

## 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 Science
Subject(s):	<i>Bioscience, Biotechnology, Plant Science &amp; Biotechnology / Bioinformatics &amp; Genomics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Plant Science & Biotechnology
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	M.Sc

**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

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?

**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 course continues to be of a very high quality and the emphasis on laboratory skills is very impressive. A few minor improvements have been made but in reality the course and its monitoring were already of a sufficiently high standard.

**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 course compares favourably with similar courses elsewhere. The subjects are interesting and relevant, the monitoring is excellent and there is a clear sense that the staff go the extra mile to provide the students with a first-rate course.

**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 assessment methods are varied, with a range of different methods employed. The assessments are in general effective and while the module marks vary, this is to be expected and I did not find any cause for concern. I found the marking to be fair, having been present at poster assessments and having gone through exam scripts and project marking. My sole concern is that written feedback was sometimes too brief, especially for projects. In one case the feedback amounted to only a few words, and I would recommend clear guidelines to staff concerning the quality and quality of feedback required.

**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.*

The Plant cohort this year was unusually low – just 2 students – and it would not be appropriate to provide an assessment of their performance with such a small sample size. However, after talking to them I did not note any obvious causes for concern.

**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.*

Minor changes have been made but as indicated above, the small size of the cohort precludes effective assessment of their effects

**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 modules taught, especially the projects, are heavily influenced by the research profiles of the staff. This is to be expected and the wide variety of research areas ensures a good choice for students.

**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.*

Yes, the information was sufficient

- 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

- 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?**

Yes

- 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?**

Yes, apart from a lack of feedback on a few projects

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

Yes – highly 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?**

Totally satisfactory, and I was able to attend the exam board

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

Yes

#### Other comments

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

Faculty of Biological Sciences  
Student Education Service

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



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

14 January 2016

Dear

**RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2014/15**  
***MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology***

Thank you for your very positive report on this course. You commented that written feedback on some projects is sometimes too brief. It should be noted that the project supervisor gives quite extensive written feedback to the student on a draft version of the report, which the student is then expected to address in the final version which is submitted for assessment. However we will remind project assessors to give sufficient comment to ensure that the examiners can understand the rationale for the mark awarded. In terms of feedback to and from students we have implemented an end of module feedback session for all modules and have reminded module managers to make use of marking proformas where appropriate and to keep in mind that feedback should allow the student to understand why they got the mark they did and provide some guidance for improvement.

We have a much larger cohort (11) on the programme this academic year as well as some integrated masters students (MBiol) taking some of the modules.

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,

Programme Leader

Tel: 0113 :  
Email: