

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

QA Team received 25/08/2017

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

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| Faculty / School of: | Lifelong Learning Centre |
| Subject(s): | <i>Interdisciplinary Science Foundation Year</i> |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | BSc Interdisciplinary Science with Foundation Year BSc Earth and Environmental Sciences with Foundation Year BSc Studies in Science with Foundation Year |
| Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc): | Progression to Year 1 |

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.

There were many examples of innovation and good practice:

- High quality, consistent module handbooks
- Use of pencasts to support maths learning in LLC0132
- Asking students to predict their own mark on coursework cover sheet in order to encourage reflection
- Use of Peerwise platform with which students create original multiple choice questions. This promotes learning and also creates a revision resource.
- Collaborative chemistry textbook.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.

The course remains at the high standard that I observed last year.

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

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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| 1. | Were you provided with an External Examiners Handbook? | NA |
| 2. | Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these? | NA |
| 3. | Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor? | NA |

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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| 4. | Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment? | NA |
| 5. | Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made? | NA |

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| 6. | Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this? | NA |
| 7. | Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor? | NA |

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

This is my second year as External Examiner and I count it a privilege to be involved with the Interdisciplinary Science Foundation Year in this capacity. It is a model of how foundation years should be run. The course is well resourced; the level of staffing allows the dedicated teaching staff to offer meaningful support to students from a wide variety of non-traditional backgrounds and, thus, to make a genuine contribution to widening participation. The modules are well developed and high quality. A variety of imaginative teaching and assessment methods are used to support learning in terms of both relevant academic knowledge and high level study skills. Excellent use is made of the VLE and the course material is varied and interesting.

Standards

| | | |
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| 8. | Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study? | Y |
| 9. | Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met? | Y |
| 10. | Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award? | Y |
| 11. | Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)? | Y |
| 12. | Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions? | Y |

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

The Foundation Year has built on years' of experience to become a mature, effective programme. Both the academic subject matter and the broader contexts of skills development are well designed to prepare WP students to become mature, independent learners, well equipped to thrive at university.

The course content is compatible with and similar to other FHEQ level 3 material (such as A levels) and is entirely appropriate. The course is comparable with other Foundation Years.

The course is staffed at an appropriate level so that students can receive tailored academic and pastoral support.

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| 13. | Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear? | Y |
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Please explain how this is/could be achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research)

The teaching staff were well-informed about evidence-based teaching and this informed the whole curriculum.

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| 14. | Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD? | N |
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:
NA

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| 15. | Does the programme include clinical practice components? | N |
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:
NA

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| 16. | Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)? | N |
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:
NA

Assessment and Feedback

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| 17. | Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment? | Y |
| <p><i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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.</i></p> <p>The students were assessed by means of a variety of course work and examinations. I observed many examples of high-quality feedback on marked coursework scripts. Exam papers were marked to a high standard.</p> <p>A number of innovative and creative assessments were used. These innovative activities stood out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LLLC0125, assessed poster exercise • LLLC0127, collaborative textbook | | |
| 18. | Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award? | Y |
| 19. | Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes? | Y |
| <p><i>Please comment on 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></p> <p>The wide variety of course work and examinations gave students with all learning styles the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. The standards were compatible with other level 3 courses such as A level.</p> <p>It is particularly impressive that all of those recruited to the Foundation Year are widening participation (WP) students. Given this fact it is not at all surprising that the student cohort showed a wide range of ability and engagement. Inevitably some students did not thrive but the progression rate - roughly 70% complete the course successfully – is in line with other foundation years I am familiar with.</p> <p>I was impressed with the way staff are able to quickly identify struggling students and intervene with academic support and pastoral advice in a timely manner.</p> | | |
| <p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>I have a minor concern regarding the appropriateness of using Google Docs for some groupwork assessments and booking tutorial sessions. I asked the staff to reflect on whether there were any data protection issues that might be avoided by using, for example, Sharepoint or some other collaborative platform that is under University control.</p> | | |

The Progression and Awards Process

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| 20. | Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process? | Y |
| 21. | Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner? | Y |
| 22. | Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility? | Y |
| 23. | Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility? | Y |
| 24. | Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility? | Y |
| 25. | Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? | Y |
| 26. | Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate? | Y |
| 27. | Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions? | Y |

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| 28. | Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? | Y |
| 29. | Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated? | Y |
| 30. | Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate? | Y |
| 31. | Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations? | NA |
| 32. | Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board? | Y |
| 33. | Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting? | Y |
| 34. | Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board? | Y |
| 35. | Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board? | Y |
| <p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>Exam papers and model answers were provided in a timely manner by email.</p> <p>When I visited Leeds for the Board of Examiners I was provided with all coursework and exam scripts for a representative subset of students. This was very helpful and gave a good overview of the student experience throughout the year.</p> <p>I spent a considerable amount of time this year exploring the course material available to students through the VLE. Effective use is made of Blackboard and the course documentation is of a high standard.</p> | | |

Other comments

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

I was able to meet with one student to get some insight into his perception of the Foundation Year. He was very happy with the course and made pains to emphasise that all of the staff were "excellent, approachable and helpful". He highlighted the collaborative chemistry textbook as a useful learning exercise that also resulted in a resource for revision.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Programme Manager, Science

Lifelong Learning Centre

*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at gat@leeds.ac.uk. External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

The examples highlighted provide a representative selection from across the modules from the SFY Programmes. This feedback will be shared with module tutors in the first instance, but also as examples of good practice further afield within the LLC, the ULs and national conferences.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

NA

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

NA

Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

NA

Standards**Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We are pleased to note the answers demonstrate the relevance and currency of the programme.

Assessment and Feedback**Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

A suitable on-line tool, such as excel in MS OneDrive/Office365 will be used instead of Google Docs to manage bookings and assigned groups.

The external's report highlights the uniqueness of the SFY Programme delivering the course to an exclusive population of Widening Participation students. It should be said that the students' success on the programme is positively supported by both the resources and personnel specifically provided by the LLC and the wider UL.

The Progression and Awards Process

Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

The external will continue to have access to a subset of student work (coursework and exams) across the different programmes.

Other comments

Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report

Into the future, additional opportunities will be available for the external to meet with students from across the broad progression pathways, biology or physics as this was a new inclusion during the external's visit.

16 August 2017

Dear

External Examiner's Report for 2016-17

I am writing to thank you for your work over the last year as External Examiner for our suite of science foundation years. I know that and team are very appreciative of your observations on our work from an external perspective and welcome your assurance of the overall quality of this provision.

This year, the University has added further sections to the External Examiner's form to provide you with a structured response to your report from our programme team. Please find this completed form enclosed so that you can see the thoughts and plans that arise from our consideration of your comments.

With all good wishes,