

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Medicine
Subject(s):	<i>Medicine</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MRes Medicine
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MRes

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 is a research-led degree that delivers a high-level project experience, mainly to medical students partway through their training. Consequently it is of great importance that the project (and supervisors) are carefully selected and well matched to the students. This aspect of organisation is managed very well. The superb standard of general course administration in this program is also a feature of note.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.
Some relatively small but useful changes have been implemented, primarily in the area of detailed assessment format and/or mechanics of marking and documentation. I hope and expect that these will enhance the transparency and rigour of the assessment process as a whole.

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

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?	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

Throughout the period of my appointment the response of the programme organisers has been exemplary; I have particularly suggested changes to the detailed procedures of assessments, such as the allocation of the same examiners for all work in the same assessment, and these suggestions have been implemented promptly and fully. Similarly, I have made a series of suggestions to ensure the rigour of transparency and consistency of documentation for assessments. Overall, I believe that these changes have acted incrementally to enhance the equity and robustness of the assessment processes.

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)?	N/A
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 overall programme structure is a good blend of taught instruction with free-ranging research project experience, with a weighting towards the latter. This ensures that while the main emphasis is on prosecuting a sustained individual investigation, there is still the opportunity to receive instruction in a wider range of background skills and concepts.

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)

This programme takes the provision of a high-level research experience as its starting point, and research pervades the whole student experience.

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:

This programme is an excellent training for subsequent Ph.D. study, and would be easily recognised as such by prospective supervisors.

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: (not applicable)

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: (Not applicable)

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 assessment methods are highly appropriate to the intended learning outcomes, and I have worked with the programme organisers to refine the details of assessment methods and marking mechanics. The standard of student performance is exceptionally high, even given the preselected nature of the student group, and testifies to highly effective learning and assessment methods.

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:

It is difficult to evaluate comparisons with students on comparable courses, as I am not aware of similar courses allowing a Masters level research experience for mid-training medical students. Nevertheless, the academic standards achieved by these students is exceptionally high and in some cases formidably impressive.

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 Examiner's 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?	N/A
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>The Leeds VLE allowed me to review all examples of assessed work through the year for the students, with the exceptions of modules undertaken in other units. I was able to see all examples of answers by students, and the marks and feedback from examiners. In all cases I first undertook my own "blind" assessment of each piece of work, and on comparing with the marks awarded by the examiners from Leeds, I found that I was in good agreement with both their marks and their comments. Very generally, I have found that the marking adopts a fair but rigorous standard, and is documented clearly and fully. The assessment and awards process, including the examination board meeting, was impeccably organised and in making important decisions (such as at the border lines of degree classification) the University's rules were made clear and carefully followed.</p>		

Other comments

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

As well as attending and examining the final project seminars on July 5th, I met with the students at the beginning of their course in September, and partway through (in February). They discussed the arrangements for their degree in a highly informed and engaged way, and were overall highly satisfied with the experience. They raised some points for improvement, and in particular placing less emphasis on generic research modules provided by other units, but overall were very positive, most especially about their research project experiences.

Overall I think this is an excellent programme. It provides the opportunity for an advanced experience in modern research, and with appropriate and careful assessment. It is justly popular among students and supervisors alike, and deserves to thrive in the future.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Director of Student Education

School of Medicine

Worsley Building, School of Medicine, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2
9JT

*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

The School notes the research-intensive experience the students receive on the MRes programme.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

The MRes team has implemented inclusive marking scales in 2016-17. The School notes the excellent administration provided by the SESO's who rapidly respond to comments made by examiners and students.

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:

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:

The School is grateful to _____ for helpful suggestions about assessment in the new MRes programme. Student numbers have fluctuated between 1 and 13 but it is now established as the most research intensive intercalated programme available to medical students.

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:

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:

The School agrees that some of the MRes students perform exceptionally well and attend conferences to disseminate the research findings.

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:

We thank _____ for _____ articulation on the efficient manner of marking and the fair way in which the meetings of Assessors were structured.

Other comments

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