

**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:	Chemistry
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Degrees programme administered by the School of Chemistry
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc, MChem, taught 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.*

Overall the Chemistry programme is extremely well constructed and administered. The research project poster session and 1 minute presentations in final year work extremely well and are a good example of an innovative approach. The final year MChem lecture courses are also well structured with opportunities for choice (elective lecture courses) and part continual assessment.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

N/A

**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*

N/A

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

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

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

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

N/A

## 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 programme structure is well composed and logical. The balance between lecture courses, practical work, small group teaching and other forms of teaching and learning is good. The aims and ILOs are entirely appropriate for a high quality Chemistry course and compare very favourably with other UK institutions.

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)

Final year MChem lectures are predominantly driven by contemporary research topics. There are opportunities for literature studies/surveys in cutting edge research areas for both MChem and BSc students and final year research projects allow students to gain first-hand experience in leading research laboratories.

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:

(Research projects in final MChem and BSc years provide valuable experience of independent research and contact with PhD researchers.)

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:

N/A

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

The programme is Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) accredited. RSC accreditation guarantees a high level of teaching standards and is widely respected as a benchmark of teaching quality. RSC accreditation is recognised by both employers and (prospective) students.

## 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.

Although the majority of student assessment is *via* written examination and laboratory work, other assessment methods are also employed (such as the submission of a “portfolio” – continual assessment – in final year MChem). Project work and communication of project outputs (reports, posters, talks) are assessed in final years.

The means of assessment

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 examination questions involved a good level of problem solving and consistently tested the understanding of the students. Research projects allowed the opportunity for students to demonstrate independence, creativity and initiative. The performance of the student cohort was strong and the proportion of students achieving 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 class degrees was high.

*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?	Variable
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:*

While most assessed exam scripts and project reports were clearly marked and well annotated with useful comments/feedback, some did not meet the same high standards. Occasionally, marks/comments were illegible or minimal and this made the marking of some scripts difficult to review. A formal marking protocol might be useful, if not already in existence.

The standard of examination questions was very high and were appropriately challenging for students. Occasionally, the provided model answers lacked depth/clarity, but the subsequent responses to my comments were generally complete and satisfactory.

The assessment of research projects was thorough and followed a detailed mark scheme. In a few isolated cases, there was a rather large discrepancy between markers. In these situations, in future, it might be useful to engage a 3<sup>rd</sup> "adjudicating" assessor and/or ensure that the assessors can meet and discuss their evaluations.

#### Other comments

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

I would like to comment on the excellent level of support from academic and administrative staff during the entire external examination process throughout the year. Queries were always handled quickly and effectively and the organisation of the various visits was extremely efficient.

1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

Dear

**RE: Undergraduate Chemistry Programmes 201617**

I am writing on behalf of the School of Chemistry to provide a formal response to your Examiner's report for 2016/17.

I was very pleased to read that you find the aims and ILOs of our programmes to compare very favourably with other UK institutions. I was also pleased to see your comments on the links to research evident within the programmes.

In line with the University's new procedures, I enclose a copy of your report, together with (in part C) our detailed responses.

- *While most assessed exam scripts and project reports were clearly marked and well annotated with useful comments/feedback, some did not meet the same high standards.....*  
Guidelines have been circulated to examiners previously and will be circulated again with additional emphasis on annotations and making explicit where marks are awarded.
- *The standard of examination questions was very high and were appropriately challenging for students. Occasionally, the provided model answers lacked depth/clarity....*  
The importance of clear model answers/marketing schemes has been emphasised to examiners.
- *The assessment of research projects was thorough and followed a detailed mark scheme. In a few isolated cases, there was a rather large discrepancy between markers....*  
A moderation panel (comprising the module manager, Heads of Section, DSE and Academic Lead on Assessment) considers all final year MChem project marks. Where there are significant discrepancies among the two independent assessors of the final report we do sometimes use a third, "adjudicating" assessor, other times we ask the assessors to review their evaluations (and whether they reflect the marking criteria) separately. This process works well and is documented.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your considered contributions and we look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School