

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 and MBIol Biological Sciences,		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018-19	Date of Report:	21 st June 2019

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the dissertation stage Examining Board in the case of postgraduate Master's programmes).

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. I also think that some of the practical classes are very innovative.

As I mentioned last year and the year before that, I am concerned that there are such large number of students registered on some of the final year modules. This has, since the restructuring, been exacerbated by the reduction in the number of modules now offered. 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 have been told that in some of these modules, classes are broken into smaller study groups, which will mitigate this to some effect. I do still worry however, 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' data-rich 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 am happy 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 are still submitting 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)

The assessment methods used are varied and are fair and rigorously applied. There is evidence of plenty of student feedback on scripts and assignments. 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 very 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.

Some modules are now assessed only by coursework and on-line. There is some variability in how this is used by the markers on the same module e.g. one marker will use the summary feedback box in addition to the on-script marking facility and others only give on-script notations leaving the overall summary feedback box empty.

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

4. **Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)** (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.

I did not receive any response to the comments that I made in last year's report.

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)

I was very impressed by the assignment in BI3156 Systems Biology & Modelling and equally impressed by the abilities of the top students on that module.

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?			N/A
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/A
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