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Sent by email to Professor Andrew Burrows

26 November 2018

Dear Professor Burrows,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2017/18

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for the Undergraduate Chemistry Programmes (Inorganic Chemistry).

Your report has been considered by 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](#).

Issues highlighted in your report:

1. Assessment Process: There is a 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 it is questionable whether this was really in their best long-term interests.
2. Assessment Process: Research projects are an important facet of any chemistry programme, and there are 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. Perhaps the School should 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

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shown, in order to better justify these marks. In addition, perhaps it may be useful 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.

Response provided by the School:

1. We thank the examiner for highlighting a point which is currently being reviewed by the School. We are planning to undertake a thorough review of Years 1 to 3, with particular emphasis on the weightings between examinations and course work (including practical work). We have recently adjusted weightings in earlier years, such that there is greater emphasis on the examination, trying to ensure that progressing students will be accustomed to the higher examination weightings in the final years and they will be fully equipped to be successful in the latter stages of their degree. We are closely monitoring the situation to see its affect in the coming year.
2. We, again, thank the external examiner for this useful suggestion. These comments have been passed on to the project committee, who will include these suggestions into the marking schemes for the projects supervisor marks. In addition, supervisors will be reminded to fully justify the marks they award in all categories.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. Summary sheets for most of the modules were provided by the convenors for the first time this year. These are very helpful and it would be positive if the department ensured these were available for all modules in the future.

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.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar