

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Pharmacology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BMSC3101 Inherited Disorders BMSC3143 Advanced Topics in Pharmacology I BMSC3149 Drug Development: pre-clinical to practice BMSC3302 Medical Pharmacology BMSC1210 Introduction to Pharmacology BMSC2210 Chemotherapy BMSC2214 Introduction to toxicology BMSC2223 Neuropharmacology BMSC2224 Principles of Drug Discovery BMSC3233 Advanced Topics in Pharmacology II BMSC2117 Cardio-respiratory Pharmacology BMSC1190 Experimental Skills BMSC2118 Neurobiology BMSC3140 Advanced Scientific Skills
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

There are no urgent matters requiring attention.

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.*

ILOs were appropriate to the year of study, as were both module content and structure.

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 aims and ILOs were of the high standard that I would expect from most UK institutions offering first degrees in Pharmacology and Biomedical Sciences. The breadth of the material covered, as well as the level of detail, was excellent, and the broad range of pharmacology and neuroscience-based research at Leeds meant that the course offered a rich and diverse array of subject material with which to engage the student.

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.*

In general, assessment across the scripts I reviewed was of the short answer or essay format, with some questions based upon calculations or problem solving. All of the methods of assessment were appropriate to the subject material and were in line with assessment methods at my own and other institutions of which I have knowledge. Marking was generally excellent, with supplementary reading and significant errors well annotated by markers and often with a brief summary of the value (or lack thereof) for an answer. The level of annotation this year was the highest I have seen and such dedication to marking students' work is highly commendable.

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.*

Students were clearly able to demonstrate achievement, with the better students scoring well across questions/modules and several outstanding individual performances in the final year. The Advanced Pharmacology modules, in particular, were useful in showing student engagement with topics they enjoyed, highlighting strong links to research and showing good evidence of students having read the literature in depth. In general the students appeared to perform as well as those on similar courses on which I have taught and/or examined. On speaking to students during informal interviews in March, I was impressed by their drive and engagement, and can say that members of the pharmacology teaching staff are held in high regard. Students were very positive indeed during the spring interview session – although it would have been even better had more students managed to come along to the interviews.

In terms of student strengths, again this year many of the students showed evidence of having read around the subject with quotations and citations from journal articles used to underpin statements in essay questions. For obvious reasons, this was most apparent in the Advanced Topics modules; however, it was evident elsewhere on occasion too. I had a small number of borderline cases to review this year, and this process confirmed that academic staff were able to weigh and justify borderline cases well, and were very fair to the students who had suffered mitigating circumstances. I thought the projects were very strong in this year's cohort, with some really excellent work that justified students' 1st Class awards. I noted many examples of nuanced understanding and high proficiency in written English.

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.

There were no major revisions of module content.

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.

As mentioned above, there is a strong theme of research informing the curriculum and I am very impressed by the links between research and teaching. I particularly enjoyed the laboratory visits in March, with students undertaking pharmacology and radiolabelling experiments showing real engagement with wet lab science. There is a great deal of hard work in running

so many practical classes, including using radioactivity and the staff involved impressed me with their enthusiasm and engagement with students.

Again this year, some students had clearly experienced research-intensive placements, and had benefitted greatly from the experience of working away from the University. Placement students were very clear in their plans after graduation.

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

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.

This was excellent, scripts and projects were supplied as well as examples of projects in each of the classification bands.

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.

All appropriate documentation was received in good time.

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 all papers were provided along with model answers.

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?

Marking was often of a very high standard, and I was presented with a sufficiently large number of scripts to be certain they were representative. Annotation of scripts was the best I have seen so far this year, with almost all staff annotating work with useful and informative comment.

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

Yes, the subjects of dissertations was clearly appropriate to an UG science degree and many were really very good. The marking sheet was mostly well used and consistency between markers was also mostly excellent. Where I saw large discrepancies between markers these appeared to have been resolved, however, I did not feel this was always clearly justified. In a similar regard, I would really have liked to see some annotation on the project manuscripts themselves. The use of annotation by markers is one of the cornerstones of my confidence in the rigour of the examinations process, and extending this level of transparency and useful, informative comment to the projects would be similarly reassuring and helpful. Any decision about annotation of projects is likely to involve a discussion of use of Turnitin (or similar) to provide annotations and I would hope that this is not used to provide annotation as, in my experience, this leads to use of generic phrases that defeat the whole process.

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?

The examinations board was fairly and transparently conducted with clear regard to fairness towards students whilst maintaining rigour. The process was efficiently chaired and administered. I was asked to consider some borderline cases (<>, <>, <> and <>) and I felt that these were dealt with appropriately and with fairness towards the students involved.

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

This was very good indeed and I thought the whole process very fair to students. I had detailed discussions over two cases of mitigating circumstances and felt the issues was thoughtfully and fairly considered.

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

7 November 2016

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2015/16

BSc Pharmacology – all programme variants

BSc Pharmacology in Relation to Medicine

MBiol, BSc Pharmacology (Integrated Masters) – all programme variants

Thank you for another year as our External Examiner and for your examiner's report with the many positive comments regarding the degree programmes' content, teaching and student performance. In particular, it was good to read that you thought the projects were very strong this year and also that the level of examination script annotation was the highest you have seen. In contrast to previous years, on this occasion there were a few borderline cases to review, and I was glad to read in your report that our process for deciding these cases was fair. I notice that you would like to see more students attending the feedback session with you during your March visit – we will endeavour to recruit more for 2017.

Thank you once again for the all the effort you have put into the role of External Examiner during the academic year and I look forward to working with you again next year.

Best wishes,

Pharmacology Programme Leader

Tel: 0113 34

Email: