

EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Andrew Burrows		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Bath		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Chemistry (MChem and BSc), concentrating on inorganic chemistry modules		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-18	Date of Report:	6/7/18

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught 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 Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The chemistry programmes cover core material in the first two years allowing modules in later years to concentrate on areas of current research interest. This structure is common to most UK chemistry departments and ensures that the level of the programmes is consistent with those expected for MChem/BSc courses. The Year 3/4 topics presented at Cardiff are in line with the research strengths of the department, which is sensible and appropriate, and they ensure a wide choice of areas for students to specialise in. There have been some changes in the structure of a few final year organic modules this year, driven by previous External Examiner comments.

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

The standards obtained by the students are comparable to those at other UK chemistry departments that I am familiar with and fully meet expectations from the

QAA subject benchmark statement. The top students are very good and a credit to the department. The proportion of First Class degrees is higher on the MChem programme than the BSc programme, but this is to be expected given the marks required to transfer to and/or stay on the MChem programme. This difference in profile between the MChem and BSc programmes mirrors that at Bath and other UK chemistry departments that I am familiar with.

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 processes are fair and robust and, during the exam board meeting, extenuating circumstances were dealt with in a fair and sensitive manner.

Examination papers have been set at the appropriate standard. I saw draft versions of these before the two sets of examinations, and my comments were all positively acted upon. Outline answers were provided for the majority of papers and I appreciate that industrial action may have affected some others. Having outline answers that highlight whether particular parts of the questions are unseen problems, related to workshop problems or from the notes is very helpful and the department should ensure this is universally adopted. The statistics sheets provided for each module were useful, but it would be helpful also to see on these the breakdown between coursework and exam marks.

It is notable that Cardiff has a relatively high coursework component to all chemistry modules, and I wonder whether this could lead to overload of both students (in terms of volume of assessment) and staff (in terms of marking). In addition, there is a relatively large tail on the BSc programme which led to quite a few students leaving without honours degrees. It is possible that these weak students were helped through their early years at Cardiff into the final year by their coursework marks, and I would query whether this was really in their best long-term interests.

Research projects are an important facet of any chemistry programme, and it was great to see some very high quality MChem project reports. For the most part, the marking on these was well supported by comments, but some of the supervisor marks were very high with poor justification. I would like the department to consider revising the supervisor's form in order to specifically obtain comments and marks pertaining to (i) effort and enthusiasm, (ii) technical ability and (iii) initiative shown, in order to better justify these marks. In addition, I would like to see the two assessors completing separate forms, as in a minority of cases the evidence trail did not conclusively show that two assessors did assess the report independently. I'm not querying that they did – just that the university might find it useful to have evidence of this in cases of appeals.

It was good to see that research projects are also offered to BSc students. These are of necessity short, and in some cases may be over-ambitious. It is important that inexperienced members of staff are offered guidance on what is appropriate for these short research experiences. I also felt that the BSc project reports are unnecessarily lengthy. A 30-page report for less than 16 days practical work seems somewhat excessive to me.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

This was my first year as External Examiner so it is difficult for me to comment on previous years. However, I have looked over the past reports on the website and it is clear that comments from the External Examiners have always been treated seriously and considered carefully.

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

Both during the academic year and the visit itself, the department has been proactive in providing me with all of the information that I needed. The draft examination papers were sent in good time, and responses were provided from the question setters to my queries in order to close the loop.

I appreciate that this has been a particularly challenging year in the department due to illness of key staff, so the fact that things worked so well is a credit to the staff involved in coordinating the assessment processes and the exam board meeting.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

Summary sheets for most of the modules were provided by the convenors for the first time this year. I found these to be very helpful and would encourage the department to ensure these were available for all modules in the future.

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

N/A

8. 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				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			N/A
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		

Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	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				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	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)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	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

8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

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