

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:	Medicine
Subject(s):	<i>Molecular Medicine</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Molecular Medicine
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.

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 Intended Learning Outcomes, and the structure of the degree course generally, are well configured to deliver the right kind of research-focused experience, and at an appropriate standard for Masters level.

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.*

(n/a)

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 used are a mix of well-established approaches, with dissertations, practical reports, spoken presentations and posters between them forming the bulk of the assessed material. This is entirely appropriate for the award, and the formats of the assessments in different modules are well documented.

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 have reviewed, and provided detailed comments on, all the assessments undertaken by this cohort of students during the 2015-16 academic year. I have made some very minor suggestions directly to the degree organisers for further improvement of the good practice in this area, but in general terms I find the marking to be at an appropriate level, clearly documented, and fair. In the specific case of the project report, I read and independently marked all of the submitted reports, and I found that I agreed closely with both the marks awarded and the comments made for all of the project reports except one, in which I considered that the marks awarded had been somewhat generous. This led to further review of the marking of that report, including the involvement of a third examiner from Leeds, followed by appropriate discussion of this specific report at the Examiners' meeting. I am completely satisfied that this and the other project reports have been subject to thorough and fair assessment, and that they have received the marks they deserve.

I met with 10 of the 12 MSc students on February 18th 2016, and we had a wide-ranging and interesting conversation about their experience. I have provided detailed feedback on this to the degree organisers, but in general terms the students are highly positive about their degree experience and would strongly recommend it to others.

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.

I made no substantial suggestions for the improvement of the degree programme last year, and therefore have no points to report here. This remains a well-organised, carefully delivered and impeccably administered 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 degree programme is very strongly led by elements of research, including the substantial research project contribution, and the involvement of research staff in the delivery of taught material. This is necessary to a Masters' degree in this area, and is effectively delivered.

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)

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.

Excellent supporting guidance was provided to me to assist my role as External Examiner. Although the University-level material was available and useful, the most relevant and helpful material was made available at School level.

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.

The availability of the online resource (SharePoint) meant that the assessments undertaken by the students had documentation that was fully available to me. As a result, I was able not only to review all the work assessed for these students, but also confirm that the marking process is appropriately and fully documented.

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?

In many cases, the assessments did not take the form of a traditional set examination, but had strong individual-specific elements. For this reason, prior screening of most assessment material was not helpful. I was nevertheless able to inspect the outcomes of the different assessments, and satisfy myself that different students were being marked on a level playing field. In this respect, it is very positive that where possible, to enhance uniformity, the assessments used a small number of examiners from Leeds.

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?

(see point 11 above)

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

The dissertation (research project) choices were highly appropriate to the degree programme, and provided a strong research experience for the students.

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 interim Committee of Examiners meeting on February 18th, and at the final committee meeting on September 20th, and both processes were run to a high standard, with good regard for formal process, thorough discussion, and clear and accurate documentation.

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

As is clear from the minutes of the Examiners' meetings, mitigating circumstances are systematically considered, and it is clear that effective and well-documented mechanisms are in place to ensure that students have such circumstances properly taken into account.

Other comments

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

This degree programme remains a strong, well-received and well-organised offering. Indeed, the tight and thorough administrative support for this degree is a beacon of good practice that should be recognised. If I have any minor imperfection to raise, it is with the format of this form. Some simple work could be done to clear the boxes of the (sometimes quite bizarre) indentation and variable fonts. Although it is necessary to ensure that external examiners provide information in a range of specific categories, dividing the process into so many individual questions does break up the subject matter into something that looks like a checklist. In reality, the important considerations are integrated into a whole, and it would be good to reflect this in larger blocks of text, while retaining some way to ensure that all the necessary factors have been properly considered.

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19 November 2016

Dear <<>>

External Examiner's report for Molecular Medicine 2015-16

On behalf of the School of Medicine, I should like to thank you for submitting your report as External Examiner for the Molecular Medicine programme at the University of Leeds.

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 were exemplary.

Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by <<>>, Programme Leader. <<>> documents your detailed approach in your role as External Examiner, noting your visits to Leeds, discussions with the students and careful consideration of the work submitted by the students.

Design of the External Examiner's report form

I share your frustration with the design of the University's report form. Each year I review the reports of 20-30 External Examiners. The closed questions do not allow for a development of ideas on the strengths and weaknesses of programmes. I have sent these comments to the Quality Assurance Team which is responsible for the form.

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

Yours sincerely

<<>>

<<>>

Enc<<>> 10 November 2016

Director of Postgraduate Studies
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Director of Postgraduate Studies
c/o <<>>
Student Education Service
School of Medicine
Level 7 Worsley Building

10 October 2016

Dear <<>>

MSc Molecular Medicine 2015-16

Report of External Examiner, Professor John Armour

<<>> has been the External Examiner for the MSc Molecular Medicine since 2013-14.

I am pleased to report that <<>> does not have any major comments for attention on the MSc Molecular Medicine course in his examiner's report.

Standards

<<>> finds our learning outcomes are at an appropriate standard for Masters level. <<>> commends the configuration of the course, the research focus experience it provides to students and the quality of research led teaching in the course. <<>> also finds the variety of assessments methods in the programme appropriate and at right standards.

<<>> does a thorough work of checking every piece of assessment from all MSc students and provides us with specific comments on each module every year. <<>> marks are usually correlated with the marks awarded by Leeds internal markers. This academic year <<>> reported on one mark for a project report which <<>> thought was too generous. Following his comments the project report was additionally marked by a third marker and the mark was discussed at the Committee of Examiners meeting on 20 September 2016.

<<>> has no suggestion for improvement. <<>> finds the programme “remains well-organised, carefully delivered and impeccably administered”.

Examination Process

<<>> is extremely satisfied with the guidance offered to him at School level. <<>> makes use of the SharePoint resource where <<>> can access all assessments and feedback and check that the marking process is well documented.

<<>> only criticism regards the format of the External Examiner Report form and its breakdown into too many questions.

We are grateful to <<>> for <<>> report and <<>> helpful comments. We are pleased we managed to act on <<>> comments in previous years to raise the standards of our programme to <<>> expectations.

Yours sincerely

<<>>

<<>>

Programme Leader

MSc Molecular Medicine