

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 / Colour Science
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PGCert/PGDip/MSc Polymers, Colorants and Fine Chemicals
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCert/PGDip/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.

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

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?

Yes

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.*

This is a new course but contains several modules from a previous MSc in Polymer Surface Coatings and Technology run by the Department. It includes modules on analytical chemistry, organic synthesis and colour chemistry together with a module on specialist case studies which provides the students with real examples of process chemistry with many of the lectures given by industrial speakers. Some of the modules are common with another MSc offered by the Department. The programme also includes a large research project element enabling the students to put their acquired knowledge in to practise. The students are able to choose to take either module CHEM5126M Organic synthesis for fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis or CHEM5116M Advanced organic synthesis for fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis with advice provided by the programme team. All but one of the students were advised to take CHEM5126M. The programme team should consider just offering CHEM5126M as a compulsory module. Overall I believe the course content and intended learning outcomes are appropriate for a Masters level course.

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes are of the standard one would expect of an applied chemistry course at postgraduate level. The Department is the only Centre in the UK and one of just a few in Europe which has the expertise in the area of colour chemistry to run such a course and there are no similar courses offered in other UK Universities to make direct comparison.

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.*

A wide range of assessment methods were employed including unseen exam, essay, tutorial performance, group project, poster and oral presentations. For most of the modules the main assessment method was unseen exam (80%). The Case Study module was assessed by essay choosing 6 out of 10 problems set. The research project assessment was based mainly on the practical work and dissertation although the students were also required to give an oral presentation and to prepare and present a poster. The variety of assessment methods chosen is entirely appropriate for this course. It is noted that double marking was employed for the research project and a third person was involved in one particular case when the difference in the marks awarded was considered significant. The assessment criteria used to mark assignment essays was clear and appropriate. Overall the student marks were good indicating that the teaching and assessment methods were sound.

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.*

There were eight students enrolled on the course and the overall pass rate was very good with one passing with 'Distinction', four with 'Merit' and there were two 'Passes' and one 'Fail'. I was able to review all of the assessed work and the project dissertations and overall I consider the standards to be high and commensurate with those of a Masters degree. The dissertations submitted by the students were particularly noteworthy with marks ranging from 59-79% with a mean of 67.6%. It is interesting to note that the average mark for the students in the CHEM5126 optional module was 66.6% whereas the mark for the single student taking the optional CHEM5116 module was 55%. It is regrettable to note that there was one student who failed in 4 of the 7 modules.

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.

This is a new course which builds on a previous MSc Polymer Surface Coatings Science and Technology programme and now includes some new applied chemistry – based modules which are common with another MSc programme.

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 main influence of research comes from the Extended Research Project module which accounts for 75 credits. The topics for the projects were drawn from the research expertise of the Staff, some of whom are internationally recognised for their work. The Staff have extensive industrial contacts and some of the projects were undertaken in collaboration with Companies giving the students exposure to industrially relevant applied research. Some of the modules required the students to undertake a literature review and in one particular module the students were asked to produce a concise one-page summary of the relevant material. This is important in developing research skills and critical commentary.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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 can confirm that the guidance and information provided was sufficient for me to carry out my duties.

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.

I can confirm that I received all of the appropriate documentation including the External Examiners and Programme Handbooks.

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 received copies of the draft examination papers specific for this programme and was invited to comment. The nature and level of the questions was entirely appropriate. I made a few minor suggestions and these were taken on board by the members of staff responsible.

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?

The Programme Leader sent electronic copies of some of the completed assessments before the Examination Board and I was provided with paper copies of the assessments for all of the modules on the day. Scripts were clearly marked and comments were included on the scripts to justify the marks awarded.

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

The students were given a broad range of topics for the research project. In my opinion these were very relevant to the theme of the Masters programme and typically addressed real world industrial topics. Some had direct Company

involvement. It is noted that double marking was used and a third person was involved in one particular case when the difference in the marks awarded was considered significant. This particular case was drawn to my attention by the Programme Leader and the outcome was agreed.

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?

I was present at the Examination Board meeting which was attended by the Programme leader and most of the Module Leaders. The meeting was performed professionally and the results for each of the students were given careful consideration. I was completely satisfied with the final recommendations.

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

Mitigating circumstances for two of the students were noted.

Other comments

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

18 November 2014

Dear

RE: MSc Polymers, Colorants and Fine Chemicals 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 and I am glad that you have enjoyed working with us; we have certainly valued your input greatly. I am very pleased to hear your view that the programme aims and intended learning outcomes are of the standard one would expect of an applied chemistry course at postgraduate level.

You commented on the optional modules CHEM5126M "Organic synthesis for fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis" and CHEM5116M "Advanced organic synthesis for fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis"; CHEM5116M has this year been replaced by CHEM5511M "Advanced Programmed Learning in Organic Chemistry" which offers students the opportunity to work independently to carry out literature searches and solve problems in organic chemistry. Students are advised that CHEM5126M is the most suitable option for those who do not have an undergraduate degree in chemistry.

Thank you for your positive comments about the programme, particularly about the relevance of the research projects to real world industrial topics and the high standard of the dissertations.

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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