

# 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:

Faculty / School of:

Biological Sciences, School of Molecular and Cellular Biology

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Biopharmaceutical Development

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

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.

This is an unusual course with a very high percentage of teaching delivered by industrialists. This really adds value to a course like this but I am equally pleased to see that academic rigour is at the forefront with those staff coming in from outside having some training, etc and coursework double marked by academic members of staff as appropriate. It is clear from speaking to students that this is an element they enjoy about the course and it is one that makes it unique compared to other offerings.

This is a small course and so the fact that the students commented on how welcomed and important they felt despite being such small numbers in a large faculty means that the staff (academic, industrial, administrative and technical) should all be congratulated on creating this sense of student satisfaction.

Inclusion of a reflective assessment in one of the modules – critical and reflective skills are becoming increasingly important to employers so it is good to see this incorporated into the curriculum. However, difficult to assess per se and I am pleased that the module organiser has taken advice from the Business school who have more experience of this to ensure that what is being assessed is the students ability to reflect, rather than their personal experiences.

Some of the assessment are particularly 'real' – e.g. asking students to create a clinical development plans, freedom to operate reports – it is good to see that students are practising writing real documents rather than covering the material in standard essay formats which are less industrially relevant. Good use of boundaries such as word counts to get students used to being concise.

#### Enhancements made from the previous year

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

This is an unusually structured programme so cohort 1 is only now due to graduate after 18 months – hence, although I was brought in to act as external examiner for cohort 1 I have also seen students from cohort 2 who were completing their taught modules (during a visit in March), have seen some cohort 2 work and marks, and noted changes made from cohort 1 to cohort 2.

In particular – it has been good to see that the course has evolved but based on academic principals and not just student feedback. This led to quite a big restructure of the taught programme but the new structure takes students through the development pathway in a sensible fashion and has reduced the coursework burden whilst still ensuring the ILOs are met and assessed.

It is good to see that following my visit in March some suggestions are already being taken on board such as including a COSSH assessment directly into the practical module, some more cell/gene therapy content being included. The latter will need continued effort but it is sensible to work on integrating this over time. This should also ensure that coursework stays ‘fresh’ rather than topics for e.g. essays being repeated regularly.

Given that there have been some issues with plagiarism despite existing teaching/quizzes on the course I was pleased to see that it would now be mandatory to finish these before submitting the first assignment as this avoids any of the part-time students falling through the gap between modules.

### 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*

One issue for general attention: the project is worth 80 credits and of that, 80% is the final report. It was noted that even with the 2 students due to graduate this year, although the quality of the final report was very good in both, there were differences in terms of the complexity of work that students did. This may be down to differences in expectation/experience by the industrial staff that supervise these projects. At the exam board we therefore discussed a few options including more structured visits by academics to the students during their projects, more frequent formative reports from students on progress or inclusion of some formally assessed (but short) interim reports – e.g. focusing on the production of 2 graphs with results/analysis/discussion to check students are on the right track. I would encourage the team to consider these and decide what can be implemented with those students currently on placement as well as next year.

### 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?	n/a new programme
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y -although not met yet

### 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 /
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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>The structure of the programme for cohort 1 was good but I agree with the team at Leeds that the changes implemented for cohort 2 were necessary (e.g. merging a couple of modules) – this has cut down on some overlap and the credits are now better balanced between areas. The content of the course covers the core subjects as expected from a degree in biopharmaceutical development, taking the students from product concept through to commercialisation and including practical skills which they will then implement in their year-long industrial project. This structure allows for integrated learning and synoptic assessment.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
<p><i>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)</i></p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

### 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>		
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>It is the year-long placement in particular, alongside the extent of teaching by industrial tutors, that makes this programme unique. As noted earlier, academic rigour has however, been maintained – assessments are fitting to the ILOs of the course as well as individual modules and allow students to showcase not only knowledge but a variety of skills (oral presentations vs written work, group vs individual work, etc). Notably, there is a fair bit of group</p>		

work in the programme but enough individual assessments are present to ensure that students are being awarded an individual degree. Peer assessment is also used.

