

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - BSc(Hons) in Physiotherapy

Dear Ms Asghar,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the School of Healthcare Sciences 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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School.

1. **[3] your detailed comments on the continuing use of a written examination on a named part of the programme;**
2. **[3] your report of some student concerns regarding "inequity/inconsistency of feedback" provided on formative assessments and related comments.**

The following response to these and other matters raised in your Report has been provided on behalf of the School.

The BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy Programme Manager and the Assessment and Unfair Practice Coordinator for the School of Healthcare Sciences, Cardiff University, met (September 2013) to consider the external examiner's annual report. It was duly noted that the annual report supported the current programme structure as appropriate. Further, that developments planned through the curriculum review project, for the 2014 programme; with the development of shared and inter-professional modules, was pleasing, current and supported by contemporary pedagogic approaches. The external examiner applauded the planned removal of the final level 6 unseen written exams for the current Physiotherapy Practice 2 module; and the move towards more content and assessment in level 6 which mirrored current employability demands for physiotherapy. The external examiner raised the concern that with the current programme running its course, there would still be 3 years in which the unseen final written exam at level 6 would be implemented. In response to these concerns, the learning outcomes assessed by this assessment were therefore explored, to determine whether they could be assessed in a different format. The following points were raised and conclusions drawn:

The learning outcomes assessed by the written exam, cover a range of topics and reasoning skills within the module. The aim of the exam is to simulate clinical practice using an unseen, simulated service user, complex case scenario, which the student needs to explore and discuss. By providing a 90 minute exam, the student is allowed sufficient opportunity to discuss the case study, in the breadth and depth of analysis and synthesis (with demonstration of reasoning skills) pertinent to the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes could be assessed with a written assignment, however; a written assignment would not simulate autonomous, independent practice in the way in which an unseen written exam does. With an unseen written exam, the student is required to produce work all on their own, independent of other resources. The placement of the exam at the end of the module, following completion of the college work and also all clinical education opportunities, ensures the maximum achievement of the learning outcomes. In this way the exam mirrors autonomous, independent practice at a point in time immediately prior to graduation. Further, as the students complete no other written exam across levels 5 and 6 but a variety of written assignments; keeping the written

exam ensures that a range of assessments are maintained within the curriculum. This should allow equal opportunity for all students to achieve across these levels.

Oral assessment of the learning outcomes via a presentation was also discussed. In order to orally assess the learning outcomes to the breadth and depth required, it was determined that a presentation would be limited and that a viva type assessment would be needed. A viva brings a range of difficulties in terms of resources and time required that are currently unavailable. Resources and staffing are currently under review following the merger of the School of Healthcare Studies and the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Currently it was therefore determined that a viva type assessment would not be feasible to implement in the short to medium term. It was therefore determined that the unseen written exam would need to continue for the short to medium term.

The external examiner was happy with the current academic standards and assessment processes, however, reports from students on concerns regarding inequity/inconsistency of feedback provided by personal tutors for formative feedback on draft assignments, was noted. Personal tutoring and student feedback is currently undergoing review within the new recent merged School of Healthcare Sciences and these issues will therefore be explored, reported on and dealt with in the near future.

The comment on the high number of learning outcomes for some modules, in comparison to others, was noted. As part of the curriculum review project this has been addressed by ensuring modules are 20 credits across the board, except for research at level 6. Planned modules will have similar number of learning outcomes, except where more credits are awarded. A higher number of learning outcomes are also required in the shared personal and professional development module, where many aspects of professionalism across a range of professions, are to be assessed.

The students comments of appreciation on the physiotherapy programme and the level of support received, were gratefully noted. This has recently been reflected in The Times University Guide where the Cardiff University Physiotherapy programme was placed top in the UK. We will continue to endeavour to achieve excellence in this area whilst undergoing change and re-structuring within a new merged school.

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

- a. [1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;**
- b. [1 and 6] your support for planned changes to the programme;**
- c. [6] your confirmation of student appreciation of the programme.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Mrs Jill Bedford
Director of Registry and Academic Services