

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
 ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined***Title and Name of Examiner:**Faculty / School of:*

Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Biomedical Sciences

*Subject(s):**Neuroscience, Neuroscience In Relation to Medicine**Programme(s) / Module(s):*BSc Neuroscience – all programme variants
MBiol, BSc Neuroscience (Integrated Masters) – all programme variants
BSc Neuroscience in Relation to Medicine*Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

MBiol / BSc

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.*

There is an excellent range of lab-based projects on offer.

There is a broad base of modules available that ensures that students are exposed to all relevant areas relating to neuroscience e.g. electrophysiology, genetics, pathology, epigenetics, bioinformatics etc.

There is a good level of consistency with regard to marking.

There is a pleasing level of rigour in the exam questions – there are no easy options.

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

N/A

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*

N/A

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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 programme offers a wide range of bespoke modules to the students. There is both depth and breadth of offer. Although most courses tend to offer modules that lie within the comfort zone of available staff, there are no gaps in the programme - all relevant areas are covered to a sufficient depth.

I have experience of Neuroscience programmes at my home university of _____ and in a previous role as external examiner at _____. The programme at Leeds offers an equivalent experience to both of these.

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)

The projects are supervised by researchers in both the research and teaching families. This allows those research active staff to offer students projects using cutting edge technologies and to pass on research relevant experience to the students. There are also data analysis/bioinformatics type projects available, thus there should be suitable projects available for all student tastes.

Given the speed with which technologies evolve and are incorporated into basic research the programme offers a wide range of teaching in up to date technologies, e.g. optogenetics, CRISPR, FRET etc. that are considered basic information for any students seeking to do postgraduate studies.

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)?	Y
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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
<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>The programme is assessed in a number of ways, from the traditional marking of essays in an exam setting, to coursework, oral presentations, group presentations and project write ups. There is sufficient diversity that students who do not prosper under one type of assessment are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>Final year work is double marked, and if required moderation occurs if the marks diverge.</p> <p>The final degree classification is calculated from both final year marks and 2nd year marks. In addition the marks achieved by students who have taken out a year out in industry, or those who take a year abroad also contribute. Student performance is of a level expected for a Life Sciences degree from a Russell Group university. From what I saw students tended to do better in coursework assessments than in essay/exam type situations, but this is to be expected given the additional time allowed for coursework submissions.</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>About 35% of students achieved 1st class degrees. Although this is a wild over-generalisation I would assume that this is about on a par with all degrees at all universities. I was particularly impressed with the quality of the project write ups. I read 6 of these, all of which had been awarded 1st class marks, and they were all enjoyable, and for the most part well written. As occurs in Nottingham, the project marks tend to be higher than the rest of the final year modules, and given their 40 credit weighting they allow students the opportunity to improve upon their degree classification.</p> <p>On reading the exam questions I found them challenging, so there is certainly no drop in standards for this programme.</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

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

The exams board ran very smoothly. It was carefully prepared and all examiners knew their roles and contributed appropriately. I would add that there should be no threshold judgements required by the examiner. With thresholds, students either make the grade or do not. It is obviously an unfortunate likelihood that a few students will be very close to threshold, but such is the nature of arithmetic. Boundaries and threshold by their nature are all or nothing.

Other comments

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

The Neuroscience Programme at Leeds offers a rigorous test of students' abilities. It provides teaching in the basic knowledge required by all students, but also offers up to date instruction on cutting edge technologies. The ability for students to carry out a year on secondment in Industry or abroad is surely a great asset for the course, and a very appealing feature for prospective students. This aspect should be carefully nurtured, and the enormous amounts of work required by the associated staff who support these must be recognised in terms of workload allocation. To conclude, the Neuroscience Programme at Leeds is in safe hands and is a credit to all who contribute to it.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):	Neuroscience, Neuroscience In Relation to Medicine
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc Neuroscience – all programme variants MBiol, BSc Neuroscience (Integrated Masters) – all programme variants BSc Neuroscience in Relation to Medicine
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MBiol/ BSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:	Programme Leader for Neuroscience
Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Biomedical Sciences
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 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

This is the first year that _____ has acted as external examiner. The comments regarding innovation and good practice are all positive and allude to the wide range of lab-based projects and the breadth of the neuroscience degree programme. The consistency of marking and the rigour of the exam questions were also noted.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

None requested

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:

None

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:

It isn't clear why the previous report by _____ was not made available. This is probably an administrative error due to the change of external examiners. We will make sure that the previous year's report is available in future.

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:

notes the breadth and depth of provision in modules which is something we have striven for in recent years after identifying some gaps in our curriculum. This is also evident in the diversity of final year projects which cater for every taste whilst still providing instruction and experience of cutting-edge technology.

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 noted the diversity of assessment throughout the degree programme, the challenging nature of the exam questions and the use of moderation in exam and coursework assessments. The high number of firsts probably reflects the quality of students that we recruit to our degree programmes and the presence of a substantial number of intercalating medical students in the final year.

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 are pleased that felt the progression and awards process went well. The awards process is dictated by university protocols and regulations.

Other comments

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

notes the rigour of the degree programme and the opportunities for students to gain a greater experience of the workplace and/or other countries and cultures. We consider these to be key features of the degree programme that continue to make it appealing to students and prospective employers alike. Finally, we would like to thank for insights and kind words regarding the Neuroscience degree programme.