

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>Biotechnology; Infection, Immunity and Human Disease</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Biosciences
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

No

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 content and structures of the programmes are entirely appropriate, and of a standard for a high quality master's programme.

- 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 programme continues to compare favourably with similar programmes, and easily meets or exceeds national standards.

- 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.*

Previous years' comments continue to apply: Assessment is continuous, relying on in-course assessment using a variety of different assessment formats. This allows the ILOs to be comprehensively assessed.
The marking arrangements are clear, stringent and appear very fair. Having reviewed the projects and a number of pieces of coursework, I felt that the marking was mainly consistent and appropriate. The clear marking criteria are likely to be a major factor in this.
As previously, I and the other examiner felt that the expectations, assignment and marking of the student's work is rigorous. We carefully considered the borderline candidates and moderated where appropriate.

- 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 continue to be impressed by how the programme's design provides an excellent path for the development of knowledge and skills that produce high quality scientists.

- 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.

The Immunology and Human Disease and Treatment streams have been redeveloped into the single *Infection, Immunity and Human Disease* stream. In my meeting with the students, there was a mixed response to this. Some students felt that the Disease element was not strong enough.

- 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.

A stated last year, the research profile of the Faculty clearly influences the curriculum. This is entirely appropriate. The variety of research in the Faculty ensures that students have the possibility to experience a wide array of research fields.

- 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.

As with previous years, the material that was made available and the briefings with the staff provided more than sufficient information to allow me to get to carry out what my duties.

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. As stated before, all of the information was provided in a timely manner, and the policies and procedure were clear and appropriate.

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?

N/A. No exams in this programme, as it is continuously assessed.

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?

This year, examiners were given access to large samples of the assessed course-work on a shared drive some months before the exam board. This allowed me to spend spread the evaluation over a longer, less intense period, which allows for greater reflection on the assessments. One improvement that could be made is that the actual assignment (i.e. the instructions for the assignments given to the students) was not included. Some of these were available in the VLE (to which we have access), but others were not evident.

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

I refer to my comments from previous years:
With any programme of this type, the dissertation topics generally reflect the research interests and backgrounds of the academic staff. This is appropriate, and the range of projects suggests that students are able to have the opportunity to undertake a topic allied to their interests. The project assessment was, as with other assessments, stringently and fairly assessed. The different component parts of the project assessment and the instructions to markers are very clear.

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?

As in previous years, the administration of the assessment process is clear, scrupulously fair and efficient.
I attended the exam board meeting. It was conducted fairly, a few small clarifications were discussed, but the process was smooth and the results were agreed by all attendees.

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

Mitigating circumstances had been considered prior to the Exam Board and the decisions were applied appropriately.

Other comments

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

As I have stated previously, meeting with the students at the poster session and "debriefing", allows the external examiners to get excellent insight into their perception of the course. In previous years, it has generally been a very positive affair. This year the students raised a number of issues. Most of these related to minor administrative problems, and I think that the general tone was strongly influenced by a couple of vocal individuals. It was my impression that the students sometimes felt that the response to their raising issues with the staff and administration was too slow. It may have been that class reps were not in place or ineffective. It might be worth developing clearer lines of communication, and mechanisms for response. I know that staff have already positively acted on some of the information that I passed to them after the meeting with the students.

I continue to be impressed by this programme. It maintains high standards, and I believe that it meets, and indeed, can exceed, the students' expectations. I would recommend it to my own BMS undergraduates.

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

20th December 2016

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2015/16:
MSc Infection, Immunity and Human Disease
MSc Biotechnology

Thank you very much for your report. We are very pleased with the support outlined in the report and your positive comments. As you know the MSc IIHD is a new course, formed by amalgamating two previous MSc so it is good to know that the external examiner felt that this ran successfully the first year.

We note that some students felt the Disease element was not strong enough and have made some modifications to course content to address this (for example in the Infectious and Non-Infectious Diseases module more emphasis on disease pathology has been included in the content).

We also note the concerns of some students about the administrative aspect of the course. As this was the first time the course had run we did try very hard to be proactive and respond to comments from students rapidly. For example in several cases we moved assessment deadlines to avoid 'bunching'. We have continuously advised the students to raise issues quickly so they can be dealt with in good time. This year we have looked carefully at assessment deadlines to spread them out more uniformly, we have also reduced the number of assessments in some modules to make the assessment burden more equal across the modules. So far there have been no complaints or issues raised by students regarding assessments so I hope that we are in a better place than last year.

Thank you again for your comments and input into the course, these are much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Programme Leader

Tel: 0113
Email: