

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Human Disease and Therapy;</i> <i>Biotechnology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Biosciences
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*

. No

#### 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 outcomes underpin a high quality programme whose standards are appropriate.

#### 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.*

As stated last year, the programme compares favourably with similar programmes, and easily meets or exceeds national standards.

**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.*

Last year's comments still apply: Assessment is continuous, relying on in-course assessment using a variety of different assessment formats. This allows the ILOs to be comprehensively assessed.

The marking arrangements are clear, stringent and appear very fair. Having reviewed the projects and a number of pieces of coursework, I did not find a single instance of a mark that I felt was not appropriate. The clear marking criteria are likely to be a major factor in this.

This year, I and the other examiners felt that marking of coursework and projects was very strict, though we did not feel that any students were disadvantaged by this. We carefully considered the borderline candidates.

**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 reiterate my comments of previous years about how the programme's design provides an excellent path for the development of knowledge and skills that produce good scientists.

**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.*

The programme has not changed significantly since last year. Please refer to my comments from last year in regards to areas of good practice. These still very much apply.

**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 profile of the Faculty clearly influences the curriculum. This is entirely appropriate. The variety of research in the Faculty ensures that students have the possibility to experience a wide array of research fields.

**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.*

As with previous years, the material that was made available and the briefings with the staff provided more than sufficient information to allow me to get to carry out what 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.*

As before, all of the information was provided in a timely manner, and the policies and procedure were clear and appropriate.

**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?**

N/A No exams in this programme, as it is continuously assessed.

**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 provision of large samples of the assessed course-work on a memory stick some months before the exam board, is an excellent innovation. This allowed me to spend spread the evaluation over a longer, less intense period, which allows for greater reflection on the assessments.

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

I refer to my comments from previous years:

With any programme of this type, the dissertation topics generally reflect the research interests and backgrounds of the academic staff. This is appropriate, and the range of projects suggests that students are able to undertake a topic allied to their interests. The project assessment was, as with other assessments, stringently and fairly assessed. The different component parts of the project assessment and the instructions to markers are very clear.

**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 refer to last year's comments:

The administration of the assessment process is clear, scrupulously fair and efficient.

I did attend the exam board meeting. It was conducted fairly, a few small clarifications were discussed, but the process was smooth and the results were agreed by all attendees.

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

N/A this year

#### Other comments

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

The programme maintains high standards and I believe that it meets, and indeed, can exceed, the students' expectations. Meeting with the students at the poster session and "debriefing", allows the external examiners to get excellent insight into their perception of the course. It is generally a very positive affair. It's an impressive programme.

**Faculty of Biological Sciences**  
**Student Education Service**

Student Education Office  
Irene Manton Building  
University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT, UK



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

8 January 2016

Dear

**RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2014/15:**  
***MSc Human Disease and Therapy***  
***MSc Biotechnology***

Thank you for your report and for the very positive comments on our programmes. We were pleased to note that you consider the programme's design to provide an excellent path for the development of knowledge and skills that produce good scientists and that our programmes easily meet or exceeds national standards.

We note that you felt the marking was sometimes quite hard although you did not feel that any students were disadvantaged by it. We have discussed the use of marking criteria at a recent School Staff meeting and the use of descriptors in the higher range. We will continue to ensure that clear guidance on marking criteria are provided to staff.

We appreciate that acting as External Examiner is an additional call on your time and we are grateful for your input. We look forward to welcoming you back as an External Examiner in 2016.

Yours sincerely,

Faculty Director of Student Education

Tel: 0113  
Email: