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Sent by email to I.dubras@ulster.ac.uk

10 February 2020

Dear Professor Dubras,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for the Intercalated BSc in Medical Education.

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. The programme continues to be well balanced to enable students to gain a broad understanding of all aspects of medical education.
3. Teaching and learning are delivered to enable appropriate and relevant learning and experience; and the provision also provides opportunities for staff to role model a variety of educational approaches.

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

1. **Academic Standards:** *The number of students achieving a first class honours degree*

It is important to note that our iBSc programmes recruit the highest achieving Cardiff medical students to participate. There is an academic element to selection for these programmes which is based upon the academic ranking of the students who wish to undertake the BSc. This will



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automatically create a cohort of students that are exceptional in terms of academic ability.

Professor Dubras noted that she considers that the assessment criteria are applied fairly and appropriately. We can confirm that in general terms across the BSc there are five modules with both formative assessments and eight main summative assessments (of which the majority are double marked, some being triple marked). We estimate that each student receives summative marks from anything up to 18 assessors during the year. Marks are reviewed in the module leads' meetings; high inter-rater reliability is evidenced and there is no evidence that any areas of the course is marking consistently more highly than the others.

For further information, we provide details of the proportion of first awarded across all intercalated BScs in MEDIC over several academic sessions. The notes demonstrate the introduction of the secondary rule relating to degree class boundaries (an intercalating student within 2% of a classification boundary shall be raised to the higher degree class if at least 60 credits have a module mark in the higher degree class) and the introduction of the discounting of module marks for students with accepted extenuating circumstances (up to a maximum of 20 credits discounted):

Academic session	N FIRSTS	N 2:1s	% FIRSTS	N secondary rule applied	N discounting raised degree classification	Notes
2010/11	19	22	46%	0	0	
2011/12	25	20	56%	0	0	Intercalated Programme introduces secondary rule
2012/13	32	18	64%	4	0	
2013/14	23	24	49%	4	0	University introduces discounting for ext circs plus secondary rule
2014/15	34	25	58%	0	0	
2015/16	37	19	66%	2	0	University introduces marking rubrics
2016/17	45	19	70%	2	1	
2017/18	55	5	92%	6	4	Strike action increased modules eligible for discounting
2018/19	40	7	85%	0	2	

2. **The Assessment Process:** *Across all modules, University level marking rubrics are utilised but having reviewed these, I wonder whether there might be some difficulty in distinguishing between “good”, “comprehensive” and “excellent”; since the percentage marks indicated for these are 65%,*

75% and 85% respectively and span the crucial boundary between 2.1 and 1st class degrees.

The standard Cardiff University undergraduate level descriptors are used for all coursework assessments and exam-based essays on all six intercalated BScs within the School of Medicine. Across the majority of the mark spectrum we use categorical marking of mark points 2, 5 and 8, but at the extremes of the spectrum we use only the mid-mark of the descriptor (e.g. 85% in the excellent category.) Given the high calibre of work produced by the intercalating students there might be a case to introduce the marks of 82 and 88 into the excellent descriptor to help distinguish between students' abilities. I can confirm that no descriptor category cuts across a degree classification, e.g. Fair (50-59%), Good (60-69%), Comprehensive (70-79%).

3. ***The Assessment Process:*** *The University policy of discounting module assessments where there have been accepted extenuating circumstances permit a student to repeat a failed module assessment as if for the first time.*

For clarity, the remedies available for an intercalating student who has submitted accepted extenuating circumstances are:

1. Where a Stage 1 adjustment (e.g. coursework extension) has been made, no further action is required.
2. Where the pass mark for the assessment and module has not been achieved, and therefore there is not sufficient credit for the final award, permit the student to retake the assessment(s) as a 1st attempt (or 2nd / 3rd if the student has failed previously) at the next available opportunity.
3. Where the pass mark for module has been achieved but the pass mark for the assessment element has not, offer the student the opportunity to retake the assessment element as a 1st attempt (or 2nd / 3rd if the student has failed previously) at the next available opportunity **or** award the student credit for module without further assessment.
4. Where the module and assessment elements have been passed at the 1st attempt and extenuating circumstances are related to a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act (2010), offer the student a chance to retake the assessment element as a 1st attempt at the next available opportunity or award the student credit for the module without further assessment.
5. Where the module and assessment elements have been passed, award credit for the module. Final Examining Boards may discount module marks that have been affected by extenuating circumstances as a specified in the Assessment Regulations (maximum of 20 credits can be discounted for the 120 credit Intercalated Degree.)

A student cannot retake the assessment as a 1st attempt **AND** have the module mark discounted as these remedies exist for separate scenarios.

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