

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**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):	<i>Bioscience</i>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**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.*

The Biosciences Masters Programme provides a balance of theory and the acquisition of important practical skills, together with the opportunity to develop hypotheses and plan research, that is the programme's USP. Over the years, I have seen how much students get out of this approach and how much that they value the opportunities they it affords.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

In talking with the students, they made several comments about how they were made to feel welcome, included and well-informed during the induction to the programme. I know that the course administrator has added more to the induction process, which will further enhance this.

**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**

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y
7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	Y

*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*

It has been a pleasure to have examined in this programme. The programme provides a first-class training in Academic Bioscience theory and practice. The programme was already excellent when I started as an examiner, and the relatively modest changes and adjustments that have been made have been prompted by students, or external examiners, or by the desire of teaching and administrative staff to continue to enhance and improve, if necessary.

The education and assessment are extremely well-organised and scrupulously fair.

As I have said in previous reports, I would recommend the programme to Imperial undergraduates.

## Standards

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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>The content and structures of the programmes are entirely appropriate, and of a standard for a very high-quality master's programme.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>A stated previously, 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.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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*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.*

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 many pieces of coursework, I felt that the marking was 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.

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

*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:*

Again, I am impressed by how the programme's design provides an excellent path for the development of knowledge and skills that produce high quality scientists. The variety of the types of assessment used in the programme provides the opportunities for students with different strengths to be demonstrate these.

This year's cohort seemed to be particularly strong. I base this opinion on my talking with them individually in the poster session, the meetings with the student groups, and on their overall performance.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

## The Progression and Awards Process

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
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 <b>Masters p</b> projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N

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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

#### Other comments

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

I would like to thank the staff and administrators that have supported my role as examiner.

**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, Infection, Immunity and Human Disease

SMCB

\*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 [qat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:qat@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**

Many thanks for your supportive comments. We are particularly pleased to hear your positive comments around the influence of the research profile of the Faculty on the curriculum and research training the programme provides.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

As you note, we have enhanced the induction activities including the introduction of a mentoring system to support international students in particular to settle into the academic life of the university. The issue of 'clumping' of assessment deadlines was raised last year and we have spread these out more evenly. We also point out to students that a concentration of deadlines towards the end of a term is inevitable and that time management is required to meet these commitments.

**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:

No matters for urgent attention raised.

**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:

Many thanks for your positive comments.

**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:

Many thanks for your positive comments.

## 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:*

Many thanks for your positive comments.

## 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:*

Many thanks for your positive comments.

## Other comments

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

We would like to thank you very much for acting as External Examiner over the last few years, and for your comments and suggestions during this period. These has been invaluable in enhancing the quality of programme.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

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

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Bioscience MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**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.  
Unusually high level of laboratory work, via taught practicals during the course and in the individual research projects

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

**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

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

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3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y / N
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y / N
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y / N
7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

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

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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>The courses provide Masters-level training of a very high standard. The programme is effective and delivery is first-class. The standards are appropriate for MSc courses of this type and the courses are carefully managed by academic staff and associated administrative staff.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>Yes. The subject areas mirror some of the research areas in the departments involved, and individual research projects are carried out together with members of academic staff. The courses effectively capitalise on areas of excellence in the departments (e.g. bioimaging) and the net result is that the students acquire experience of state of the art research technology.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
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## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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 assessment methods are effective, comprising a mix of coursework, examinations and individual research project. The assessment procedures are geared to the type of module being taught and, overall, are fair and effective. Some of the module marks are higher than others, but this is to be expected given the variety of subject areas across the modules.</p>		
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

*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:*

The two courses are broadly similar in overall scope to other UK courses in this subject area but these courses are distinctive because of (i) the high level of practical work, which is extremely impressive and (ii) the unusually hands-on management systems. Overall, the academic standards of the students are at least similar, if not higher, than those in comparable courses. The overall strength of the cohort is high and there are only a few weak students. A high proportion of the cohort achieve distinction-level marks and these are invariably merited.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

**Overall: the course is excellent, and it is notable that over the last few years a series of improvements have served to maintain the high standards.**

### The Progression and Awards Process

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26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
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29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y
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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

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

### Other comments

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

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Programme Leader	
Biological Sciences	

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

**Completing the School response**

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**Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice**

Thank you for your appreciative comments.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

Not applicable

**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:

Not applicable

**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:

Not applicable

**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:

Thank you for your positive comments. No specific issues raised that require to be addressed

**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:

Thank you for your positive comments. No specific issues raised that require to be addressed

## 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:*

No issues to address

## Other comments

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

Not applicable