The coursework for both cohort 1 and cohort 2 were of high standard – setting probing, stretching questions/topics, often in a very ‘real’ way as mentioned above. Although numbers of students on cohorts 1 and 2 are small, differentiation between students in the work is being achieved. Marks overall are high (e.g. both students on cohort 1 are at distinction level) but numbers are small and students are selected through interview so it is perhaps not surprising that standards are higher than some other MScs. This is why it is important that nonetheless, differentiation between individual students in modules has been possible, indicating good coursework has been set.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

I was very pleased to see that although there is some variability in amount of feedback provided between academic staff, overall there is very good use of rubrics and proforma to maintain consistency between markers and students. I was also pleased to hear that in the practical module, students are given individual feedback and asked what they think their score is before being told the mark- this type of self-assessment is important in helping students understand how and what is marked as well as being able to self-criticise constructively.

### 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?	n/a- no exams
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Yes for coursework
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?	n/a
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?	n/a this year

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

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

I would just like to thank the team for inviting me earlier this year for an initial visit as it really helped me to understand the structure and also gave me a chance to speak to the cohort 2 students before they went on their placements.

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

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

*Biopharmaceutical Development*

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Biopharmaceutical Development  
Modules:

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

MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Programme Leader

Faculty / School of:

*Biomedical Sciences*

Address for communication:

Faculty of Biological Science, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

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 that the external examiner assesses the programme as:

1. **unique:** on the basis of the delivery of substantial parts of the programme by industrialists, trained and supported (as teachers) by academics;
2. **well structured:** covering the “core subjects as expected from a degree in biopharmaceutical development”
3. **Using probing, stretching assessments,** in a format that is wholly realistic for this industry (e.g. drug development plans, freedom to operate reports, etc.)

We will continue to use these approaches in the programme.

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

This is a first assessment of the programme by any external examiner. The external noted that comments made during an interim visit had already been acted upon.

**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:

The external identified two areas to address regarding the research project module. Firstly how can we ensure the consistency of research projects (standard, complexity and expectation) commensurate with the MSc level where these projects are defined by industrial supervisors? Secondly, the introduction of a formative assessment into the research project to help students the depth and standard expected of this dissertation. **RESPONSE:** An academic tutor is assigned to each student during their placement/research project: from July 2018 these tutors will work closely with the student and industrial supervisor to make clear the objectives, standards and expectations of an

MSc level research project. An item of formative assessment, which displays the data handling and interpretation of a section of the research project will be introduced for the cohort on placement (May 2018-Apr 2019).

In addition, the external supported the proposal that plagiarism training must be completed before the first item of assess coursework could be submitted. This will address a problem encountered with some part-time students.

**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 external examiner confirmed that they had received the programme documentation (Q1), and had been provided with a mentor to support their role (Q3). All other questions (Q2, Q4-7) were not applicable to a new course, being reviewed for a first time by an 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:*

We are pleased that the external assessed the programme as being coherent and appropriate for the level of MSc (Q8), setting and meeting aims and learning outcomes fitting of an MSc in this subject area (Q9-11). The programme was described as unique, thereby exceeding the statement that the programme is comparable with similar programmes at other institutions (Q12). The external did not comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching (Q13), however this is substantial in all modules where the majority of the curriculum uses current examples from research to illustrate the topic under examination. The programme does not form part of an integrated PhD (Q14), contain clinical practise elements (Q15) nor is it accredited by an external body (Q16).

## 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 external examiner was wholly satisfied with the style, range, rigour and balance of assessments and the quality of marking and feedback (Q17-19).

## 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:*

The progression and awards processes were considered to be wholly appropriate and fitting of the MSc degree.

## Other comments

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

No response needed.