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Sent by email to Professor Jean van den Elsen

08 November 2019

Dear Professor van den Elsen,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for BSc Biochemistry, MBiochem, BSc Biological Sciences (Genetics), BSc Molecular Biology.

Your report has been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. Annotation of the exam scripts and course work material is excellent, with clear abbreviations throughout, accompanied by detailed comments.
3. The range of dissertation research topics, the quality of the work and the marking standard is impressive.
4. Briefing for the role as examiner was very good, and arrangements for assessing the work to review was excellent.
5. The Biosciences degree programme at Cardiff University shows good practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:

1. **Academic Standards:** *The School may want to consider PSRB accreditation.*



Accreditation of our degrees was considered when we revised our curriculum in 2016, however we opted not to pursue this at the time due to time constraints, and the decision that the benefits did not outweigh the financial and workload cost. Once our new curricula are well-embedded, we will revisit whether this would be an appropriate avenue for the Integrated Masters programmes, which would be the only programmes eligible for accreditation.

2. **Assessment Process:** *Provide statistics on the spread of the marks and student performance in other modules.*

Due to the volume of work undertaken by our module teams and professional services staff around the time of the exam boards, we cannot guarantee that we would be able to provide this level of detail (in particular if some modules were to be scheduled very late in the exam period). We will request that this information is included in the module reports generated centrally from the student management system (SIMS), but we cannot guarantee that this will be possible. We will try our best to provide this information if SIMS is unable to offer it, however, and will consult with External Examiners over what statistical information they require. But there are resource limitations that may mean that this is not possible.

3. **Preparation for the role:** *Earlier access final year report dissertations.*

This is an excellent proposal. Under the new timetable, the Final Year projects will be submitted in early-mid March, with marking complete by mid-April. Once this process has been completed we will be able to make the Final Year Project module available (along with a summary of the projects undertaken, sorted by subject area of the Supervisors) to External Examiners to review around the end of April, and prior to the Exam Board in June.

4. **Preparation for the role:** *Opportunity to meet with students.*

This opportunity is something we have typically offered to External Examiners in previous years, inviting them to meet students in a bespoke visit around February time. Our typical approach has been to invite External Examiners to visit the school to meet students on alternate years, so that each External in a subject area visits every other year. However, this was not arranged this year due to a focus on managing the introduction of the new Final Year curriculum. We will be planning this meeting opportunity for the 2019/20 academic year as soon as possible.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme.

In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Wright', written in a cursive style.

Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar