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**Sent by email to [j.deuchars@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.deuchars@leeds.ac.uk)**

**27 February 2017**

Dear Professor Deuchars,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BSc in Biomedical Sciences and the BSc in Biomedical Sciences (Intercalated) (Neuroscience, Physiology).

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. Answers to some questions in some modules were sparsely annotated, making it harder to assess the fairness of the grades and making the scrutineering more difficult.
2. Variation in the contribution of similar tasks (e.g. presentations/newspaper style summaries of a research paper) made to the overall module mark between modules.
3. Use of the upper end of the marking scale for excellent work.

**The following response has been provided in consultation with the School:**

1. External Examiners looking at other Programmes within the School commented that annotations and feedback was good, so it appears that the problem is specific to certain modules and markers in your area of

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examination. Markers and module leaders will be reminded of the importance of this for quality assurance and assisting the scrutiny and external examining process.

2. There is some variation in the mark value given for similar looking tasks, as you note. Module teams generally do justify these in the way you indicate but the School agrees that greater clarity is needed in the documentation associated with specific tasks and modules.
3. As you note, there does seem to be an unwillingness in some quarters to use the upper end of the marking scale for excellent work, with most high marks being in the 70's and a few in the 80's. The School has encouraged markers to consider these higher levels more and to give high marks where they are merited, and this does occur although it may be that in the material that you examined this was not the case. Other External Examiners did comment on the wide use of the marking scheme. The marking criteria have been modified this year to try to make it more straightforward to award higher marks where deserved, and there will be a major redesign of them associated with the introduction of the Year 2 and 3 of the new degree schemes next year.

### **Additional Comments / Observations**

Your comment on late work receiving a mark of zero has been noted. Senate Regulations provide that where Coursework Assessments are submitted late, and where there are no Extenuating Circumstances, a mark of zero shall be awarded for those Assessments. This University rule has been in place for many years after a University-wide consultation conducted in the *Assessment Matters* project in 2013-2014. The School has confirmed that exceptions are made for students with extenuating circumstances.

Your comments on the sufficiency of data provided to facilitate analysis of mark trends are also noted. A suite of reports is available for Schools to use to meet the requirements of their Examining Boards. It is intended that they provide a broadly consistent approach across all Schools and limit the potential for error caused by separate School-produced reports. The content of the SIMS reports formed part of the University's *Assessment Matters* project in 2013-2014 and all Schools were consulted on the nature of the reports. Where Schools identify additional data requirements particular to their needs it is open for them to draw the matter for consideration by the University Assessment Working Group.

### **The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;

2. commendation of the planned introduction of new Integrated Master's programmes that will enable the Cardiff graduates to remain competitive with those from other UK universities with similar schemes;
3. the provision of written feedback on a draft of the final year report;
4. the annotation and scrutineering of exam scripts providing a good foundation for External Examiners to compare the marks with the marking criteria;
5. the responsiveness of School staff to suggestions made by External Examiners;
6. enthusiastic student perceptions of the School and University.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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