

EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	James Wakefield		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Exeter		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Biochemistry, Genetics, Biotechnology, Molecular Biology <i>BSc in Molecular Biology / Genetics / Biotechnology / Biochemistry</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-16	Date of Report:	16th June 2016

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

1. Programme Structure

The structure and content of the programmes are well aligned with their aims. The course materials and Handbook are clear.

The material and taught techniques are appropriate at the different levels - 1st year Programme structure is compulsory and provides your students with the core material required for their degrees, while the 3rd year courses generally provide a good level of choice, with an emphasis on small group teaching and critical analysis.

The optional Professional Placement Year (PTY) provides students with an opportunity to secure a year in a research environment that will be beneficial for their future careers and should be encouraged.

2. Academic Standards

Based on the available evidence (exam scripts, project reports, other assessments) I am confident that the academic standards at Cardiff are high.

3. The Assessment Process

I have always been impressed with the level of feedback, both on coursework and on exam scripts for the majority of modules I examine, and have no concerns with the robustness of marking. The marking criteria for the different levels are really very good - clear and helpful, with a good distinction of assessed qualities between Levels. The

scrutineering process appears to be working well, with all failed Examination questions being subjected to this.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

The one thing I wish to revisit this year is the quality of the data and data analysis we're provided with as External Examiners. The time we spend in Cardiff is precious and although the Administrative team do a great job in providing additional details *ad-hoc*, I spend much of my time trying to look at trends and assessing comparability across and between modules, and cohorts, rather than delving into the details of quality, student attainment and satisfaction. I completely understand the limitations in terms of time and person-power, and I do acknowledge that we now have some data - such as the mean of exams and modules, and a standard deviation - but visual representations such as the range of marks in a module, as a box-whisker plot and a scatterplot of the final marks for students on a module compared to their overall average performance on the degree would make such a difference to the job of assessing quality and consistency throughout the degree.

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

The Biosciences Student Office and Education Staff are to be highly commended. They are committed, conscientious individuals who have the student's interests at heart.

Some final year modules have this year been revised and rebranded. The examinations for final year modules are gradually becoming less reliant on the traditional 2-from-5 structure and it was great to see the new "**Advances in Stem Cell and Developmental Biology**" taking the opportunity to refresh the style of the exam. By using a Part A and Part B structure with multiple questions - both compulsory and choice-driven, I believe it tests a greater set of graduate qualities than the traditional approach; I look forward to seeing more modules take this up.

The Final Year Research Project (BI3006) is the largest module in a student's degree Programme, and the Project Report is the largest single assessment point (50% of a 40 credit, final year module - therefore ~13% of the entire degree, for a 3 year programme). Even a single percentage point can be the difference between a Class boundary, especially with the University's preponderance "secondary" rules. The Department should be commended for the use of the "Draft Report Feedback Form" - it provides, in my mind, an absolutely crucial point of reference to demonstrate that a supervisor has provided guidance to the write up, and therefore allows the opportunity for the student to revise their approach and style to their final report. However, I feel it would be prudent to look to further strengthen the scrutiny and assessment of the Final Year Research Project (BI3006), and have a number of suggestions:

(i) the Handbook variously describes the Project Report as: "*a project report*" and a "*thesis*", but guides students by recommending specific Journals and, in the current

assessors guidelines consistently uses the phrase "*appropriate for scientific article*". To avoid any possible ambiguity, the guidance could be revised.

(ii) harmonise the Assessment guidelines for the Final Year Research Project (Module BI3006) with the Level 6 Marking criteria. For example, currently, there is a set of guidance for Level 6 Oral Presentations and a separate set of guidance for the BI3006 Oral Presentation.

(iii) The Department might also want to consider an additional level of end-of-year scrutiny regarding this module, in advance of the External Examiner visits. Once all marks for final year students have been calculated on SIMS, the Department could identify those individuals whose overall degree classification could be affected by a <5% positive change in their Project Report, scrutinising to ensure consistency between Assessor comments and the final grade. Formal minuting of this meeting and these cases would provide maximum quality assurance for this crucial element, in addition to alleviating some of the time pressures on the External Examiners (who currently undertake this process on an ad-hoc basis during their visit).

One final point I would like to make regards the relationship between the Department and the Central QA Registry Office. It does seem there is some work to do on the relationship between the School and the higher University Administration. The regulations on removing modules that students register on and then change, in the same year or in the next year (due to IOS and the same module not running in the following year, or changing programmes) requires clearer communication in advance of the Exam Board.

7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 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
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		
Marking 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				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
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
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A

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

ExternalExaminers@cf.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

SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.