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Sent by email to h.a.james@uea.ac.uk

15 December 2016

Dear Dr James,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BDS(Hons) in Dentistry (Primary BDS, Part 1).

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

1. Perception that students might be being over-assessed.
2. Observations on double marking and moderation practices emphasising the need for robust processes to ensure the reliability and consistency of marking, particularly for essay questions.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the Programme Team:

1. The Programme Team has, over the years, reduced the assessment burden on students and tried to strike a balance to encourage engagement throughout the year so that revision is not left until the last minute. The four ICA help the students both in terms of engagement but also to understand and practice the types of questions they will come across in the end of year papers. The data also helps the academic team identify students who are

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finding the transition from school difficult early so we can support them. The Team has taken on board your concerns with respect to over assessment and indeed for this academic year have removed one of the project elements (although this was popular with the students).

2. In terms of moderation of scripts, the Team has oversight with respect to the projects and moderation takes place. Practical assessments are moderated such that all failed and 20% of the rest are scrutinised and moderated if required although the marking criteria are robust and objective. With respect to short answer questions because “the range of acceptable answers is agreed beforehand, and there is virtually no interpretation of information necessary”, we do not scrutinise as the marking is very objective. The Team takes on board your comment with respect to essays which are more subjective and will in future utilise current practise in the School of Biosciences which is to scrutinise all failed scripts and 10% (or 10 whichever is greater) to ensure that scripts are annotated, follow the marking criteria and justify the mark given.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. good level of markers’ comments on assessed work;
3. efficient Examining Board provided with informative and helpful summary paperwork;
4. detailed and informative course handbook;
5. appropriate use made of extensive and clear marking criteria;
6. exemplary information provided to External Examiners and access to student work before and during visit to Cardiff.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University’s provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar