



Academic & Student Support Services
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Sent by email to s.m.sait@leeds.ac.uk

01 June 2016

Dear Dr Sait,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MRes in Biosciences.

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.

Issue(s) Highlighted

1. Clearly identifying areas of strength / weakness and areas for improvement is an aspect of the assessment process that could still be developed further in some areas";
2. Your report of student concerns about the imbalance in the amount of work required and time available for different components of modules, especially where multiple assessments are set in quick succession and/or are bunched at the end of the module;
3. Your indication that students had requested that they be permitted to attend the seminars of the preceding students. This would require some careful consideration of the timing of the seminars with arrival/induction events.

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The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The Programme Team has noted your comment and will review feedback forms to incorporate specific sections to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the assignment.
2. There will be significant alterations to the timetabling of the taught modules in Stage 1 to address the imbalance in the amount of work required and time available for different components of modules. The School will also be reducing the number of assessments set in quick succession, that were part of the Data Handling and Statistics Module, and will be replacing with 'in-class' problem solving sessions, which are more supportive towards student learning. Whilst Portfolio work for BIT011 and BIT002 is due in at the end of the session, the assessments are given throughout the course and it is students' time management that results in any clumping. It is important that postgraduate students develop time management skills, as this is an essential component to success. Students receive guidance in time management as an integral part of BIT011 (Key Skills in Research Practice) and this process is supported by their Personal Tutors as students are expected to present and discuss a Coursework Gantt Chart to aid in the completion of all components in each taught module.
3. The possibility for the incoming cohort to attend the seminars of the exiting students has been discussed. The presentation event happens outside the academic year and therefore incoming students will be invited to attend the Seminar, as part of their arrival/induction, but attendance will not be compulsory.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. your particular commendation of feedback provided to students, of enhanced "clear and unequivocal" marking criteria, of the variety of assessment methods employed, of clear moderation practices and of opportunities for current students to meet their predecessor cohort.

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

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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