The University of Leeds

Received by QAT 20/11/2017

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

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 / 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

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

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N

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)
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.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N

Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N

Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N

Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

Assessment and Feedback

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

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.

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.

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

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 final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
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
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

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

Received by QAT 19/02/2018

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:	
Position:*	Programme Leader
Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Address for communication:	
Email:	
Telephone:	

**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. 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

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