

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:	Medicine and Health / Medicine
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Medicine
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MRes

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?

Not applicable – although this is my first year as external examiner, this is also the first year in which the programme has run.

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

Not applicable

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 overall aims and learning outcomes for the programme were highly appropriate to the target cohort, namely medical students undertaking an intercalated year of intensive scientific study. In particular, the program combines taught courses on elements of research theory and practice with a substantial hands-on research project experience.

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.*

(Not relevant)

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.*

Module grades for some of the taught elements were shared with other programmes, and had been scrutinised by other external examiners. I specifically inspected and ratified the marks for the MEDS5020M Paper Criticism module, which I thought was an incisive and valuable part of the programme and which I judged to have been marked at an appropriate level. I gave considerable time and attention to the marking of the main MEDS5010M Research Project in Medicine module. I thought that the combination of assessment methods (Research Proposal, Project Report and Oral Presentation) together provided an appropriately deep but varied framework for assessment, and I was able to provide my own direct ratification of marks in all three of these assessment components.

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.*

Overall I am satisfied that the combination of modules gives students adequate opportunity to demonstrate the level of their achievement. This is harder to judge this year (with only a single participating student), but I do not see any obvious deficiencies in this area.

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 relevant).

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.

Not relevant – first year of this 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 influence of research on this curriculum is clear and obvious, and is indeed a major part of its rationale.

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

This does not form any part of an integrated Ph.D., but would nevertheless constitute highly appropriate training for one.

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**

(not relevant)

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.

The scope of the External Examiner role was clearly and usefully defined.

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.

It was particularly important in this first year of operation that I should have good access to relevant background materials such as programme specifications and module descriptions, and this literature was provided in full from an early stage.

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?**

The only examination paper relevant to my area of scrutiny was the Paper Criticism, which I thought include questions at a carefully-selected level of challenge.

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?**

This is another respect in which a class size of N = 1 creates unusual conditions, but for all modules not under the jurisdiction of other examiners I was able to inspect all of the assessed work and found the level of assessment appropriate, with very good annotation of examiners' comments.

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

Only a single project was required this year, but this was highly appropriate in its subject-matter. The methods (plural) of assessment were absolutely on-target, and the standards applied appropriate.

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 can only describe the standard of administration of this programme as exemplary. I have found the efficiency and effectiveness of my interactions with the programme team to have been excellent overall, and absolutely impeccable since the appointment of the Programme Coordinator. Throughout the year, guidance, course materials and requests for advice and comment have come to me in a highly systematic and organised way. In the particular case of the Board of Examiners, this was particularly well managed, and was even able to accommodate my relatively late request for a change of date without any obvious impact on its effectiveness. I was completely satisfied with the conduct of that Board meeting, and have no doubt at all that the conclusions reached were both robust and fair.

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

I was satisfied that appropriate processes for the evaluation of mitigating circumstances operated in the context of this programme.

Other comments

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

This first year of operation for the MRes programme was unusual because there was only a single student undertaking the degree. Although I was completely satisfied that this did not lead to any disadvantage to the student, there are clearly some aspects of examination, most notably comparability between students in marks awarded, that I have had no opportunity to evaluate. This will become possible in the coming year, in which I am told the class size is rather larger.

School of Medicine
Faculty of Medicine and Health
Worsley Building
Clarendon Way
Leeds
LS2 9NL



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26th February 2015

Dear <>

External Examiner's report for Molecular Medicine 2013-14

As the School of Medicine's Director of Postgraduate Studies, I receive all the External Examiners' reports for the eighteen subjects offered at Master's level in 2013-14. First, let me welcome you to your role and thank you for assembling the 2013-14 report for the programme in Molecular Medicine. This is your first report for this programme. I note that you have previously submitted a report for the Master of Research in Medicine. I apologise for the delay in this response.

I note that there were no urgent matters for attention. You comment that the academic standards and content of student work are appropriate for the level of award. You report that you were given comprehensive access to student work and assessments and the administrative arrangements worked well.

Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by <>, Programme Leader. <> addresses the points made about double marking and consistency of guidance presented to markers.

Student experience

In 2013-14 the Molecular Medicine students produced excellent programme evaluation in a University survey. You met the students at an early stage and this helped to establish a good relationship with the students before their assessments.

Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner. Your contributions to the Molecular Medicine programme are much valued.

Yours sincerely

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Enc: <> 20 November 2014

Director of Postgraduate Studies

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**Leeds Institute of Biomedical and Clinical Sciences
School of Medicine, University of Leeds
Room 8.28A Clinical Sciences Building
St James's University Hospital
Leeds LS9 7TF**

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10 November 2014

Dear <>,

Re: MSc Molecular Medicine 2013-14, Report of External Examiner

Firstly I would like to apologise for the delay in this response, which is a reflection of the need to complete a lengthy programme review form for 2013-14. Secondly, many thanks for your excellent help throughout the year. Since this was the first year of the course, the interim report was especially useful since this reinforced conversations relating to marking (double marking and disparities) and informed our actions during the second half of the academic year.

Since there were only minor comments for attention on the MSc Molecular Medicine course in the examiner's report, I have also included your interim report in my programme review. I am pleased that you found the course offered a good mix of compulsory and optional taught modules in addition to a strong research project, and that the research-led content was at an appropriate level. In line with your recommendation we are offering a greater choice of projects from which students can select in 2014-15. We have just offered 15 projects for 8 students in 2014-15.

With respect to your suggested minor adjustment to the mix and weightings of assessments in different modules, we will make some small changes and keep this under careful review. This issue was also discussed, for example during the module review meeting of MEDM 5221M Cancer biology and molecular oncology. Although there was some variation allowed and flexibility for module leaders, overall, as programme leader, I had ensured that the workload would be relatively uniform across the modules during approvals by the School and Faculty committees. Nevertheless, for 2014-15 we will adjust timing of some assessments, such as making sure formative assessments take place before summative assessments, where possible across modules. Over the course of the year I will review the assessments and weightings across modules, but have to be mindful of there being

only one time of the year that I can seek approval for significant change in the university system!

I was pleased that you were satisfied with the examination process, and that you had enough material made available to you to evaluate the standards of the assessments as well as the consistency and quality of feedback received by the students. We noted your comment that a lot of markers were involved. Although we will aim to reduce the number of markers to improve equality of student experience, we will also be very careful “to draw the required procedures clearly to the attention” of all of markers over the coming year. I am happy that you found that “appropriate standards were applied consistently and conscientiously” regarding marking. Your suggestions recorded in the interim report concerning double marking and rationalising of discrepant marks were implemented in 2013-14 as described above. We will continue to be vigilant!

We are very grateful for your first report and helpful comments. We look forward to working with you over the coming year and your two visits to Leeds.

Yours sincerely

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*Programme Leader
MSc Molecular Medicine*