



Academic & Student Support Services
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Sent by email to c.a.langley@aston.ac.uk

13 November 2017

Dear Professor Langley,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2016–2017

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MPharm (Clinical Pharmacy).

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. Programme structure and module capping.
2. Sub-component marks for PH4118 to be included in the mark breakdown on the front of the relevant answer paper.
3. MCQ item analysis for PH3110 and comments on the time available for this assessment.
4. Late availability of examining board spreadsheets.
5. Anonymous marking and rounding of marks.

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The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. Thank you for your comments on module capping when any component of a module is failed. This is an issue that continues to vex our students and we have raised the issue with the PVC for Student Experience and Academic Standards. As you know, our regulator requires that all components of assessment in the MPharm programme must be passed in order for a student to progress and therefore all our assessments carry a qualifying mark. The consequence is that our students are in more peril of module capping than others where a fail in one component of the schedule of assessment may be compensated for by a pass in another.

Under Senate Regulations, failed modules are capped on resit. The situation has been drawn to the attention of the University and the School is being supported by the College Education Officer. We will keep you updated on these discussions at a later point.

2. Your comments have been referred to the module leader and to all other module leaders and the School will action your request.
3. The School is reviewing its processes for analysing MCQ item analysis data to ensure that an adequate level of quality assurance is in place to identify poorly performing questions and questions that are incorrect. The School will also undertake a statistical 'speededness' test on MCQs in future in order to identify any issues whereby the length of the paper or the time allocated means students have insufficient time to complete the assessment.
4. We recognise that exam board reports were produced at the last minute this year. The school is liaising with the College Education Officer to support this process
5. Thank you for these observations which have been noted. Procedures for anonymous marking and rounding of marks have been harmonised across the University to provide a consistent approach in all disciplines.

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 programme continues its restructure to produce a more integrated programme as required by the General Pharmaceutical Council;
3. the programme benefits from a dedicated teaching staff who are motivated to enhance the student learning experience on a continual basis;
4. the use of critical fails within the OSCE assessments follows best practice for this type of assessment.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 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