

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 26/06/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Faculty of Biological Sciences
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Pharmacology
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	BSc Pharmacology MBiol, BSc Pharmacology BSc Pharmacology in Relation to Medicine
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	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.*

Administrative organisation associated with my visits was excellent and I was provided with the necessary information and material.

There is a particular strength in the delivery of practical components of the course with a real highlight being the provision, where required, of final-year experimental projects. Although resource intense, these projects offer excellent opportunities for students to develop practical skills along with a range of analytical and presentation skills, thereby providing a firm foundation for further study at a higher level and/or employment. The course has some innovative organisation in parts (for example, the ability to select areas of interest within modules) and interesting delivery (for example, providing pre-recorded lectures with face-to-face teaching being used to deliver talks focussed on research papers). There is some diversity of assessments and it is nice to see practical reports and process-type challenges forming integral parts of the portfolio. Practices for the marking and moderation of the assessments appear robust and similar to those within my own institution. Having looked through the assessed material that was made available, I had confidence in the marks awarded. The criteria for marking were clear and the marks were generally supported by appropriate statements from the markers. There is a good breadth of material and good evidence of research-led teaching.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

As this is my first year acting as external examiner for these programmes it is difficult for me to comment. I understand that there have been no major changes in delivery or assessment in the past 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*

There were no issues that would impact on the ability to offer the programmes or that would need addressing before the programmes run in the following academic year.

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

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / <del>N</del>
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y / <del>N</del>
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / <del>N</del>

**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 an 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 / <del>N</del>
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y / <del>N</del>
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y / <del>N</del>
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y / <del>N</del>
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y / <del>N</del>

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

Each of the programmes delivers across key elements of pharmacology and are sensibly designed, showing good progression over the different levels. There is some flexibility in the programmes, allowing an element of selection by the students, which is very positive. There is a strong element of practical and analytical skills embedded within the courses, which is to be commended. There are a range of both in-course assessments and final examination formats consistent with the type in my own and other institutions. The progress and outcomes that are expected of the students are appropriate. Module and programme ILOs are clear and align with delivery and assessments.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / <del>N</del>
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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)*

There is evidence of research-focussed material taught particularly in Year 3 of the programmes. Course content demonstrates this and it is evident within the work of the students that I was able to view. There is, of course, a direct link to research activities within the research projects carried out by the students. For those conducting experimental projects there are excellent opportunities to engage with a genuine research project, whilst those undertaking literature-based projects are required to immerse themselves in current issues and to provide critical analysis and insight.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y/N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y/N
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y/N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y/N
<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>The programme and module ILOs were clear and the assessment tasks aligned to interrogate these outcomes. There is variation in the assessment profile across the elements of the programmes. The marking criteria were clear for the assessments and there was good evidence that these criteria were applied throughout the marking process. In line with practices at my own institution, there was evidence of appropriate moderation of the marking and, for the projects, blind double-marking. Student performance both within modules and across the programmes was generally very good. Over the sample of exam marking that I have looked at, marking and marks awarded were appropriate. Generally there were clear indications of why the mark had been awarded and how the work could have been improved.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y/N
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y/N
<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>The academic standards of the students within the assessments that I reviewed were commensurate with the marks awarded and in-line with the level that I would expect at my own institution. Across the pharmacology programmes the quality of the students was generally very high and there were clearly some outstanding candidates. The breadth of material covered was good and graduates should be well-placed to continue into further education or science-based careers. There is strong evidence of embedded transferable skills that would also enable diverse employment opportunities for graduates.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

### 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/N
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y/N

22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / <del>N</del>
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / <del>N</del>
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/ <del>assessments</del> ?	Y / <del>N</del>
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y / <del>N</del>
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y / <del>N</del>
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y / <del>N</del>
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y / <del>N</del>
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / <del>N</del>
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / <del>N</del>
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / <del>N</del>
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y / <del>N</del>
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / <del>N</del>
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / <del>N</del>

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

In my first year as external examiner for these programmes I have focussed on the exams and projects as assessments. In the future, I hope to have the opportunity to review more of the in-course assessments to gauge diversity and standards.

As I am sure other external examiners will comment, my experience is now that examination and awards panels consider students anonymously such that there is some equality in the representation of students at the meetings and decisions are based solely on the data presented. I appreciate that some staff do feel a sense of frustration with this anonymization as they can feel somewhat removed from the process but unless all students have the opportunity to be represented at the meetings, perhaps anonymization could be considered. For borderline cases where there may be an opportunity to consider aspects other than the marks profile, these criteria should be clear with relevant information perhaps being gathered before the award meeting.

#### 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

### Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Subject(s):*

*Pharmacology*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

BSc, MBIol Pharmacology  
BSc Pharmacology in Relation to Medicine

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

BSc/MBiol

*Title and Name of Responder:*

*Position\*:*

Programme Leader, Pharmacology

*Faculty / School of:*

*School of Biomedical 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 [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 see that the strong practical component of our programmes has been recognised, particularly the research project provision. Likewise, we acknowledge the recognition of the flexible format of the Advanced Topics and the use of lecture capture to pre-deliver content in advance of more in-depth analysis of research papers.

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

No specific issues were raised requiring comment.

#### **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 specific issues were raised requiring urgent attention.

#### **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:*

No specific issues were raised requiring comment.

### 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:*

The structure, design, aims and LOs of the programme affirmed by the External Examiner, and it was acknowledged that research clearly influences the curriculum.

### **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 appropriateness of the assessment methods and their correlation to the ILOs were affirmed. The level of marking and feedback was commended.

### **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:*

As programme leader, I would support the comment that the examination and awards panels should consider students anonymously such that there is some equality in the representation of students at the meetings and decisions are based solely on the data presented. This is something that will be discussed further at School and Faculty level during the year.

### **Other comments**

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

We welcome \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ new role as External Examiner and we very much look forward to working with \_\_\_\_\_ over the coming years. We thank \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ enthusiastic and thorough approach during this first year.