

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 17/08/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Chemistry

Subject(s):

Organic Chemistry

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BSc & MChem - Chemistry degrees

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

BSc & MChem - Chemistry degrees

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Overall I was impressed with the quality of teaching and assessment. The exam papers were produced to a high standard. Most of the core organic chemistry was covered in year 1 and 2 papers. The final year papers included advanced topics which were very interesting, including contemporary research that reflected research strengths at Leeds (e.g. medicinal chemistry and chemical biology). Clear and detailed model answers were provided for the majority of exam questions. There were a few questions where incomplete model answers were provided, which made it more difficult to assess the quality and accuracy of the those questions. Most organic exam papers included elements of unseen problem solving, which provides the best test of the students understanding. However a few papers/questions were more reliant on the students recalling and reciting information from the lectures, which is not ideal. Many of the synthesis questions were based on reactions or reaction schemes reported in the literature, which is good. However a few synthesis questions did not fully define reaction conditions (e.g. solvent, temperature etc.). It is important that reaction conditions are included in synthesis questions, particularly for $S_N1/S_N2/E1/E2$ reactions where the outcome can differ depending on conditions.

The flash presentation/poster session that I attended was very informative and interesting. It was useful to get a snap-shot of all the research projects. I was impressed by the positive atmosphere and team spirit from the students and staff that participated. I particularly enjoyed speaking to students during the posters session about their projects, their undergraduate experience and future plans. The feedback I got from the students was very positive and many students had already secured jobs or PhD positions which was very encouraging. Whilst the presentations were successful, my role during the day was not well defined. Most of the students were keen to talk to me, but a few were not present at their poster and on two occasions students indicated that they couldn't speak with me, because they were waiting to speak to the internal examiners. Perhaps in the future the students might be informed that they could expect to speak with external examiners as well as the internal examiners.

The examination papers and projects were all marked to a high standard with clear justification for the marks awarded. I was given clear instructions whilst reviewing marked exam papers and project reports ahead of the board of examiners meeting. This process could be improved if the exam papers were easier to locate. Finding a particular exam paper/script was also complicated by the confusing numbering of papers. Projects were apparently marked by an expert and a non-expert. However, it was not clear why this was the case, or indeed if this was adhered to. I would suggest that projects should be marked by experts if possible, as the opinion of a non-expert is less relevant. The students are aiming to deliver research that could be publishable in the future and if this were the case the work would be reviewed by experts. I was also informed that the MChem final year marks were allocated 50% from the project, 20% for course work and only 30% from exams, which seems rather low. I would suggest increasing the proportion of marks from the examinations, possibly providing more time for revision/workshops for the lecture courses at the expense of some of the course work. Finally the proportion of MChem students obtaining 1st class degrees seemed high. I understand this year's class was very good. However if the majority of the MChem class get 1st class degrees, this could make it

hard for employers to identify the leading students and it is also diminishes the achievements of those that have excelled (i.e. those in the top 20%).

Enhancements made from the previous year

NA

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

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 a External Examiner Mentor?	Not sure

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 an 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

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.

See above

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)

Yes – see above		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	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)?	?
<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
<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>		
See above		
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
<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>		
See above – In addition to this, my impression was that the standards demonstrated by the students was on the whole similar to the students at _____, where we also had a similarly high proportion of MChem students obtaining 1 st class degrees this year.		
<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
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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p>		

Other comments

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

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Organic Chemistry

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BSc Chemistry, BSc , MChem Chemistry, BSc Medicinal Chemistry, BSc, MChem Medicinal Chemistry & variants

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

BSc, MChem

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

Chemistry

Address for communication:

School of Chemistry,

Email:

University of Leeds

Telephone:

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 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 you have been impressed by the examination questions. We are also pleased that you enjoyed the MChem projects presentation day in May. We are sorry that your role was not clear to the students and we will make sure this is explained better in future.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**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:

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 are pleased that you find the programme and standards comparable to other institutions

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:

'There were a few questions where incomplete model answers were provided, which made it more difficult to assess the quality and accuracy of the those questions. Most organic exam papers included elements of unseen problem solving... however a few papers/questions were more reliant on the students recalling and reciting information from the lectures, which is not ideal. Many of the synthesis questions were based on reactions or reaction schemes reported in the literature, which is good. However a few synthesis questions did not fully define reaction conditions (e.g. solvent, temperature etc.)' Thank you for these observations and we will try to improve these aspects in future.

'Projects were apparently marked by an expert and a non-expert'. The terminology is confusing here as both markers are actually chosen to have expertise related to the project. We will change the terminology and check that appropriate markers are assigned.

'the MChem final year marks were allocated 50% from the project, 20% for course work and only 30% from exams, which seems rather low. I would suggest increasing the proportion of marks from the examinations, possibly providing more time for revision/workshops for the lecture courses at the expense of some of the course work'. We have put together a group to look at the assessment of the final year of the MChem programmes and, as part of this, will consider the balance of assessed components.

'Finally the proportion of MChem students obtaining 1st class degrees seemed high'. We acknowledge this to be the case but are pleased that you also acknowledge *'the standards demonstrated by the students was on the whole similar to the students at where we also had a similarly high proportion of MChem students obtaining 1st class degrees this year'*. The 2017-18 MChem cohort at Leeds were a particularly strong year group and the high proportion of first class degrees was consistent with this. Nonetheless we monitor for grade inflation and the group considering the final year assessment will be asked for recommendations to guard against this.

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:

'I was given clear instructions whilst reviewing marked exam papers and project reports ahead of the board of examiners meeting. This process could be improved if the exam papers were easier to locate. Finding a particular exam paper/script was also complicated by the confusing numbering of papers'. We apologise that this was difficult and will provide more information to make the process simpler in future.

Other comments

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