

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 20/12/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Molecular & Cellular Biology

Subject(s):

Infection, Immunity, and Human Disease

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Infection, Immunity and Human Disease.
 Modules: Advanced Immunology, Infectious & Non Infectious Diseases, Practical Bioinformatics, Medical Diagnostics, Treatment of Infectious Disease & Cancer, Research Planning & Scientific Communication, Adv. Biomolecular Technologies, Protein Engineering Lab Project, MSc Research Project, Research Proposal

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

Design of and commitment to practical laboratory teaching courses (e.g. protein engineering labs) was excellent and praised by students, many of whom had very little previous practical experience. They enjoyed the weekly continuation of techniques and the support by PhD student demonstrators. Students also praised the individual project experience they had as well as the excellent supervision.

Enhancements made from the previous year

My recommendations from last year about an opportunity for some formative feedback on essays prior to summative assessment submissions was put in place, but due to administrative timings will not come into place until next academic year.

Matters for Urgent Attention

*Semester 1 is very assessment-heavy compared to Semester 2. This was also raised by students last year so should be looked at and amended if possible.
 Some content of the Advanced Biomolecular Techniques module was too advanced and too detailed for the non-expert in those techniques. Key concepts should be emphasised more than excessive method detail.
 Some students felt there was little on Immunity and Immunology in the Masters degree than the title suggested. Could consider revising this.*

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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 only

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

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

An excellent well balanced programme overall with a good balance of teaching and learning methods and assessment modes. A high practical teaching content that is to be commended.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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Yes, this is a highlight of the degree that is clearly appreciated by students in both lecture material and project teaching.

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:

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:

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:

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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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.

Assessment method are varied and designed to train students in research methods and practical techniques in addition to essential transferable skills in line with Los. Marking is conducted fairly and appropriately in line with criteria and I am satisfied that classification was carried out appropriately. Student performance varied according to the abilities of the individual student and students with lower abilities were supported very well.		
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>The cohort this year had a longer tail of lower performing students and a number with mitigating circumstances and issues, but this simply reflected the spread of abilities and individual circumstances of the cohort. There were also very high achieving students so the teaching and learning was clearly delivered appropriately to allow students to succeed.</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>Marking of project posters could be improved by making reference to degree classification ranges on the marking sheets to avoid discrepancies in second marking based on a simple points system.</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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

Other comments

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

Access to exam papers, marks and example coursework was made available via two different online portals and gaining access to these was very problematic, time consuming and stressful. Original instructions given were out of date and required several phone calls to a general Leeds IT helpdesk to resolve where I was on hold for long periods of time in a queue. VPN client software had to be downloaded and this still didn't work so IT staff had to remote access my desktop to fix. When I finally got access to a specific desktop) where files were stored I did not have the correct access (UG not PG files visible). More phone calls to resolve. Not very satisfactory.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Infection, Immunity and Human Disease

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Programme Leader, Infection, Immunity and Human Disease

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Molecular & 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) must be sent 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 the External has highlighted the satisfaction of the students with the practical provision and project opportunities. We will strive to maintain the high standard of training opportunities for the students.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Specifically we changed the first essay assignment (GFP essay) from summative to formative, to enable the students to gain experience in writing scientific essays and receive detailed feedback on their work without the concerns over losing marks. This has been implemented for 2019/2020 and has been favourably received by the students.

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:

We conducted an analysis of the workload in each semester, this revealed that in fact the number of assessments for each was the same.

Semester 1 assessments (6 compulsory, 5 specialist): 11

Semester 2 assessments (7 compulsory, 4 specialist): 11

We are constantly reviewing the assessments to ensure consistency between different modules

We are reviewing the content of the Advanced Molecular Techniques module and will consider whether there is an overemphasis on technical details rather than basic principles. This is particularly relevant for techniques such as NMR where the technical details are highly complex. The overriding principle of this module should be to make the students aware of the techniques and what they can achieve, we will ensure this is reflected in course content.

With regard to immunology content – the course is a broad balance of Infection, Immunity and Human Disease so it is not possible to provide a large amount of immunology as this would limit other aspects. We are however, reviewing the content and delivery of the Advanced Immunology module to ensure the students are exposed to a range of immunology topics that are relevant to the other aspects of the course.

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:

n/a

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 thank the External for supportive comments regarding the programme in general, the practical components and the research-led aspects of the teaching.

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:

We thank the External for supportive comments regarding the assessment and 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:

n/a

Other comments

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

It is regrettable that the External examiner encountered such problems with remote access to the course material. This should not have been the case and we apologise. We have raised this issue at a high level with IT services and will ensure that systems will be improved by next academic year.