

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 26/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Biology

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Genetics

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BSc

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 well-organized and well-run degree program that draws on the extensive expertise and knowledge of staff across the School of Biology to deliver an up-to-date and relevant degree scheme that is heavily influenced by the strength of research in this area across the School. The opportunity for a final year research project enables students to gain first-hand experience of independent, but supervised research including experimental design and implementation, which builds on the more formal first and second year laboratory practical classes. The choice of laboratory projects is good given the breadth of research expertise underpinning the degree program. In terms of assessment, a wide-range of assessment procedures are used to assess achievement against the learning outcomes. For the exams, the dual marking and clear annotation of scripts, and well defined marking criteria and model answers are all elements of good practice.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

There were no significant enhancements this year as compared to last year, but no areas were identified last year where enhancements were required. The consistent use of second marking and clear annotation of exam scripts makes the work of external examiners straightforward and highlights the fair and rigorous way in which the work is assessed.

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

No matters for urgent attention were identified.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y
3.	Were you provided with an 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?	n/a
7.	Have you acted as an 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

When I started as external examiner this was, a well-run and well organised program. However, areas where improvement has been noted include the regular refreshing of course content and material to reflect the rapidly developing field, and in terms of assessment and the associated process, there has been an improvement in the level of second marking, enhancement of script annotation, plus use of the full range of marks within the well-defined marking scales.

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.

A well-structured program with breadth across the discipline, and clearly linked modules that build on previous years' work with a mix of prerequisite as well as optional modules. The course content is fresh and up-to-date, but also builds strongly on the established foundations of the subject. The mixed methods of course delivery and student assessment all contribute to the delivery of the learning outcomes.

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)

Very much so, the course content throughout the program is heavily influenced by the breadth of research expertise amongst academic staff contributing to this program. The final year research project is a very clear example of research inspired teaching.

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:

The course provides a very clear and strong foundation in the core discipline as well as a wide range of practical experience from formal laboratory classes to independent final year research projects. These in combination provide a strong foundation for PhD study

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:

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 MBIol and BSc with Industrial Placement courses have Advanced Accreditation by the Royal Society of Biology.

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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>A wide range of assessment methods are employed throughout the program, including a combination of formative and summative assessment. Laboratory practical classes are assessed by lab reports, and other in course assessment elements include presentations, essay writing, literature reviews, manuscript reviews and problem solving. Final year research projects are embedded within a research laboratory environment so this provides assessment opportunities in terms of research performance and independence, as well as the assessment of the final year project report. These diverse in-course assessment methods are complemented by the end of semester examinations that test accumulated knowledge and integrated learning.</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
<p><i>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:</i></p> <p>As would be expected, a range of academic standards were demonstrated across the student cohort. This was evidenced through the range of marks attained in the different assessment processes. As would also be expected, some students showed similar levels of attainment across the range of modules on offer, while it was evident for other students that some subject areas were more suited to their interest than others. Overall the standard of attainment was high as evidenced by the combination of in course and examination assessment marks.</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>No further comments</p>		

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?	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:
The course, its content, the delivery and assessment are all well organised and to a high standard. I would also like to emphasise that the arrangements made for external examiners, and the availability of all the relevant information in a very accessible and easy to find format was extremely well organised this year. The work of the external examiners was made very much easier by the excellent organisation of the teaching and examinations office. There was a clear improvement in the organisation and coordination of course materials this year. Thank you very much.

Other comments

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

One final note in this my final year. I have very much enjoyed the experience as external examiner, and I will miss not coming back next year

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Genetics

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BSc, MBIol Genetics

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BSc/MBiol

Title and Name of Responder:

Position:*

Programme Director, BSc, MBIol, Genetics

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Biological Sciences/School of Biology

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 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 that the examiner recognises our continued commitment to maintaining the excellence and relevance of the programme, through our continued focus on ensuring that course content remains at the cutting edge of a fast-moving discipline.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

No enhancements were required or made, but as the examiner has recognised we have further improved the annotation and feedback provided in examination scripts.

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 have been so identified.

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 note the Examiner's recognition of the high standard of the course and the improvements we have made during tenure as External Examiner.

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:

No response necessary

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:

No specific points were raised, and we are content that the Examiner finds these aspects of the programme entirely satisfactory.

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 are happy to learn that the Examination process was made clear and straightforward by the administrative staff, and from the academic perspective I should like, on behalf of all members of the Genetics Programme, to echo this praise for our support staff. I should also like to add my own thanks to my colleagues for their professionalism in delivering the Programme during the past year, and ensuring that our students were not handicapped by ongoing industrial action that formed a backdrop to much of the year.

Other comments

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

Finally, all members of the Genetics Programme Team would like to thank [redacted] for discharging duties as external examiner during the past three years with such enthusiasm and diligence, and we're glad the [redacted] feels that [redacted] miss not performing this role, if only because we have to remind [redacted] that [redacted] appointment actually ends after the 2018-19 academic year!

[redacted] is, of course, a Leeds Genetics graduate, and this has provided [redacted] with a unique insight into the nature and strengths of the programme as it has evolved through the years subsequent to [redacted] graduation.