

**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>Biodiversity and Conservation</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<b>MSc/MRes Biodiversity and Conservation</b>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	<b>MSc/MRes</b>

**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.*  
This Masters programme offers an excellent range of subjects, and thus provides opportunities for an array of future career trajectories among the graduates.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*  
No substantial changes to the programme took place during this 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**

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?	N/A
7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	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*

During my four years as External Examiner for this course, I have been able to develop a good understanding of the programme structure, assessments and learning outcomes. The range of modules available to students on this programme is very impressive, and contain a good range of conceptual and practical skills. The cohorts that I have been have been fairly similar in range and ability, but always of a good standard.

## 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 overall structure, aims and ILOs of the programme are all appropriate for Masters level, and constitute a high quality programme that provides a good range of opportunities for skills development. The range of available modules allows students to tailor their programme to their own interests and future career plans. The coursework and dissertation research provide a good range of opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in conceptual and practical arenas.</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>Several of the modules on this programme, particularly the conceptual modules, are clearly research-led and continually informed by research developments. In addition, the dissertation module provides direct opportunities for students to carry out high quality research projects.</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> <p>All of the skills taught on this programme are central to PhD training, and graduates from this programme who achieve good degrees would be very well placed to undertake PhD level research.</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> <p>N/A</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> <p>N/A</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.*

The breadth of assessment methods employed in this programme is impressive and appropriate to the ILOs, and the marking guidelines are all clear.

Student performance on coursework items has been consistently strong throughout the last four years and, on the rare occasions when students have experienced difficulties in completing coursework to a high standard, these matters have been addressed appropriately and with good concern for student development.

The dissertation work has been of a consistently high quality, highlighting the quality of the teaching and supervision on this programme.

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:*

This cohort of students again showed a strong academic performance that is comparable to standards on MSc programmes with which I am familiar. Most students on this cohort achieved merit or distinction grades, reflecting the quality of both the students that the programme attracts and the teaching that is delivered.

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

Some of the modules have quite a high assessment load (multiple items of summative coursework). Module organisers report that this is not excessive but it is an area that could potentially be streamlined, should that become necessary in the future.

### 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
<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 administrators, particularly \_\_\_\_\_, for providing such excellent and timely service throughout my time as External Examiner on this programme.

**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 Graduate School

\*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](mailto: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**

We are pleased to note the external examiner's very positive comments on the programme

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

n/a

**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:

n/a

**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:

We would like to thank you very much for acting as External Examiner over the last four years, and for your comments and suggestions during this period. These have helped to enhance the quality of our programmes.

**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 note the positive comments on the range of modules and training provided, and the high quality of the research projects.

**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:

We will continue to monitor the assessment load as suggested.

## 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 response needed.

## Other comments

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