

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 15/09/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Medicine

Subject(s):

MRes Medicine

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MEDS5010
MEDS5020

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

MRes

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.

Extensive amount of time designated for research project
Practical nature of some of the assessed tasks – e.g. writing an abstract,

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 the first year of my appointment – cannot comment.

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 are a number of features that I am sure the excellent co-leads, ably supported by the very capable administration team will explore over the next year for future implementation.
The only issue I would suggest of urgency relates to the mechanism of comparing and negotiating when two independent markers have a discrepancy. This was explored at depth at the Committee of Assessors meeting.

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?	Not that I recall
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor? Comment – I am well versed in the roles, responsibilities and boundaries associated with External Examining.	N

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 / N

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

I am well versed in the standard of a primary medical degree and associated intercalated BSc standards. Since the standards exhibited here are higher than a typical BSc, I would consider them appropriate.

The structure of the programme seems rather assessment-heavy, particularly around written work. This results in a large quantity of time required for marking. I would tend to suggest a gentle shift towards including behaviour-based assessment, through a portfolio of activity, to help guide the student more in their future expectations and performance. Although currently growing in student number, this course is rather intricate and I wonder about the deliverability of this for a small faculty.

I do wonder if there is evidence to suggest that the assessment is reliably able to differentiate to two decimal points reproducibly – but I understand this is part of the University's procedure, rather than one developed at the Programme's level.

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)

This is extremely explicit – and the primary purpose of this degree

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:

It may be useful to develop this as the introductory year for a four year PhD.

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:

Most of the students on this programme are medical students. Although they will often be working on patient information, specimens or images, etc, and may contact patients or study members I do not interpret this as clinical practice in the way I think it is intended.

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

N/A

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>I cannot comment per se on the quality of teaching – but the detail, care and attention provided to these students is very high. Assessment as I have said seems rather “written heavy” – while developing writing skills is important, I suspect it would be useful to move to a more rounded assessment model, to help students identify other aspects of academic behaviour, and learn to model them.</p> <p>I would argue that the length of the oral presentation was extreme – moving to, for example, a 15-20 minute presentation would allow the student to focus more – and may more accurately mimic presentation at conferences as an early years researcher.</p> <p>I have encouraged the leadership team to explore a more robust mechanism for agreeing a mark, when there the two markers differ in their initial opinion.</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>Academic standards are high. I was particularly impressed by the quality of the project write-ups. The project is undertaken by both intercalating medical students and those who have completed a science BSc – I could not distinguish between them.</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>I understand that project supervisors play an active role in this programme. It would be useful to be able to consider their feedback to and about students as part of the allocation of marks – and, if allowable within the university’s marking scheme, when considering students who fall into discretionary degree classification territory.</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>The administrative team have been exemplary. The communication and administration has been by far the best I have witnessed as an external examiner at 4 Russell Group universities.</p> <p>Discussions at the Board were detailed. Great care was taken to fully consider difficult decisions from all angles, particularly focussing on ensuring students were treated fairly and favourably where possible.</p> <p>The Board meeting was chaired very effectively by a new co-lead. It will be important that these two new co-leads are adequately supported as they develop this important role and learn the intricacies of programme leadership.</p>		

Other comments

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

The two new co-leads are non-tenured senior research fellows, and I understand they have willingly taken this on in addition to their full timetable of research commitments. I would hope this adds weight to future academic progression. Given REF in 2021 it will be important to consider how expectations around their research output are considered alongside their new responsibilities. I assume the OfS income generated through this degree is reflected in educational activity elsewhere within the school.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)***Title and Name of Examiner:**Subject(s):**Programme(s) / Module(s):**Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

	MRes Medicine 2017-18 MEDS 5010M Research Project in Medicine MEDS 5020M Paper Criticism in Medicine
	MRes Medicine

*Title and Name of Responder:**Position*:**Faculty / School of:**Address for communication:**Email:**Telephone:*

	Director of Student Education – SoM TPG
	Faculty of Medicine and Health / School of Medicine
	Worsley Building Clarendon Way. Leeds LS1 9LN

**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 qat@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

The School acknowledges the positive comment from the external examiner as to the extensive time allocated to the student research project. The school also acknowledges the comment that the assessed tasks are very practical in nature, and this broadens the overall experiences gained by the students.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

As this was _____ first year as external examiner for the MRes Medicine course, _____ was unable to comment upon 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:

The School is grateful to _____ for the point raised pertaining to the handling of markers scores, where a large discrepancy exists between the two independent markers. Current practice involves both markers compromising to a similar degree, which in essence averages out the two marks. During the Committee of Examiners meeting, this was discussed at length, and it was agreed that should this situation arise, a third independent marker will be required to review the piece of work in question, and all three markers will meet to determine a consensus final mark.

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 school is very grateful to _____ for agreeing to act as external examiner on the MRes course for the next three years.

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 School acknowledges _____ comments in relation to its assessment-heavy nature. The students are required to submit several pieces of written work during the year, in addition to the project report, which all require marking. The new Programme Co-leads, _____ and _____, are keen to investigate ways to implement a more behaviour-based assessment, which may be more relevant to their future careers.

The school also acknowledges _____ comment regarding the use of the MRes Medicine course as the introductory year for a four year PhD. This issue is already the subject of ongoing discussions within the postgraduate school.

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 School agrees that the academic standards are very high across the student cohort, as demonstrated by high quality project reports and oral presentations. We acknowledge _____ comments that the oral presentations should be reduced in length, to reflect likely future conference presentation lengths. The Co-leads will consider this suggestion, and also the suggestion to use feedback from the project supervisors during the markers meetings, where the student falls into the discretionary band.

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 would like to thank _____ for kind remarks regarding the excellent level of administrative support provided to the MRes course management team by _____ and _____. We also thank _____ for positive comments about the chairing and efficient running of the Committee of Examiners meeting.

Other comments

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

As new programme Co-leads, _____ and _____ appreciate the acknowledgement by _____, that their roles have been willingly taken on in addition to full-time research careers, and agree that there is a requirement to ensure that research outputs are still attainable, despite this new challenging role.