

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 08/07/2019

**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 and Cellular Biology

*Subject(s):*

*Biopharmaceutical Development*

*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.*

As per last year, notable elements of the course are the high percentage of teaching by industrialists and the 'realness' of the types of coursework that students are being asked to complete. There is clearly a drive for continual improvement – issues raised by students or spotted by staff (e.g. discrepancies in marking) are being carefully considered and discussed with appropriate staff. Although challenging, the fact that \_\_\_\_\_ and the team are considering whether the course could be delivered in different formats to appeal to a wider audience (including international) is good to see and I look forward to receiving updates at future meetings.

**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 2 is only now due to graduate after 18 months and cohort 3 has started their placements in industry. My comments refer broadly to changes made this year rather than to a specific cohort for simplicity.

Placement dissertations: my recommendation of including more interim coursework into the 80 credit module could not be implemented due to confidentiality issues with the industrial placements. However, the ethos of more academic involvement and better clarity on academic requirements for students and industrial supervisors has been followed through and \_\_\_\_\_ confirms informal feedback on this has been positive. More change to include industrial supervisor marking (as primary, second marker academic) is now also being considered. At the board in June I encouraged staff to consider whether the final report should be more technical report or academic paper – at the moment they are leaning towards technical reports (less depth of discussion and ties back to existing literature). Setting clear expectations will be important if these are marked by both industrial and academic markers to avoid large discrepancies.

**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*

1)

From the module handbook on Minerva and student submissions, it looks as though the essay title for BIOL5164 Biopharm pathway development has been the same for the past two cohorts at least. For all modules, a check

should be done that coursework is being refreshed appropriately (new essay titles, new example drugs to do IND on etc).

2)

When I met with students in my March 2019 visit they commented on variability across the modules in how peer assessment was applied. This may be appropriate but the team need to ensure a variable approach is justified pedagogically. I would encourage them to think about how this is communicated to students so they do not expect a standard approach and understand why this is the case.

**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.*

The course structure has not changed since last year. It continues to cover 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 yearlong-industrial project. This structure allows for integrated learning and synoptic assessment. A change has been implemented in how many modules need to be completed before a student can start the placement – this is sensible given that timings mean the placement should be started before Semester 2 marks are ratified. A pragmatic approach has been taken whilst ensuring students achieve a sufficient standard before starting the placement.

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)*

A large element of the course is the research project and students are being given 'real' coursework which requires finding information about existing drugs. The team need to continue to monitor content to ensure relevance, slowly adding in more cell and gene therapy, other new biological modalities as appropriate.

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)?	N
<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>		
Yes – see earlier comments on 'real' coursework.		
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>		
Coursework for the 2018/19 cohort has been of a high standard overall.		
The coursework for both cohort 2 and 3 were of high standard. Average marks are staying consistent – these are relatively high but not unexpected given the selection process onto the course. For size of cohort, range of marks is ok. Some discrepancies in marking between first and second or academic and industrial markers have been noted – improved communication around expectations should avoid this in future and there is a clear record of communication between staff as to how a joint decision was reached were discrepancies did exist.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		
I was very pleased to see that although there is some variability in amount of feedback provided between academic staff (some provide perhaps too much and need to think about how much a student can actually absorb and implement in the next assessment), overall there is very good use of rubrics and proforma. Nonetheless, this was an issue raised by students when I met them in March 2019- they clearly notice that variability in feedback. The team may want to consider how they set and manage student expectations around feedback – do students recognise generic feedback, discussions in class and so forth as feedback?		

### 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?	Y – for coursework – see issue about repeat coursework earlier
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?	Y
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>Excellent to see use made of regulations around lesser awards for a student who was no longer able to continue on the course.</p>		

#### Other comments

**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 informal visit as it was useful for me to speak to the cohort 3 students before they went on their placements. I have been kept well informed of programme changes and have been very well organised.



**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 was provided all necessary materials: not comment required here.

**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:

reports satisfaction with the structure of the course, its relevance to the delivery of an “integrated learning and synoptic assessment”, the revision in progression criterion for cohort 2019/20, and its standing compared to other similar courses offered elsewhere.

The teaching is research led, and recommends that the curriculum continues to develop as the field matures, bringing in more examples of cell & gene therapy. The programme review of summer 2019 will identify where further cell & gene therapy content could be used across the programme.

**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:

reports that the standard and style of assessments are excellent, and that students are performing at a high level.

A discrepancy in marks between academic and industrial assessors was evident in a major assignment within BIOL5280M. These discrepancies were each discussed and resolved to the satisfaction of all. For 2019/20 the teaching team will meet to align expectations of the assignment at the outset of the module (to align the tutorial system support this assignment) and before marking.

**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:

All satisfactory. The programme was commended on the “Excellent to see use made of regulations around lesser awards for a student who was no longer able to continue on the course.”

**Other comments****Response to items included in the ‘Other Comments’ section of the report**

No comment necessary