

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from [ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk).

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Dylan Gwynn Jones		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Aberystwyth University		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Biology, Ecology and Zoology		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018-2019	Date of Report:	1-07-19

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

**Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).**

Please extend spaces where necessary.

**1. Programme Structure** (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

Cardiff Biosciences continues to offer a good range of interesting and academically challenging modules structured into well designed and academically sound degrees in the Biosciences. New scheme structures have recently been introduced and the degrees provide very good range of skills and learning experience aimed at responding to the benchmark statements for the scheme subjects provided. Within these degrees, there is appropriate content, depth and learning opportunity. However, this new structure has possibly reduced the opportunities for field training and this is an element that needs reflection.

The methods of teaching vary and I was particularly impressed by some of the practical elements demanding multi-variate analyses.

**2. Academic Standards** (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

For the modules inspected the academic standards are high and in line with what I would expect at level 5/6 and similar to those in other equivalent Institutions. Examination scripts inspected were all moderated and thoroughly annotated highlighting why a particular mark had been attained. This year the examination

answers were comparable in terms of content but were not as well written as in previous years. This is possibly the result of students engaging less with exams via the new structure introduced.

The quality of practical scripts was generally high and all were thoroughly annotated. I could clearly see why a particular mark had been awarded.

**3. The Assessment Process** (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The processes in place were generally easy to follow and well organised and all examination, assessment and Dissertations were available for inspection. The marking criteria are consistently and correctly used. I blind marked 10 random Dissertations using the criteria and my mean was  $65.7 \pm 5.5$  SD and the awarded marks were  $64.9 \pm 7.7$ .

For all exam scripts there was very clear evidence of annotations, feedback and the marks awarded on scripts / reports matched the work presented. Final comments were comprehensive, and appeared to match very closely against the text in the marking criteria. There was consistency within and between modules with clear evidence of moderation throughout.

**4. Examination of Master's Dissertations** (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

Sample Dissertations were inspected and the marking scheme used to test mark a sub-sample. These were of a high standard, voluminous in data and comprehensive in content. The marking scheme and marks awarded were appropriate.

**5. Year-on-Year Comments**

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

This was my fourth and final year as examiner. The processes at the School are consistent between modules. These processes are well managed and there is continued evidence of good practice.

Some key points include:

- Use of the upper range for marking is now widely employed with exceptional work awarded >90%.
- Overall referencing has continued to improve over the last four years.
- Issues with students responding to feedback remains as a problem.

**6. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

N/A

**7. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement** (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

- a. Consistent, clear and thorough annotations on all exam scripts inspected.
- b. Clear marking criteria.
- c. Good feedback that explains clearly why a particular mark had been awarded.
- d. Evidence of staff research backgrounds having a positive influence on teaching via examples used and standard of work expected.

**8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)** (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

The School has recently undergone significant changes in their scheme structures moving to 30 and 40 credit modules. This has reduced student workload with less overall assessment. In the future it will also make delivery of courses easier for staff and the School more resilient against any future staff changes. I have been very impressed by the way Biosciences has so smoothly transitioned to this new structure. Clearly this will make the School more efficient and resilient but the student experience and overall marks should be carefully monitored.

Students appeared to be performing better overall based on this new structure. In terms of assessment, they are maybe putting more effort into less assignments overall with more emphasis on quality. For these large modules, I was impressed by the multiple practicals / reports presented, particularly where multi-variate analyses was employed. The new structure appears to have less emphasis on exams and in one module there is no exam. I personally believe that every module should have at least one examined element.

The new structure has also possibly diluted field training elements and this is something to consider in the future. Also the Dissertations have become more desk based over the years although the quality remains high and there remains clear evidence of research and synthesis.

Finally, I believe that the University is currently reviewing administrative structures. In doing this can they ensure that SIMS is properly resourced in terms of staff and that processes and practices are scrutinised including the timing and delivery of final marks and rounding etc. I also urge the University to invest and build on the very important relationship between Departments and the Registry.

## 9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
<b>Commenting on draft examination question papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
<b>Examination scripts</b>				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
<b>Coursework and practical assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining board meeting</b>				

9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?		<b>N</b>	
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			<b>N/A</b>
9.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	<b>Y</b>		
<b>Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			<b>N/A</b>
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			<b>N/A</b>

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:  
[externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk)

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

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