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**Sent by email to [h.h.fielding@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:h.h.fielding@ucl.ac.uk)**

**30 November 2016**

Dear Professor Fielding,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016**

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the Physical Chemistry modules on undergraduate programmes.

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. Report of a curious class distribution for CH 3410 and related suggestion that each question needs to have a few more marks allocated for more challenging work.
2. Suggested preparation of summaries for each course by course organisers.
3. Improvements to arrangements for study abroad or in industry.

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

1. The marks for this module were discussed at a meeting of the internal examiners prior to the External Examiners' visit, and the module team confirmed that the marking criteria had been the same as in previous years.

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The School apologises that this was not made clear in the External Examiners' briefing. In 2016/17, the module team will change following the resignation of a member of staff. Your suggestion that "perhaps each question needs to have a few more marks allocated for more challenging work" has been referred to the module leader and the School looks forward to receiving your comments on the draft examination paper in due course.

2. Your suggestion that the School adopt a similar practice to UCL in requiring the module leaders to "prepare summaries for each course, both for the course as a whole (including some response to course questionnaires) and the final mark distribution" is, in part, already happening, although not quite in the same way. Module leaders have to provide responses to the results of module evaluation via the online system used by the School, and feedback to students on the overall module results is provided later (after the meeting of the Examining Board) via our virtual learning environment (Learning Central). In 2016/17 the School is considering how these procedures might be made more effective, and your comments are therefore particularly timely.
3. Significant changes to School procedures regarding the administration of placements overseas or in industry have been made in the last two years. The students who graduated in 2016 from the MChem Chemistry with a Year Abroad and MChem Chemistry with a Year in Industry programmes undertook their placement in 2014/15, and would not have experienced these changes. In particular, in 2016/17 the School is providing significantly more support for Year 2 students applying for placements, as well as monitoring the progress of students more closely whilst they are away from Cardiff in Year 3. We are also making enhanced learning resources available to the distance learners via Panopto, including recordings of all lectures and workshops.

**The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. efficient organisation of the assessment, including close consultation with External Examiners on draft papers;
3. positive student feedback received from a well-attended meeting with final year students;
4. commended procedures for the marking of final year projects.

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