

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:	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.*

It is very evident that the course structure, content and intended learning outcomes are appropriate for a Masters Level Course. The programme has a strong materials chemistry focus and the structure has changed slightly from the previous year. It consists of five taught modules and an Extended Laboratory Project. The taught modules consist of 3x15 credit and 1 30x credit modules concerned with colour and polymer chemistry and advanced instrumental techniques and the students have a choice of one of two additional 15 credit modules from a Chemistry-based MSc programme concerned with fine chemical and pharmaceutical synthesis. A key change this year has been that the introduction of the Extended Laboratory Project valued at 90 credits which replaces the 75 credit Extended Research Project. This is a welcome change as it gives the students a greater opportunity to put into practise the knowledge gained from the taught element of the programme. As in previous years the research topics for the projects were very much of an applied nature dealing with industrially relevant topics.

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 main theme for this course is polymer and colour chemistry and the staff within the Department are recognised internationally for their expertise in this area. The programme objectives are commensurate with the award of a Master's degree and are clearly of the expected standard of courses offered by 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.*

The main method of assessment for the taught modules was through a written examination (75-100% of the total mark) although the Chemistry Module on Case Studies in Fine Chemical and Pharmaceutical Studies was assessed entirely by essay. I was sent the examination scripts and model answers for the Colour Chemistry modules to approve well in advance of the examinations. The questions set were appropriate for a Masters level course and the marking criteria were clear. The Extended Laboratory Project was assessed through Dissertation, Practical, Oral and Poster presentations. I was invited to attend the oral presentations and was highly impressed by the quality of the research work undertaken and by the professionalism of the students. Their knowledge and enthusiasm for the research work was very clear from their presentations and response to questions.

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.*

Unlike previous years I did not have the opportunity to view the student written examination scripts, course work or dissertations. There were seventeen students enrolled on the course compared to ten last year and the examination marks awarded were high. Overall, seven students gained a 'Pass with distinction', seven a 'Pass with Merit' and two a straight Pass. One student was classified as 'Delayed Award' due to ill health. The performance of the students in the Extended Laboratory Project was very high with nine of the students gaining marks of 70% and above. I was invited to attend the oral presentations and was highly impressed by the quality of the research work undertaken and by the professionalism of the students. Their knowledge and enthusiasm for the research work was very clear from their presentations and response to questions.

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 third year that this course has run in its present form. The most significant change from last year is that the Extended Research Project valued at 75 credits has been replaced by the Extended Laboratory Project valued at 90 credits. As noted above I was given the opportunity to attend the student oral presentations and it was clear that the students enjoyed this element of the course and clearly demonstrated a good knowledge for the subject. Another change to the course was that the module 'Advanced Programme Learning in Organic Chemistry' [CHEM 5511M] was replaced as an alternative optional module by the Case Studies in Fine Chemical and Pharmaceutical Synthesis.

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 Laboratory Project. The topics had a strong applied research focus drawing on the internationally recognised expertise of the staff in the areas of colour chemistry and polymer science.

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 External Examiner Handbook, the Programme Handbook, the Code of Practise on Assessment and the Rules for Award.

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 received all of the necessary documentation including the Programme Handbook giving details of the modules and the marking criteria for examinations.

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 for a Masters level programme.

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?

Unlike previous years I was not provided with copies of completed examinations scripts, coursework or copies of the Dissertations.

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 topics such as polymer systems for fire glazing, ink-jet printing, foams, photodynamic therapy, drug delivery and waterless dyeing.

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?

Unlike previous years, I did not receive an invitation to attend the Board of Examiners meeting. MSc module mark sheets and classifications were sent to me by email in accordance with the letter I received from the Director of Student Education at the start of the Academic year.

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

I understand that one student submitted a case for mitigating circumstances but I did not receive any details.

Other comments

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

I was very appreciative of the chance to attend the student research presentations but a little disappointed at not attending the Examination Board as in the past.

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20 December 2016

Dear <<>>

RE: MSc Polymers, Colorants and Fine Chemicals 2015/16

I am writing on behalf of the School of Chemistry to provide a formal response to your Examiner's report for 2015/16.

I was very pleased to hear that you feel the programme objectives are commensurate with the award of a Master's degree and also, are of the expected standard of courses offered by other Universities in the area.

I have responded below to the key points raised in this year's report and I hope the responses provided address the comments made:

- Unlike previous years I did not have the opportunity to view the student written examination scripts, course work or dissertations

Please accept my apologies for this. Module marks sheets, scripts and projects should have been sent to you in September for scrutiny before sign off. This was an administrative oversight on our part.

I understand that the date for the Progression and Awards Board has been circulated to you for September. I have asked the Exams Team to ensure they follow this up closer to the time to ensure a) your availability (though electronic sign off is acceptable) and b) you have the necessary paperwork to accompany the mark approval sign off.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to continue your External Examiner responsibilities for the School for one additional year. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

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Head of School

Cc <<>>