

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 18/12/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Molecular and Cellular Biology

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Bioscience
MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology

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. As in previous years, the emphasis on laboratory work and hands-on research training is unusually impressive. The level of close administrative support is also exceptional and students commented on this on several occasions.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box. No specific enhancements were noted but the written feedback to students on assessments appeared to have improved in terms of quantity and quality.

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

None

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

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?	Y / N
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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

The courses have evolved over the period of my appointment. When I started the overall standard was already high but the assessment systems have improved and several modules have improved in terms of content and delivery.

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>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>My overall impression is that these courses are of an extremely high quality. The content is challenging but rewarding; students are not spoon-fed but have to grapple with difficult - though important - subjects and they have to carry out cutting-edge research projects. At the same time, they are given a great deal of support from academic staff and administrative staff. The balance is good and the net outcome is that students undergo a course that is challenging but very rewarding.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p>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)</p> <p>There is considerable emphasis on research in both the taught modules (eg through use of state of the art technologies) and the extensive laboratory research project.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</p> <p>The MSc is excellent training for a PhD</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>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.</p>		

Assessment is regular and varied. The marks awarded are appropriate and the feedback is comprehensive		
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: The students naturally vary in terms of ability and results but two points are important. First, they act as a cohort and there is a real sense of cohort identity in their attitudes. Secondly, their overall, or average, performance is very good. The best students are phenomenal although there are invariably a small number of weaker students.</i></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>		

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>		

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

The exam board operates very professionally and it was notable that students with ILPs/ other problems had received a considerable amount of assistance when required.
Overall, this is an excellent course.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

MSc Bioscience, MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSC-BIOL/BS
MSC-BSGS/PSB

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

MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Programme Leader for MSC Bioscience suite of programmes

Faculty / School of:

Molecular and Cellular 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

Thank you for your kind comments and for your help in improving our programmes during your tenure as our external examiner.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Not applicable

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:

Not applicable no urgent matters raised

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 comments to address

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 specific comments to address

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:

Thank you. The programme team have worked hard to improve quality and consistency of feedback

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:

No issues to address

Other comments

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

Thank you for your warm comments.