

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

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Simon R LEATHER		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Harper Adams University		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Biological Sciences		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-2018	Date of Report:	25 th June 2018

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)

The programme structure is very similar to many other universities with a common first year followed by optional modules. I am satisfied that the assessment is varied and allows students to develop skills in essay writing, report writing and oral presentation. As I mentioned last year I am concerned that there are such large number of students registered on some of the final year modules. In my opinion, best practice would suggest that a final year module should have, at the very most, 40 students, preferably 30 and this has been my experience at other universities with similar year entries. I reiterate my comment that in their final year, students should be interacting with both staff and peers in class discussions that involve ALL students. I do not see how this can be possible once student numbers exceed 40. I do worry that the student experience is being negatively affected.

Again, I must repeat my concerns about literature reviews being suitable as final year projects. Ideally all students on an honours science degree should be doing a 'hands-on' project. If literature based projects are unavoidable then I suggest that they are done as a formal meta-analysis.

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

I believe that the academic standards are comparable with similar degrees across the UK. The presentation of the final year research projects was very good in the main, although some students submitted projects containing 'Excel' graphs that had not been edited to conform to scientific conventions.

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

Assessment methods used are varied and are fair and rigorously applied. There is evidence of plenty of student feedback. Exam papers are copiously annotated and the marks given are justified and in the main follow the written rubric. The use of abbreviated codes to indicate independent reading, use of course material etc. were very useful to me as an External Examiner. There were only a few occasions where students were given the same mark but the written comments were different. These are however, the exception rather than the rule.

Although in general the questions on the examination papers attracted roughly equal numbers of answers, there was on module, BI3136 Global Climate Change Ecology, where one question was noticeably unpopular. I was unable to see any reason why this question was avoided but perhaps the School might consider looking into the matter.

Final Year projects were varied and marked fairly and rigorously. I looked at twelve projects and marked them blind. My marks were within 1 or 2% of those awarded by the internal markers.

As external examiners in 2018, we solely focussed on inspection of the work assessed within the School, concentrating on whether the work had been fairly marked and processes (including mitigation against the strike) within the School had been appropriate. Based on the evidence presented, we can confirm that marking, annotations, comments on student work and all processes used appeared thorough and effective.

The Exam Board, which I attended, was conducted professionally and efficiently.

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

If this refers to Year 4 MSci projects these were, as with the Year 3 projects fairly and rigorously marked and my assessments were in line with those of the internal markers.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

I continue to be very impressed with the detailed comments given in student feedback and also on exam scripts. It was useful to be able to see Year 2 student portfolios.

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)

The assignment in the Biological Conservation module BI3114 is an excellent and challenging means of assessment.

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

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)
Programme/Course information				
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?	Y		
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
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		
Examination scripts				
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		
Coursework and practical assessments				
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		
Clinical examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining board meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		

9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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?	Y		
Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
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:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE