather than going to a 3 hour examination format for 10 credit modules, we have decided to uniformly reduce the written requirement within the exam papers by adopting an exam paper format, which is **effective immediately** and will consist of;

- Sections A and B equal weighting.
- Section A- students **answer any 7 questions from 8**.
- Section B- as current but colleagues need to construct questions appropriately such that there is a reasonable workload balance with Section A.

Thank you for your comments relating to the students' abstracts; we will add some explicit instructions on report abstracts into the module booklet for the projects for next year and this will also be highlighted to supervisors as a point to discuss with their students.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your considered contributions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

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