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Sent by email to k.malcolm@qub.ac.uk

07 April 2020

Dear Professor Malcolm,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for MPharm (Drug Delivery).

Your report has been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. The opportunity for students to review their exam scripts upon return to studies;
3. Every lecture theatre at Cardiff University is installed with a video capture system for the recording of lectures. This makes it relatively easy to record lectures, and is clearly an invaluable resource for students.
4. Teaching of numeracy and calculations is formally implemented and assessed in each of the four year of the MPharm degree course. The students we spoke with as part of our visit were hugely complimentary about the way numeracy is taught, and derive great confidence from that teaching.

Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:

1. **Academic Standards:** *The proportion of students obtaining a first classification has now increased very significantly over the past four years.*



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We have also observed the rising trend of first-class awards, and as a programme team have always been mindful to maintain high standards in the content and delivery of our curriculum; as well as testing each cohort with challenging assessments. It is hard to pinpoint a single reason for this increasing trend. The programme content and assessment profile has been mostly static over the period quoted. We have however significantly improved our admissions procedures in this time, so it may be that we are attracting better students. In the absence of an obvious cause, we will continue to monitor this trend.

2. ***The Assessment Process:*** *To mitigate against rogue questions appearing in future exams, creation of a Keywords document, capturing keywords for every teaching item within the MPharm degree programme allowing staff to quickly and easily track the teaching of any topic within the degree.*

It was unfortunate that an siRNA question appeared in an exam that students felt unprepared for, and we appreciate the support from the external examiners of the resolution we proposed. We are about to undertake a curriculum mapping process for the purpose of programme review that could, and will, also be used to support the checking and review of exam paper content as part of our internal quality process.

3. ***Examination of Master's Dissertations:*** *Variation in the style of written reports/dissertations.*

As part of the above mentioned programme review, we will also be taking a fresh look at the research project requirements, not least against the new education standards expected soon from the PSRB. Several proposed modifications to the presentation of this assessment have been previously mooted, including formatting as a research paper or submission of a completely lay document. We will return to this debate as programme development matures, and it is helpful to have support for this direction from an external examiner.

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

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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

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.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar