

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:	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?

N/A

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.*

The programme has a clear applied chemistry / materials focus. In all the students take five 15 credit modules and one 30 credit module together with a 75 credit extended research project. The modules introduce the students to the areas of colour science and colour application technology, polymer synthesis and application, characterisation techniques and fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis. The topics for the research projects have a significant industrial relevance covering areas such as surface coatings for sub-sea applications, magnetic and curable inks, cancer therapeutics and hydrogels for wound dressings and fire glazing. Overall it is evident that 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.*

There is a long standing history of Colour Science at Leeds University and the Department of Colour Science is now the only European Department and only one of three Departments worldwide that provides teaching and research in all areas of colour science. The programme objectives are commensurate with the award of a Master's degree and are clearly of the expected standard of courses in other Universities in the area of applied chemistry.

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 examination, essay, tutorial performance, poster and oral presentations. This is considered entirely appropriate for this type of course. Five of the modules were assessed through a written examination (75-100% of the total mark) while two were entirely through essay / problem based exercises. I was sent examination scripts and model answers for the Colour Chemistry modules to approve well in advance of the examination. The marking criteria were clear and appropriate. I was provided with all of the written examination scripts and course work and it is evident that the assessment process has been rigorous and fair. Second marking was undertaken on the few borderline examination scripts. Some examination scripts were annotated to explain the reason for the marks awarded. There was excellent feedback provided to students for coursework. The Extended research project was assessed through Dissertation, Practical, Oral and Poster presentation. All dissertations were double marked. I was also provided with the posters prepared by the students for their specific projects.

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 ten students enrolled on the course and the standard of work produced was very high. The average marks attained for the modules ranged from 58.6 to 74.1%. Only one student failed a module [CHEM 5226M] and two passed a module [COLO5180M] after resitting the examination. Overall, four students gained a 'Pass with distinction', four a 'Pass with Merit' and two a straight pass. The performance of the students in the Research Project was very high and the average mark was 72%. The dissertations were very well structured and the presentation was excellent.

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 the second year that this course has run in its present form and all but one of the modules were the same as last year. Module CHEM5116M was no longer offered as an optional module as recommended in my report of last year. The module 'Advanced Programme Learning in Organic Chemistry' [CHEM 5511M] was offered as an alternative optional module and was chosen by three of the students.

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 interests of the programme team are reflected in the topics offered for the Extended Research Project Module. The topics had a strong industrial / applied science focus drawing on the internationally recognised research expertise of the staff. It is very evident from reading the dissertations that all of the students thoroughly enjoyed undertaking this module.

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 was provided with all of the necessary information to undertake my duties as external examiner.

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 necessary documentation including the Code of Practice on Assessment and the Programme Handbook giving details of the modules.

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 sent copies of the examinations questions with model answers prior to the examinations. The nature and level of the questions was entirely appropriate.

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?

I was provided with copies of all of the examinations scripts and coursework together with copies of the Dissertation and Poster for the Extended Research Project for each student. Scripts were clearly marked and annotated where necessary.

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

The students were able to choose the topic for their Extended Research Project from a list drawn up by the staff. The topics chosen by the students were very relevant to the theme of the Masters course and were of an applied nature involving areas such as surface coatings for sub-sea applications, magnetic and curable inks, cancer therapeutics and hydrogels for wound dressings and fire glazing. All dissertations were marked independently by two members of staff.

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 most of the Programme Team. The meeting was conducted in a professional manner and the performance of each of the students was reviewed. 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 one of the students was noted.

Other comments

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

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

21 December 2015

Dear

RE: MSc Polymers, Colorants and Fine Chemicals 2014/15

I am writing on behalf of the School of Chemistry in response to your Examiner's report for 2014/15. Thank you very much for your contribution and I am glad that you have enjoyed working with us; we have certainly valued your input.

I am very pleased to hear your view that the programme objectives are commensurate with the award of a Master's degree and are of the expected standard of courses in other Universities in this area of applied chemistry.

Thank you also for your positive comments about the programme and, in particular, your comments relating to the standard of the students' research projects and also the strong industrial/applied science focus which draws upon the internationally recognised research interests of the staff involved.

In the meantime, we shall certainly continue along the lines of your positive comments and look forward to contacting you again in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

Cc